

**Jon's Homeschool Resource Page.** Access: <http://www.midnightbeach.com/hs/index.html>.

The U.S. Department of Education estimates that 1 percent of the school-aged population is home schooled (half-a-million students), while various home schooling organizations give estimates two to three times higher. Whether for reasons of quality, morality, family togetherness, or attempts to control social interactions, all agree that the numbers are growing at a swift rate.

Since the Internet has joined the public library as a great resource for parents who choose to educate their children at home, home schooler Jon Shemitz ([jon@midnightbeach.com](mailto:jon@midnightbeach.com)) has aggregated Internet resources that support parents who choose to home school their children.

The most valuable resource on his site is the list of local support groups for 45 U.S. states taken from the magazines *Growing Without Schooling* (<http://www.HoltGWS.com/>) and *Home Education Magazine* (<http://www.home-ed-press.com/>) and another home schooler named RuthAnn Biel. Those support groups that have Web sites tend to outline the rights and responsibilities of parents, provide curricular materials, and give a philosophical foundation for home schooling. The list also includes resources for nine foreign countries and seven religious groups.

Many of Shemitz's support pages also point to state laws. While some merely point to compilations of all state laws, others summarize relevant laws, including state standards for certification, required hours, school attendance, standardized tests, health and immunizations, and eligibility for extracurricular activities. Since not all pages point to legal information, it is a shame that the link to a summary of each state's home schooling law leads to a site that has moved or no longer exists.

Another key resource is the list of Web sites for home schooling pages and national organizations. In addition to other sites that aggre-



gate home schooling resources, Shemitz lists pages that discuss the philosophy of home schooling and provide curricular materials, lesson plans, activities, field trips, and information about college admissions. His list of individual and family home pages would be more useful if he did something more to distinguish one homepage from another than separate them into families, students, and graduates.

Other sections include a file of FAQs, lists of discussion groups, a pointer to site-listing conferences, links to general education and parenting resources, and a very limited list of "offline" resources. Shemitz only includes vendors who choose to pay to appear on his site.

Jon's Homeschool Resource Page does not link directly to curricular resources, but it is one of the most comprehensive and best organized of the ideologically "neutral" (i.e., no particular religious viewpoint) aggregator sites. It should serve the needs of parents who are exploring the idea of home schooling or already teaching their children at home.—*Mark Emmons, University of New Mexico*

**NewsTrawler.** Access: <http://www.newstrawler.com>.

"Meta" search engines allow librarians to search the Web efficiently by sending a search request to more than one engine at a time. NewsTrawler is a meta-search engine specializing in searching archives of Web news sources and a useful starting point for undergraduates looking for current news stories.

The site is based in Australia, which probably explains the site's preference for news sources from Asia. Of the 18 countries in the "publications by country" list, 9 are in that part of the world, while the Americas, Europe, and South Africa also appear. Many of the sites are not in English, which patrons should keep in mind when composing a search. Publications are also classified by "category," or type of publication, but the user should be aware that the publications listed as journals might merely

Sara Amato is automated systems librarian at Central Washington University; [samato@tahoma.cwu.edu](mailto:samato@tahoma.cwu.edu)

have "journal" in the title. In all, the NewsTrawler site covers around 200 news sources.

The simple search interface consists of a window to enter search terms, a drop-down list to choose the search's timeout limit, and another drop-down box that lets the user determine if images should be provided. There are no help screens, possibly because each news source treats a search differently. At the top of each publication's search results, which appear together as one long page, the user will see the search strategy as interpreted by that publication's search engine. In this way I determined that some of the sites treated an intended phrase search correctly, while others put "and" between each term.

One downside is the inability of users to know in advance whether they will have to pay to see a full article. Sometimes in the search



results a price appears next to an article summary, but occasionally a patron will click on an article with no

price listing, only to find that access to the site's archive requires payment of a subscription fee. The News-Trawler administrators might add a symbol to the publication title to indicate fee-based access.

NewsTrawler entered the Internet on June 27, 1998, and is still developing. The site administrators are very responsive to suggestions, generally responding to my e-mail messages within 24 hours. They are open to ideas for new publications and require only 15 minutes to add new sites.—*Heidi Senior, University of Portland; senior@up.edu*

**Policy.com.** Access: <http://www.policy.com>.

The Web provides access to a wide range of information on political and policy issues. Users may view official government sites plus those operated by organizations and individuals. Maintained by A2S2 Digital Products, Policy.com ranks among the better designed Web sites providing free access to data concerning current political and governmental topics.

Policy.com's main page contains three sections. The main section presents links to current news stories, daily briefing and issue

## Policy.com

The policy news & information service

of the week sections, information on the upcoming 1998 federal, state, and local elections, a special report section covering in detail one current issue, and a featured event area presenting Real-Time audio versions of speeches presented at policy forums.

During the period of site examination the site contained information on the proposed patients' bill of rights, the Social Security Reform Bill, the debate on race in American society, the upcoming elections in Ohio and North Carolina, and the Microsoft antitrust suit. Each section contains links to additional materials taken from government sources, the media, think tanks, and other sources. Echoing the site's efforts to gather information from a range of nongovernmental sources, one side section contains a listing of policy events occurring in the Washington, D.C. area.

A second side contains the site index, contents grouped in eight broad areas. The news, events, and issues of the week are listed first, followed by an issues' library containing archive materials. An interaction area allows users to discuss topics in various moderated policy chat groups, and the Virtual Congress area provides links to pending and past legislation and allows users to contact senators and legislators via e-mail. A student section contains links to college- and university-based publications and groups. The community section contains a well-selected list of think tanks, advocacy groups, associations, foundations, businesses, colleges and universities, U.S. and foreign government sites, international organizations, media organizations, and other related resources. Finally, the search section contains a site search engine and a text-only site index.

Combined with sites like Project Vote Smart, which concentrate on federal and state legislative action, Policy.com gives citizens a powerful tool for obtaining needed information on important issues facing the country. It provides an excellent balance for the evening news. This site is recommended for all varieties of academic libraries.—*Stephen L. Hupp, University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown; shupp@upj.pitt.edu.* ■