

BOOK REVIEWS

Andrew McMichael. *History on the Web: Using and Evaluating the Internet.* Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2005. Pp. 82. Paper, \$8.95; ISBN: 0-88295-230-7.

As history educators, we are concerned not only with teaching our students how to think historically but also how to find authentic and reliable sources for historical study. The Internet has brought both benefits and challenges to our classroom door as we figure out ways to help our students separate the wheat from the chaff. Because the web is so vast and so complex, our task only continues to get harder. However, Andrew McMichael's *History on the Web: Using and Evaluating the Internet* provides an excellent starting point for any instructor or student of history from the high school through the graduate level conducting historical research on the web.

While our students become more and more dependent on technology, their enhanced skill level does not necessarily translate into classroom application that they can viably demonstrate in their spoken and written assignments. One reminder of this is students language skills and their comfort zone that includes text messaging but not necessarily long, thoughtful, complete sentence-filled essays. In turn, this means that students have come to expect instant access to sources. Even with our concerns about student plagiarism from the net, it's often easy to spot this form of cheating because they often google their paper topic and pick one of the first sources and, at most, pick a source from the first page or two of results generated to their computer screen. And, because our computer skills were not acquired as soon in life as those of our students, we are sometimes perplexed at what we can expect from students in regard to utilizing the vast resources of the Internet to enhance their study of history.

In this short book that can be purchased alone or as a package with any of the other numerous history works available from Harlan Davidson, McMichael manages to navigate these treacherous waters successfully. The author grounds his work in a brief overview of the history of the Internet—a subtle way to point out to our students that the Internet did not always exist—and then jumps to more practical matters when he examines the role of search engines in finding history on the web. McMichael explains in plain language how the search engines work and how students (and instructors!) can develop their search skills to find what they are seeking. An important point to note is that throughout the book the author discusses how to think critically about what is found on the web and how to decide what sources are reliable and which are not. This is obviously an ongoing discussion and underscores that we hope our students think and critically analyze what they find as they research and go well beyond basic reporting of what they have found. Chapter Three deals with this issue most specifically and McMichael's descriptive analysis at this crucial point in the book contributes to the overall user-friendliness of this book.

Demonstrating how McMichael is able to achieve broad yet brief coverage in this work, he deals with web resources beyond websites in Chapter Four. Most history teachers are aware but most students are not aware that much of the early historical

material on the web arrived in our email boxes and not on our color screen and ways to access some of these archived resources are examined in this chapter. The H-Net (Humanities and Social Sciences Online) site is an excellent example of a wealth of information for students of history that does not always pop up as Google's most popular site on the topic yet contains numerous historical discussions among scholars and teachers that are useful even today. Finally, he discusses how to put material on the web in the last chapter. He succeeds at dealing with some of the bigger issues without recommending specific software because, as he aptly points out, the best software is a multi-variable decision for both students and instructors.

Teachers of high school history courses through graduate level courses will find this work useful in enhancing effective student use of the web both in and out of the history classroom. McMichael's writing is clear yet succinct and grapples with large issues and topics in an easy to read fashion that also succeeds in not talking down to the reader—a difficult task in any book like this.

Pittsburg (KS) State University

Kelly A. Woestman

Dana Lindaman and Kyle Ward. *History Lessons: How Textbooks from Around the World Portray U.S. History.* New York: The New Press, 2004. Pp. xxi, 404. Cloth, \$26.95; ISBN 1-56584-894-2.

We all recall Robert Burns's couplet, reminding us that we should see ourselves as others see us. Thus Dana Lindaman (a Harvard Ph.D. candidate) and Kyle Ward (a professor of history and politics at Vincennes University) have set a useful task for themselves. History teachers and students of the discipline in general should be interested in reading United States history as seen through others' eyes. But the task is not as straight-forward as it appears. Their study, though a useful and rewarding book, also raises as many questions as it answers.

The book proceeds more or less chronologically from the age of European exploration of the Americas through the post-Cold War world. Within each section, the editors have selected passages from current secondary school textbooks from a total of twenty-eight countries around the world (though surprisingly, Australia was left out). It is not surprising that the selections from any particular country emphasize topics that are relevant for its own history, and that apparently the books have little or nothing to say about other aspects of U.S. history. Prominent voices that appear regularly are from Canada. While they emphasize issues of importance to Canadians (such as trade policy), they also provide important and often critical commentaries on other aspects of U.S. foreign policy.

The editors are to be commended for dealing well with the technical aspects of their tasks. In addition to the resources of the Harvard libraries, they have tapped the excellent collection of the Georg Eckert Institute in Germany. Often the selections had to be translated by third parties. Simply arranging for the permission to publish from all