

ESSAYS



The Internet and Education About India

By Suzanne McMahon

For students studying about India, the Internet can bring immediacy and involvement to the learning experience. Multimedia resources from the Internet can add new dimension to printed course material. E-mail, listservs, and newsgroups open the door to communication in the global arena. With authoring software, it is possible to organize Internet resources into creative classroom presentations and demonstrations; to create multimedia tutorials; or to provide links to scholarly resources through a class Web page. Local and global development of the Internet dictates, to some degree, the extent to which the Internet can be used for study of foreign countries. While the Internet is firmly established in many Western countries, the Internet in India is only beginning to develop. Still, India is coming on-line very quickly, and the day is not far off when it could be possible to establish e-mail contact with students in India to share learning and life experiences, to work on collaborative projects, or to conduct joint research.

This article reviews a sample of Internet resources that could be applied to teaching about India, with reference to search tools to locate other resources, and to Web sites that strive for comprehensive coverage.

INTERNET RESOURCES ABOUT INDIA

WORLD WIDE WEB GENERAL SITE/SEARCH

Because of its graphic and audio capabilities, the World Wide Web has the widest range of resources. Web pages on India that include general, comprehensive lists linking to other Web pages offer an excellent overview of what's available. The most comprehensive list of Web resources for India is the World Wide Web Virtual Library: India (<http://webhead.com/WWW/VL/India/>) maintained by the Australian National University. The page, which is updated frequently, is divided into subject categories including: Art and Culture, History, Internet in India, Language, Literature, Maps, Music, Organizations, People, Religion, Sports, and States. A periodic check of WWWVL:India will keep you up-to-date on most of what's new and interesting on the Web for India. Yahoo(<http://www.yahoo.com/Regional/Countries/India/>) also provides links to

a wide variety of resources on India. Search tools like Alta Vista (<http://altavista.digital.com/>), Inktomi (<http://inktmi.berkeley.edu/>), and Excite (<http://www.excite.com/>) are constantly being improved and turn up an abundance of material through keyword searching.

ON-LINE PERIODICALS

Electronic publishing has begun to blur traditional print-based definitions of format, and it is not easy to describe the qualities of an on-line periodical. In this section I have included Web pages that identify themselves as electronic periodicals.

A few Indian periodicals and newspapers that publish in print also publish an electronic version. *The Hindu*, a leading national newspaper, puts up its weekly edition (<http://www.webpage.com:80/hindu/>), as well as an edition of *Business Line*, a weekly business news magazine (<http://www.indiaserver.com/news/bline/bline.html>), up on the Web.

Electronic Darpan (<http://www.sponsor.net/~pmishra/darpan/>) is the on-line version of *Darpan*, a literary magazine, published by students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, that explores the rich Indian and Indian-American experience with featured prose, poetry, and graphics.

Publishers from the Indian-American ethnic press are also putting up Web versions of their magazines; for instance, *India Currents* (<http://www.rahul.net/indiatur/>).

Some periodicals are offered only on-line. *IndiaWorld* (<http://www.indiaworld.com/>), a general magazine published in Bombay, includes shopping opportunities, job listings, matrimonials, and business news. *IndoLink* (<http://www.indolink.com/>), published in San Jose, California, has calendars of local events, general and economic news, recipes, and a humor column. *CyberINDIA* (<http://www.cyberindia.net/cyberindia/main/indiace.htm>) offers articles on business, sports, literature, food, and travel.

Several scholarly journals are issued by universities only in electronic form. *Sagar* (<http://asnic.utexas.edu/asnic/sagar/sagar.main.html>) is a biannual journal sponsored by the Center for Asian Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. The journal showcases exceptional graduate student and junior scholar articles. *The Journal of South Asian Women's Studies* (<http://www.shore.net/~india/jsaws/index.htm>), currently

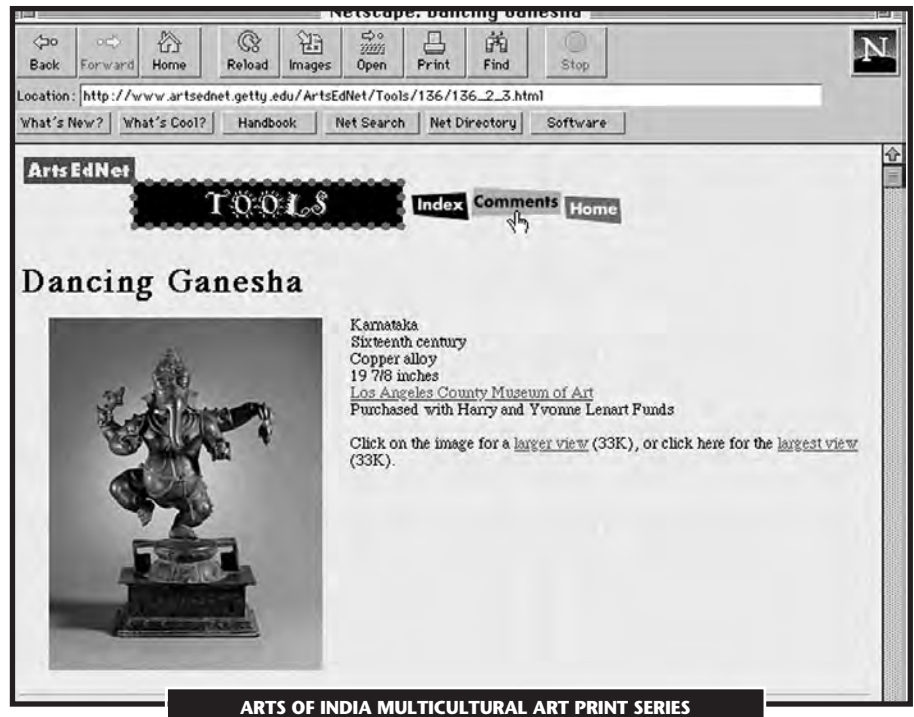
located at Harvard, publishes theoretical and practical papers on issues that are of interest both to scholars of South Asia and to women in and from South Asia. Specific subjects include gender issues, religion, philosophy, politics, the arts, discoveries, and cultural or social products by women.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Language resources are still limited on the Web. The Human Languages page (<http://bang.lanl.gov/nalii/lang.html>) gives a good overview of what's available. For instance, the University of Pennsylvania Web site for Hindi (<http://philae.sas.upenn.edu/Hindi/hindi.html>) offers simple audio lessons. A short description of most Indic languages can be found at Ethnologue (<http://www-ala.doc.ic.ac.uk/~rap/Ethnologue/eth.cgi/India/>). The WWWVL:India list links to assorted language pages (http://web-head.com/WW_WVL/India/india210.html). For classical Indic languages, the best source of information is the Indology page (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/~ucgadm/indology.html>). Indology and the South Asia Gopher Archives ([gopher://gopher.columbia.edu:71/11/clioplus/scholarly/SouthAsia/Texts/Archives](http://gopher.columbia.edu:71/11/clioplus/scholarly/SouthAsia/Texts/Archives)) both include lists of electronic text archives.

ART AND CULTURE

A good example of the high quality art exhibits that are showing up on the Web, and also a good candidate for an electronic field trip, is the Arts of India Multicultural Art Print Series (<http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Resources/Maps/index.html>). Many state and city pages provide good mini-tours of parts of India, for instance the Rajasthan page (<http://www.ent.ohiou.edu/~kartik/raj.html>). The Indian Humor Page (<http://www.rajiv.org/ii/>) includes humorous dialogue from Hindi films, regional jokes, and humorous essays. The Indian Last Names page (<http://www.nssl.uoknor.edu/~lakshman/names.html>) describes how Indian last names are derived—from caste, town, religion, and so forth—and why the last name functions differently in India than in the West. The South Asia Diaspora Web page (<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/SSEAL/SouthAsia/diaspora.html>), includes essays on diaspora topics, bibliographies, photographs, and links to other electronic resources on the South Asian Diaspora.



BUSINESS SITES

The Indian business community, sometimes in collaboration with foreign investors, has put up Web pages with information and news about doing business in India. One good page with a U.S. orientation that draws together quality sites on the subject of business in India is Indiaserver (<http://www.indiaserver.com/ilink.html>). The India Biggest Emerging Markets (BEMS) page is maintained by U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, and gives information on India for U.S. exporters (<http://www.stat-usa.gov/bems/bemsind.htm>). The Japan-India Technology Network's JITNet (<http://sunsite.sut.ac.jp/asia/india/jitnet/index.html>) was created to serve as a communication link between technologists, researchers, academicians, businessmen, and other individuals on issues related to science and technology in Japan and India. The site includes overviews of Indian economy and business practices; technology updates; links to Software Technology Park Web pages and newsletters; World Bank projects in India; and a bibliography of articles on economic reforms.

RESOURCES ON INDIA SERVERS

The National Informatics Center has put up a Web page (<http://www.mah.nic.in/>) describing its program of state-of-art solutions to the information management and decision support requirements of the government and the corporate sector, including conducting feasibility studies for computerization and designing, developing, and implementing computer-based information systems.

Besides information about the ERNET program, the ERNET page offers news from India, updates on Indian cyberspace, and links to Indian Web pages; for instance, the UNESCO-India Home Page (<http://vision.doe.ernet.in/~unicefd/>) describing the Indian UNICEF program.

Universities and research institutions that have access to ERNET have built home pages describing their programs and resources. One good example is the IISc in Bangalore (<http://ece.iisc.ernet.in/iisc.html>).

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View from the Ground (<http://ece.iisc.ernet.in/monster/news/welcome.html>) offers an irreverent description of the development of the Internet in India, links to current articles about the Indian computing scene, and free downloadable software for Indian Internet users.

Indiagate (<http://www.indiagate.com/bbs/bbslist.html>) gives a complete list of Indian BBSs, i.e., newsgroups, with instructions on how to sign up, and an article describing the "typical" Indian BBS user.

GOPHER

Gopher technology has been around longer than the Web and some universities have developed very extensive Gopher sites. For India, one of the oldest, best known, and most useful is the South Asia Gopher ([gopher://gopher.cc.columbia.edu:71/11/clioplus/scholarly/SouthAsia/](http://gopher.cc.columbia.edu:71/11/clioplus/scholarly/SouthAsia/)).

The South Asia Gopher is a collection of worldwide network accessible information resources relating to South Asia. It includes direct links to on-line catalogs of the world's top library collections on South Asia; lists of South Asia related newsgroups, listservs, BBSs, organizations, societies, and other NGOs; and the International Directory of South Asia Scholars. A Web version of the South Asia Gopher is being developed.

NEWSGROUPS AND LISTSERVS

Currently there are over 50 newsgroups and hundreds of listservs dealing with subjects related to India. Through newsgroups and listservs it is possible to participate in discussions of current interest topics and to stay updated on new Internet resources. Newsgroup FAQs provide answers to frequently asked questions, and the listserv archives of previous discussions can also be highly useful resources in themselves. A comprehensive list of newsgroups and a list of some of the better known listservs is available at the WWWVL:India page (<http://webhead.com/WWWVL/India/india5.html>). The short list below illustrates some of the major categories.

NEWSGROUPS

alt.culture.us.asian-indian
Asian Indians in the U.S. and Canada
 alt.movies.indian
Films from India and the Indian subcontinent
 misc.news.southasia
News from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, etc. (Moderated)
 rec.music.indian.misc
Indian music in general
 soc.culture.indian
India and things Indian

soc.culture.tamil

Tamil language, history, and culture

soc.religion.islam

Islamic faith (Moderated)

soc.religion.sikhism

Sikh Religion and Sikhs all over the world (Moderated)

LISTSERVS

INDIA-IN-LANGUAGES@EE.ROCHESTER.EDU

Scholars and speakers of Indian languages

Subscription requests to INDIA-INLANGUAGES-REQUEST, not LISTSERV.

INDIA-D@INDNET.BGSU.EDU

Daily discussion of news digests in English

INDIA-E@INDNET.BGSU.EDU

Economic Forum at BGSU

INDIA@CUNYVM

News and discussion, some emphasis on computers, includes "The India Journal" and "South AsiaCurrents"

INDIA-ALERT@CS.WISC.EDU

News about human rights in India

INDOLOGY@liverpool.ac.uk

Forum for Sanskritists, MIA and NIA language specialists, Dravidologists, historians, and others interested in any aspect of Indological studies

TAMIL-L@DHDURZ1

Tamil Studies

CONCLUSION

Multimedia resources, global communication, and collaborative activities through the Internet can enrich and expand the experience of learning about India. This article has presented a small sample of Internet resources available on the World Wide Web and through Gopher, listservs, and newsgroups. It is possible to locate other resources and stay updated on new resources by periodically checking Web pages that maintain comprehensive lists of links to resources about India, doing keyword searches on the ever-improving search tools available, and by following announcements and discussions on listservs and newsgroups. ■