

Spread the word about Access Pa.

In early October, I spoke to a group of teachers about improving student research on the Web. When I mentioned the fabulous databases of the Access Pa. Power (Pennsylvania Online World of Electronic Resources) Library, to my horror most of the educators stared at me blankly. They had never heard of these high-quality subscription Web resources offered by Pennsylvania's public and school libraries, and generously supported by the state.

In effect, we've been paying for the premium channels, and the family has been watching basic cable. What a waste!

Let me fill you in on what may be the best deal in town - actually, the best deal in the state.

Beyond the free Web, accessible through your favorite search engines, there is a world of Web-based reference books, full-text magazine and newspaper databases, and much more. If you are an educator, parent, student, or if you research for any reason at all, read on. And please help me spread this worthy gospel.

Pennsylvania residents can access these databases without passwords at most school and public libraries. From home, you will need to visit your public library's home page, and, when prompted, enter a valid public library card number. An online map at www.powerlibrary.org/InterfacePower.asp will help you locate the Access Pa. log-in page for your nearest public library.

Most students search using the one or two engines whose URLs they remember. Parents can help get them out of this searching rut, and encourage use of the Power Library, by taking two simple steps. First, once you find your public library's Access Pa. log-in page, have every family member bookmark it in a browser. Then, create a little text file to make it easy for family members to paste their bar-code numbers into the log-in box without digging for a library card.

And now, the databases:

EBSCOhost. The largest of the Power Library's databases, EBSCOhost, offers a database for everyone in the family. Here's what it includes:

MasterFILE Premier has full-text coverage of more than 1,840 periodicals in nearly all subject areas.

Business Source Elite offers full text for nearly 1,040 journals in business, management, economics, finance, banking and accounting.

Newspaper Source offers full text for 159 regional U.S. newspapers, 18 international newspapers, 6 new swires, and the Christian Science Monitor and Los Angeles Times.

Health Source: Consumer Edition offers full-text coverage of nearly 165 journals, and abstracting and indexing for nearly 180 more in the medical sciences, food science, nutrition, child care, sports medicine and general health.

Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition provides more than 520 scholarly full-text journals focusing on many medical disciplines.

ERIC, the U.S. Education Department's Educational Resource Information Center database, contains citations and abstracts from more than 980 educational and education-related journals, and the full text for more than 2,200 ERIC digests that summarize research on major educational issues.

There is also EBSCOhost for children:

EBSCO Animals has in-depth information on the nature and habitat of familiar animals.

Primary Search for elementary-school children offers full text for more than 50 children's magazines and more than 100 children's pamphlets.

Middle Search Plus offers full text for nearly 120 magazines covering general topics appropriate for middle and junior high school students.

Searchasaurus is a colorful graphical interface that aids access to EBSCO's databases for children.

The databases don't stop at EBSCO. E-Library Elementary, which is updated daily, includes the full text for more than 60 magazine and newspaper titles, along with television and radio transcripts, books and reference works, photographs, images, and maps.

SIRS Discoverer is an excellent reference tool for young readers that includes selected full-text magazine articles, graphics, country facts, and the World Almanac.

Poem Finder offers coverage of world poetry from all eras, and includes more than 85,000 full-text poems searchable by subject, biographical and critical material, and the Year's Best Poetry.

Groves dictionaries are comprehensive scholarly reference resources on music, art, astronomy, astrophysics and life sciences. Included in this group is access to the full text and graphics of Scientific American, 1993-present.

Gale's Scribner Writers Series provides 15-to-20-page signed essays on more than 1,600 authors and literary genres from 13 of Scribner's print series.

Contemporary Authors has biographical and bibliographical information on more than 120,000 U.S. and international authors.

AccuNet/AP Multimedia Archive/AP Photo Archive is one of the most extensive media collections anywhere. It gives access to more than 700,000 photographs from the AP's collection of more than 50 million images. Coverage ranges from the historical (1840s) to breaking news.

Although this column describes resources in Pennsylvania's Power Library, readers in Delaware and New Jersey have access to a similar array of databases made possible through their state libraries. Karen Hyman, executive director of the South Jersey Regional Library Cooperative, said the New Jersey State Library and Regional Library Cooperatives jointly fund a package of databases for libraries and residents of New Jersey.

Remote access is available through local library Web sites. The group hopes to secure funding from the legislature to expand the program under a central identification site under the domain name for 24X7Library.org.

Access Pa. Power Library is at www.powerlibrary.org/Interface/Power.asp.

New Jersey and Delaware residents can check these sites:

Delaware Digital Library of the First State: Magazines and More at www.lib.de.us/magazines/.

South Jersey Regional Library Cooperative at www.sjrhc.org/ebSCO2001.htm (the first set of EBSCO databases are the free ones).

SJRLC Facts.com at www.sjrhc.org/factsonfile.htm.

Camden County Library System Databases at www.camden.lib.nj.us/databases/databases.htm.

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