

ESSAYS

CHINA BY INTERNET

An Introduction to Internet-Based Resources for the Research and Study of China

By Pamela A. Seay



One clearly stated aspect of the mission of our university is that we are to bring an international perspective to our programs. As a professor who teaches law in a criminal justice program, this seemed more than simply a challenge, but an impossible dream. Then I had the opportunity to meet a professor from Tsinghua University in Beijing, who introduced me to the wonderful world of international communication by computer. Through this encounter, I began the odyssey of adventure which plunged our criminal justice program into the depths of international and comparative justice, with a primary focus on China. The results so far have included an annual study tour to China, an International Justice Certificate that can be earned by taking classes throughout the university, and a course titled “Comparative Justice” which is taught both in a classroom and over the Internet. It is the Internet components that have provided the most eye-opening information and greatest opportunity for up-to-date research on China.

Since this “Comparative Justice” course precedes and is often tied in with our study tour to China, the primary focus has been the People’s Republic of China. As the students progress in the course, they become more aware that justice, government, business, and economy are inextricably intertwined. The comparative methodology introduces the student to the unique aspects of the Chinese government. They soon learn that, unlike the United States and other countries with which they have become familiar, until recently the Chinese government, by law, was the majority owner of all business in China.

To fully appreciate the impact of this fact, the course begins by taking students through a tour of the Chinese governmental structure. Using information available over the Internet as supplemental information to the assigned text and readings, students explore official and unofficial information available by

Internet. This article provides a location, or URL, of the sites assigned, the purposes for which they are used, and a summary of their content. It is a pathway on which students are guided to a greater understanding of the Chinese government and economic system.

Introduction to the Chinese Government

Students begin the segment on China by becoming familiar with the government and its operations. At this point, it is important for them to make a distinction between “official” and “unofficial” Web sites.

<http://www.china-embassy.org>. Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United States of America. As an official Web site of the Chinese government, this site provides official statements regarding economics and business, as well as links to laws, rules, and policies affecting the economics of China.

<http://www.undp.org/missions/china>. People’s Republic of China Mission to the United Nations. Though a part of the United Nations Web page, this site gives the current status of China’s world opinion on issues affecting the PRC, including links to official press releases and statements.

<http://www.asiannet.com/china/main.html>. China On-Line. Here you will find a wide range of links to Chinese business interests and international business in China. Also included is a relatively current listing of the personnel and the organization of the Central Government of China.

<http://www.usembassy-china.gov/english/>. United States Embassy—China. For the American perspective on the Chinese government and business environment, this site can be quite helpful. It contains official statements and press releases from the U.S. Government on China, including separate sections on economics, agriculture, commerce and the environment.

<http://www.usinfo.state.gov/regional/ea/ea.htm>. U.S. Information Agency: East Asia-Pacific Issues. With links to information on China and other Asian countries, this official U.S. government site provides current and topical information on government, economics, business, and trade.

<http://www.qis.net/chinalaw>. ChinaLaw. This site, sponsored by the University of Maryland School of Law, provides up-to-date information on Chinese law and the legal system. It contains links to English-language translations of Chinese laws, including corporation and company law, banking law, securities law, bankruptcy law, patent law, foreign investment law, and numerous other related laws.

News and Information

Once students have become familiar with the basics regarding the structure, form, and function of the Chinese government, they are introduced to additional resources to give a foundation for the current conditions in China.

<http://www.chinadaily.com.cn>. China Daily. The official English-language publication of the People’s Republic of China provides an insight into the current areas of focus for the

Chinese government. Students should be encouraged to compare the news and information learned here with news and information gleaned from other news organizations worldwide. A resource for news worldwide is the Australian site, <http://www.onlinenewspapers.com>, which includes links to thousands of on-line newspapers and journals.

<http://www.scmp.com>. South China Morning Post. For an alternative, though still official, source for news in China, this site gives the Hong Kong view of events in China. It also provides current stock information and statistics for the Hang Seng Market. A first visit to this site requires registration, though no fee is required.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/front.htm>. Washington Post International News. By clicking on its "Asia/Pacific" link from this page, this site provides links to current news and information from the Associated Press and Washington Post in China and surrounding regions. In addition, it links to other news sources worldwide that focus on China. An International Currency converter is included as a link from the China page site.

<http://www.chinanews.org/>. China Internet Information Center. This official China news resource provides links to comments and information on topics from law reform to economic opportunity.

<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/>. People's Daily Online. As the official newspaper of the People's Republic of China, this site provides links to numerous official facts and figures on China's government, business, and trade. Students should be encouraged to compare the material found here with other resources.

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/ch.html>. The CIA Factbook China Page. The U.S. CIA provides general statistics and reference information on the Chinese people, geography, government, economy, communications, transportation, military, and transnational issues. This site provides students with a good foundation in the general aspects of the country.

<http://freenet.buffalo.edu/~cb863/china.html>. Finding News About China. Though not always reliably available, when up and running, this site provides a wealth of links to news and information on China from around the world. It also includes useful tools, such as "How to access blocked sites."

Business and Statistics

Once students become aware of the media surrounding China, the next step involves a review of the economic atmosphere in which the Chinese community operates.

<http://www.insidechina.com/investorinsight/stat.php> p3. Inside China Today: Investor Insight. A part of the umbrella Web site, Inside China Today, this site presents current statistical information on China's economic status, and its current economic forecasts. Returning to the Inside China Today homepage, <http://www.insidechina.com>, the student will be able to link to additional Chinese news and information. This site is sponsored by the

European Internet Network, a private Internet publishing company.

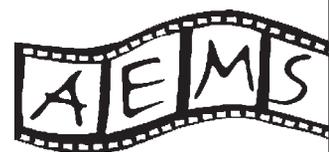
<http://www.wtdb.com>. World Trade Data Base. According to its own promotions, the World Trade Data Base is "committed to bring businesses worldwide the marketing information and cutting edge media tools necessary for success in the Greater China market." In addition to tracking relevant laws, regulations, and policies, the student will find information on and links to materials on business opportunities, tradeshow, foreign trade companies, and consulting companies in Mainland China as well as Taiwan.

<http://www.chinavista.com>. China Vista. For references to current business news, stock information, and statistical reports, this is a generally reliable site. It also offers the chance for the student to branch out into the arts and entertainment for a break from the challenges of Internet research.

<http://www.china-window.com/window.html>. China Window. If your research needs to focus on a specific industry, this site may provide the link you need. With links to television, radio, newspapers, education, economics, pharmaceuticals, and other industries, this site gives a broader view of China business and industry. Though many of the links are in English, many others are only available in Chinese. City-specific links give students an insight into the economic thrust of various regions throughout China.

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Limits and Advantages of Internet Research

When incorporating Internet resources and information into your teaching or lesson plans, it is important to note the limitations, as well as the advantages, of the Internet as a research tool. Aside from the instantaneous and easy access that the Internet provides, another advantage is the interconnected approach that linked pages provide. Since nearly every page contains a link to another related page, the resources are immeasurable.

The interconnectedness is also a limitation. Students often fail to recognize the need to stop and consider fully the information they have found. This sometimes leads to a broad vision with shallow understanding. Sometimes the limitations are not as noticeable, as when a Web page is not regularly updated, or when a site is “under construction” when it is needed. When dealing with news and other time-sensitive information, the Internet, though a bountiful source, can be a vengeful enemy. News by its nature does not last forever. News organizations constantly (usually daily) replace old news. Therefore, Internet news links are only as good as the paper or hardcopy source to which they can be attributed.

Keeping in mind its limits, the Internet can be an invaluable resource and supplement to more traditional methods. The guidance of the professor is the best way to incorporate these resources and to guide the student to success. Providing this pathway for your students to follow can lead to a rewarding result at the conclusion of their studies, and a greater understanding of not only China, but the wealth of knowledge waiting at their fingertips on the Internet. ■

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The Spring 2000 issue of *EAA* (Volume 5, Number 1), contained two bibliographical errors in the article “Teaching Asian Political Economy: The Evolution of an Ethnographic Survey Course,” on page 8. In both cases the Chinese author’s given name was listed first. The correct bibliographical entries are:

Fei, Xiaotong (Hsiao-tung). *Peasant Life in China*. London: Routledge, 1939.

Yan, Yunxiang. *The Flow of Gifts: Reciprocity and Social Networks in a Chinese Village*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1996.

We would like to thank University of Michigan Professor Norma Diamond for calling our attention to this error.

EDUCATION IN ASIAN LANGUAGES

Start at the Very Beginning

By Linda H. Chance

The good news is that the year 2000 finds a growing number of elementary schools in the United States launching foreign language programs, including Asian languages. The hard news is that there are not enough trained teachers or curricular materials. (There is no bad news as long as we continue to address the problem.) Even in the case of Japanese, which has relatively well-developed resources, training needs exceed supply, as you can read in the report, “Japanese Teaching Credential Programs in the U.S.,” by Hiroko Kataoka, Hiroko Furuyama, and Yasuhiko Tohsaku, appearing in the Spring 2000 issue of *The Breeze* quarterly (no. 21). As the authors demonstrate, departments and schools involved in the education of K–12 instructors need to be more conscious of the particular needs of Less Commonly Taught Language (LCTL) professionals. With the growth of programs at the elementary level, and the desire to sustain language instruction over subsequent school years, a firm foundation becomes all the more crucial.

Activity is proceeding on a number of fronts to combat these lacks, however. In the features section of this issue of *EAA* you will find an encouraging how-to article by Betty Lau on a project that both compensated for a shortage of trained individuals and exposed the demand for Asian language instruction. Finding interest and support is key to the inauguration of any program. Rocco D’Amelio, who is principal of an elementary school in Menasha, Wisconsin that now offers Japanese language instruction, tells how administrators contemplating their students’ futures, the School District Foreign Language Department Coordinator, and local citizens found themselves in unsuspected agreement on the value of foreign language at this level. The March 2000 issue of *Japan Forum Newsletter* (no. 16) details the establishment of a K–12 Japanese curriculum in the Menasha Joint School District upon the discovery that many supported such an effort.

In addition to these reports, the resources gathered here are intended to provide some basic information about early language education, as well as to stimulate vision and networking, two necessary components of any initiative for your own school. If you are new to this field, key words to investigate include FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary School), content-based FLES, immersion, CBI (content-based instruction) and Early Language Learning. Below you will also find updates to the list of “General Resources” that appeared in the Winter 1998 edition of *EAA*. Several organizations have changed physical addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, or Web site URLs. Some have added new projects, links, or information of special interest. Only that new information