

ACEnet @ American Council on Education. Access: <http://www.acenet.edu/>.

The American Council on Education (ACE) serves as the coordinating higher education association for degree-granting colleges and universities and other education-related organizations in the United States. Established in 1918, the Council dedicates itself to the belief that equal educational opportunities and strong higher education systems are essential components of a democratic society. The Council works to represent the views of the higher education community.

The ACE Web site incorporates a wide range of information sources relating to education issues such as accreditation, minorities in higher education, financial aid for students, and distance learning. Located in Washington, D.C. the Council also provides up-to-date information on new legislation and policies that may affect colleges and universities.

Furthermore, several of the site's incorporated documents address some of the social and political aspects surrounding higher education. Documents include the reports from the President's Task Force on Education, investigations into the use of sweatshop labor for the production of college merchandise, and an outline of the Academic Excellence and Cost Management National Awards Program for institutions that strive to improve academic quality while containing costs. Many of the documents are provided in HTML format, but several PDF files are included.

Although ACE's mission statement indicates that the organization maintains both a domestic and international agenda, there is little information provided that is not directly related to education in the United States. The site is reasonably well organized, but it assumes that one is well informed of the activities of the Council. Individuals unfamiliar with ACE may find it most helpful to use the site index and search options to become acquainted with the site's content. The main site is updated daily, and most of its subdocuments are less than a year old.

ACEnet appears to be directed towards educators and administrators. The ACE mem-

bership is comprised of institutions rather than individuals, thus most of the information provided has value for institutional planners rather than individual instructors. This being said, there is some information included that would be of specific interest to individuals exploring their higher education opportunities. Specifically, there is one section devoted to adult learners which provides information about college training in workplace, General Education Development (GED) training and testing, and recommendations regarding college credit for military programs. Overall, the ACE Web site provides a good overview of ACE programs, political initiatives, and publications.—*Jennifer Cardwell, McMaster University, cardj@mcmaster.ca*

Anthology of Middle English Literature (1350-1485). Access: <http://www.luminarium.org/medlit/>.

The Anthology of Middle English Literature is a Web guide to online study materials on Middle English literature from 1350 to 1485. It covers nine important authors, texts, and genres, including Chaucer, Margery Kempe, Everyman, and medieval plays. In addition, there are essays, additional resources, and a bookstore. Each main section of the Anthology contains links to Web resources, biographical information, electronic versions of each text, and online essays and articles. Essays written by students are also included and are clearly marked. The section on Chaucer is by far the most extensive and well developed.

The Anthology is a part of a larger site, Luminarium, which also includes information on Renaissance and 17th-century literature. The site's author, Annina Jokinen, created Luminarium in 1996 because she found it difficult to locate online study materials while taking a survey class. This Web resource has

Joni R. Roberts is associate university librarian for public services and collection development at Willamette University, e-mail: jroberts@willamette.edu, and Carol A. Drost is associate university librarian for technical services at Willamette University, e-mail: cdrost@willamette.edu

been maintained and expanded over the past four years and the author indicates that she will continue to do so. The entire site can be searched by words or phrases.

Though the scope of the Anthology site is somewhat limited, it does include many of the authors and texts normally covered in introductory Middle English survey courses. Adding links to background information and other influential texts would further increase its usefulness and provide historical and cultural contexts for the texts. In addition, while the author notes that the site "is scholarly and aims for accuracy at all times," selection criteria are unclear.

Despite the black background on the main page, this site is very easy to navigate and has an attractive design with vivid, colorful images. One problem, however, is that whenever a main section page is accessed, a sound file tries to play. This causes error messages if the proper browser plug-in is not loaded. While these messages are easy to handle, it does affect the site's usability and can be frustrating for users.

As a whole, this Anthology would be a good guide for students in Middle English survey classes. It is especially useful for locating resources on Chaucer. While many items included on this site can be found other places on the Web, the Anthology does a good job of collecting materials that fit specifically within its narrow scope. It is definitely worth perusing.—*Nicole Campbell, Washington State University, campbell@vancouver.wsu.edu*

FirstGov.gov. Access: <http://www.firstgov.gov/>.

All levels of information seekers will want to know about FirstGov, a new, free U.S. government Web portal, launched September 2000. A project of the President's Management Council, FirstGov provides a single point of access to all federal government information posted on the Web. Finally, a simple, straightforward way to access just U.S. government information on the Web.

One can search FirstGov in several ways: by keyword or phrase searching; by browsing the Interesting Topics; or by selecting a branch of U.S. government or the state and local government information links. The

homepage is primarily text-based, and a simple navigational links bar appears at the top of every FirstGov Web page.

The Interesting Topics section offers users 16 general subject areas with links to related Web sites. For example, the Consumer Services and Safety section leads users to a page with Featured Links on Recalls and Complaints, as well as at least 25 Related Links on topics such as Automobile Safety and Recalls; Food, Drugs and Cosmetics Safety; and Food-borne Illnesses and Food Product Complaints. The Interesting Topics section is fairly intuitive and easy for users to browse, if they have a general sense of the information they are seeking.

The left side of the homepage offers several sections of useful links, starting with the Featured Subjects section, which allows FirstGov to highlight interesting and timely Web pages and feature new government sites.



The next section includes the three branches of the U.S. government. The state and local government information section includes links to economic data, military installations, national parks, a post office locator, and many other links to information and statistics organized by state. The section titled Your Feedback allows users to register complaints, report problems, or offer feedback to many agencies by topic or by the agency name itself. One can also submit feedback about the FirstGov Web site itself.

Page layouts are simple and clean, and graphics are kept to a minimum. Whether you are searching for crime statistics, for information on alternative medicine, or for the Secret Service Web site (who remembers that it's part of the Department of the Treasury?), this is the Web site for you. The site is a valuable resource for all reference librarians who may be searching for government information, and for all levels of users who may be searching for statistics, legislation, or consumer information.—*Caroline L. Gilson, Radford University, cgilson@radford.edu* ■