

## Hobby Information on the Web - a Hands-On Tutorial for SCLS Librarians and Their Patrons

**Note to librarians – instructions to the librarians are given in [square brackets and underlined] Links are blue but they are not really working links.**

As we frequently read and hear, the Internet is a wonderful source of information - a "virtual library." And for hobbyists of all kinds this especially rings true. The Internet has given hobbyists from around the world a place to share, to learn, to collect, and, of course, to buy. And just as there is a wide range of hobbies pursued, there is just as many hobby web sites to surf through. We will start by looking at hobbies in general - by looking at how some of the more familiar Internet directories handle hobbies - before we take a closer look at some popular hobbies -- books and reading, cooking, gardening and the Packers.

### **Web directories**

Many new Internet users are becoming familiar with the subject directories available through sites such as Google, Yahoo and others. If you are just starting out and are thinking about wading into the Internet to see what it has to offer you and your hobby, you can't go wrong - these are great places to begin your search. Eventually you won't need to use a web subject directory - your list of personal bookmarks will be your virtual library.

Among the best of the web directories are Yahoo and Google. Let's start with Yahoo. They have neatly categorized many of the more common hobbies on one page ([dir.yahoo.com/Recreation/Hobbies](http://dir.yahoo.com/Recreation/Hobbies)). Here you can see an alphabetical list of hobbies ranging from *Amateur and Ham Radio* to *Writing*. If you find your hobby here, click on the link and you will find yourself on another page of links. Let's use *Kites* as an example. Follow the

*kites* link and you now will see a pretty exhaustive list of resources - a couple of more specific subcategories (we see events relating to kites, kiting organizations, etc). We also see a list of Yahoo's most popular sites about Kites and finally an alphabetical list of all sites they have indexed for Kites. This is a pretty extensive place to start.

Google's library for hobbies is arranged quite differently and is not as friendly for the novice user. Instead of listing most hobbies under one category (as we saw on Yahoo) Google has them listed under several. If you look at the Google directory for recreation ([directory.google.com/Top/Recreation/](http://directory.google.com/Top/Recreation/)), you will find some hobbies listed (for example birding, collecting and trains). However you would have to visit their home category ([directory.google.com/Top/Home](http://directory.google.com/Top/Home)) to find sites on cooking. To further confuse things, you would want to be sure to visit the Arts > Crafts category ([directory.google.com/Top/Arts/Crafts](http://directory.google.com/Top/Arts/Crafts)) to see an exhaustive list of arts and crafts that may be your hobby.

The beauty of Google, however, is its search function. If you go to the main page for the Google Directory ([directory.google.com](http://directory.google.com)) and type in your hobby (let's use *Kites* again) we can see that there is a category of Recreation > Kites containing a nice list of subcategories. You should be off and flying now.

Before we take a look at few hobbies in more detail, I would like to mention a couple of specific resources for hobbyists that we don't want to miss. Traditionally hobbyist look to their special interest clubs, councils, societies, agencies and associations throughout the world for a broad range of resources. Internet searchers will be happy to find out that many of the hobby associations (like the "Japan Kite Association") now have web sites chock full of information. Google has arranged a nice subject directory for many hobby organizations

[directory.google.com/Top/Society/Organizations/Hobby\\_Interests](http://directory.google.com/Top/Society/Organizations/Hobby_Interests)) and it's worth a look just to see the VAST array of hobbies out there. And as a beginning Internet searcher, this might be just the place to start.

Another resource on the Internet that hobbyists and collectors will find especially useful is the numerous online publications that focuses on their special interest. Not only will a current issue be available but also among the other online resources included will be **discussion forums, store directories** and **classified ads**. Discussion forums are places on an Internet site where specific answers can be found to specific questions. It is also a great place to meet hobbyist with your particular interest. The Internet is also a place for hobbyists and collectors to shop. Store directories and classified ads on the Internet make shopping easier and locating unusual items on the web will be especially useful to you.

Let's keep these resources in mind as we take a closer look at some hobbies popular today.

## **Books and Reading**

*"I must say that I find television very educational. The minute somebody turns it on, I go to the library and read a book." ~ Groucho Marx*

Reading and book clubs are a popular hobby and the amount of materials available to readers on the Internet is astounding. When you are looking for something to read on a particular subject or, like many of us, you can't think of anything you might want to take on your beach

vacation, we look to our friends and families for suggestions. The Internet is now used as a companion to (and even a substitute for) the opinions of our loved ones.

To get readers started, we will talk about sites that are designed for people who love to read, whether you do it for personal pleasure or part of a book group. We will focus primarily on fiction resources; however many of the same resources are useful to readers interested in nonfiction and other genres.

If you are a book group looking for materials, be sure to see what Google has in their Arts > Literature > Reading Groups category - ([directory.google.com/Top/Arts/Literature/Reading\\_Groups](http://directory.google.com/Top/Arts/Literature/Reading_Groups)). Here are listed sites to aid book groups in choosing titles, designing discussions and the list provides links to selected book groups. As you may notice, some reading groups even have their own web sites! There is a particularly clever site called 'Mostly We Eat' that includes the menu for the evening's meeting - ([www.mostlyweeat.org](http://www.mostlyweeat.org)).

There are many web sites that contain book reviews. They are very familiar to readers in their print form: The New York Times Book review ([www.nytimes.com/pages/books/review/index.html](http://www.nytimes.com/pages/books/review/index.html)) is probably the most popular of book review providers. On the web site are archives from 1996, however only the last 7 days of material are free. You must register to use the site (it's free!) and pay to see the full text of articles older than 7 days.

The Boston Globe Book Reviews ([www.boston.com/globe/living/bookreviews](http://www.boston.com/globe/living/bookreviews)) is another print source that has reviews of popular books, as does the Chicago Tribune ([www.chicagotribune.com/features/booksmags](http://www.chicagotribune.com/features/booksmags)).

Many publishers are getting into the business of guiding reading groups. Random House ([www.randomhouse.com/resources/bookgroup/](http://www.randomhouse.com/resources/bookgroup/)), Simon and Schuster ([www.simonsays.com/Sections/Areas.cfm?AreaID=4](http://www.simonsays.com/Sections/Areas.cfm?AreaID=4)) and Harper Collins ([www.harpercollins.com/hc/readers](http://www.harpercollins.com/hc/readers)) are just a few. These are nice one-stop shopping for your book group as you plan your group activities - they usually have a nice list of possible discussion questions. We would be remiss if we didn't mention a site called Reading Group Guide ([www.readinggroupguides.com](http://www.readinggroupguides.com)) - it is one of the most exhaustive on the 'net and as it isn't related to one publisher so you can get guides for books from all publishers.

The African American Literature Book Club ([aalbc.com](http://aalbc.com)) lists their goal is "to increase everyone's knowledge of the diversity of African American literature, facilitate the exchange of opinions, satisfy your on-line book buying needs and serve as a resource and vehicle of expression for aspiring and professional writers."

A couple more of the myriads of other resources out there for book lovers are the Bookwire and Book Magazine. Bookwire ([www.bookwire.com](http://www.bookwire.com)) is Publisher's Weekly's site which offers links to numerous other sites as well as its own information including a section which allows you to search for bestsellers by author or keyword in title. This site features an extensive listing of author indexes.

Book Magazine ([www.bookmagazine.com](http://www.bookmagazine.com)) is a new periodical title (launched in 1998) and is a partner with Barnes and Noble. It is an entertainment magazine as well as a magazine about books. They claim to give you "the stories behind the stories on the shelf". In every issue, you'll find dozens of reviews—and they have also included interviews with authors, a list of what Hollywood is reading and some tips, recommendations and special coverage for book groups.

Many of the big bookstore chains have gotten into the business of recommending and reviewing books. Three of the big bookstore chains have useful sites for finding book titles and relating materials. Amazon ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)), Barnes and Noble ([www.barnesandnoble.com/bookbrowser](http://www.barnesandnoble.com/bookbrowser)) and Powells Bookstore in Portland, Oregon ([www.powells.com](http://www.powells.com)) all provide professional reviews as well as reader reviews. Amazon has moved into many areas of retail [you can shop for power tools and underwear at the same time as book buying] but the book reviews are still very useful. Barnes and Noble and Powells both stick more closely to books and also include reviews. All three sites are intuitive to use and a great place to look for specific titles.

Happy reading!

## **Cooking**

*Avoid fruits and nuts. You are what you eat. - Jim Davis*

Many of us are now using the Internet to find and share recipes. And what a great way to use technology! Instead of having papers, index cards, messy cookbooks and the like, chefs can find all they need online. Well, maybe. At the very least, the Internet can help the all types of culinary adventurers find new recipes to try.

When it comes to food, the focus is generally on recipes. There are Web Sites that cover recipes for all areas of cooking. A good starting place might be the Google directory ([directory.google.com/Top/Home/Cooking](http://directory.google.com/Top/Home/Cooking)) On this site you can see a range of culinary topics from *Appetizers* to *World Cuisines*. This is a good place to start if you are not sure what you want to serve at your next dinner party.

As we mentioned before, several print resources have moved their materials to the web and magazines we know in print now offer lovely web sites chock full of delicious information (and some nice photographs, too). Epicurious ([eat.epicurious.com](http://eat.epicurious.com)) comes to us from Conde Nast, published of Gourmet and Bon Appetit. The site claims +15,000 recipes so you might want to be familiar with their advanced search. The search for recipes box is a bit hard to find in the middle of the page. Let's try to see what they have for chicken recipes. If type in the term "chicken" only you will see almost 2400 recipes. However, if you use the advanced search button, you can add preparation requirements (say quick or slow cook) or you can add kid-friendly or low fat or all of those parameters at once!

Another place to look for delicious recipes, especially if you want to go for low fat, is the Cooking Light web site ([www.cookinglight.com/cooking](http://www.cookinglight.com/cooking)). Here you can put 'chicken' in the search box and you get almost 600 recipes and articles in return. Their search results are more streamlined than Epicurious - they come back categorized in a very useful scheme.

Global gourmet ([www.globalgourmet.com](http://www.globalgourmet.com)) is a site that profiles several new cookbooks a month and offers some recipes from each. The welcoming page includes an in-depth article on say, a particular spice or vegetable. From there, the site offers recipes from around the world.

Another site that is useful for the days you aren't sure what to serve for dinner is All Recipes.com ([www.allrecipes.com](http://www.allrecipes.com)). There is a 'recipe of the day' feature - something that comes in handy if you are the type of Internet user that likes to check in regularly. Another great feature on this site is the inclusion of member ratings. You can hear from chefs that have made the dish! This site tends to include more advertising. For some web surfers this can be a nuisance.

## Gardening

*Gardening requires lots of water - most of it in the form of perspiration - Lou Erickson*

Looking for gardening information on the Internet does not require a lot of perspiration. Narrowing down the information you find to relevant materials may take a bit of weeding through, however. There are many commercial sites for gardeners that serve an important role (if you wish to purchase a particular heirloom tomato, for example) but be cautious around them.

A great place to start your gardening research is with two national associations whose Web sites have been around for quite awhile: the American Horticulture Society ([www.ahs.org](http://www.ahs.org)) and the National Gardening Association ([www.garden.org](http://www.garden.org)). The American Horticultural Society has been in existence since 1922 and its mission "is to educate and inspire people of all ages to become successful and environmentally responsible gardeners by advancing the art and science of horticulture. AHS is known for its educational programs and the dissemination of horticultural information." Especially useful on this site is the *Gardening Connections and Links/Resources* section ([www.ahs.org/horticulture\\_internet\\_community/index.htm](http://www.ahs.org/horticulture_internet_community/index.htm)) - an excellent list of links to plant specific associations, international resources, zoos and arboreta, and specific gardening topics. The NGA site is a more commercial site with an extensive Garden Shop, selling "products with a mission." Purchasing products through NGA funds their educational mission.

Organic gardening has become popular in recent years and there are several sites containing a wealth of materials. *Organic Gardening* magazine (now called *OG*) from Rodale Publishing

supports an Internet site as a companion to their magazine ([www.organicgardening.com](http://www.organicgardening.com)).

Much of the site is free including probably the most useful resource - the discussion forums (more on those later). However to read the current issue online you will need to subscribe to the magazine. Don't be afraid to check out the site -- there is a wealth of information that is free.

For the US Environmental Protection Agency's take on organic gardening, check out their Green Acres site ([www.epa.gov/greenacres](http://www.epa.gov/greenacres)). It comes from the Great Lakes region of EPA and they have a strong collection of information on landscaping with native plants, including prairie plants.

Many gardeners enjoy sharing their experiences with their children or grandchildren. There are several good sites to give you some ideas on kid appropriate activities. The kids gardening section of the National Gardening site ([www.kidsgardening.com](http://www.kidsgardening.com)) is especially strong in materials for teachers and schools. There is a section of materials for families to share (What is an herb? is asked here) and lists creative projects for the family to share.

KinderGARDEN ([aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/kindergarden/kinder.htm](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/kindergarden/kinder.htm)) is originally from Texas A&M University and has a special page dedicated to "Tips for Gardeners working with Kids [[last option on this page](#)]. One of the best tips is GETTING DIRTY IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF GROWING UP. Important advice for all!

## **Discussion Groups**

Discussion groups are an awesome resource for gardeners, especially when a gardener needs a specific answer to a specific problem. Here are two excellent examples of discussion forums

(among many, of course). [Be sure to read the instructions on how to use the forum first - etiquette is important!] It is fun to post the same question in two places and see what replies you get.

GardenWeb Forums - ([forums.gardenweb.com/forums](http://forums.gardenweb.com/forums))

Better Homes & Gardens Discussion Groups -  
([www.bhg.com/bhg/category.jhtml?catref=cat240013#](http://www.bhg.com/bhg/category.jhtml?catref=cat240013#) )

If you are a gardener, finding resources about gardening for your region is essential and we are fortunate to have the renowned experts at University of Wisconsin to assist us. The first place for Wisconsin gardeners to surf to is the University of Wisconsin-Extension, Urban Horticulture Web site ([www.uwex.edu/ces/wihort](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/wihort)). This site bills itself as the "most complete source of horticulture information for Wisconsin on the Internet" and it's true! It is a very easy to use site and is arranged by topic. There is a monthly gardening calendar, Garden Facts (answers to common issues facing Wisconsin gardeners) and some practical hints on how to manage a lawn in our state. This is a must stop for Wisconsin gardeners.

Another good source comes from Wisconsin Public Television's program *The Wisconsin Gardener* - ([www.wpt.org/garden](http://www.wpt.org/garden)), a self-proclaimed "hands-in-the-dirt approach to gardening in Wisconsin." They have an excellent set of links to more information, including such resources as the University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension, Dept. of Plant Pathology, Plant Disease Diagnostics Clinic ([www.plantpath.wisc.edu/pddc/](http://www.plantpath.wisc.edu/pddc/)). This clinic "provides assistance in identifying plant diseases and provides educational information on plant diseases and their control." Here you find the instructions on how the clinic can help you identify what plant disease you are dealing with and how to manage it. Also on this site are factsheets of the more common diseases.

One last UW resource worth mention is Extension's InfoSource on Garden and Landscape ([www.uwex.edu/disted/infosrce/garden.html](http://www.uwex.edu/disted/infosrce/garden.html)) The well-researched fact sheets provide here are full of practical and current information.

## **Sports - Football**

*"Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall." - Vince Lombardi*

Cheese, cows and the Green Bay Packers are synonymous with Wisconsin. Watching Packer football on TV and, if you are lucky, heading to Lambeau field for a game have been highlights for many Wisconsin residents for years. But following the Packers has also moved to the Internet. An excellent place to start is the official web site of the Packers ([www.packers.com](http://www.packers.com)). The site lists their schedule, roster, statistics on Lambeau field, and even a 360-degree video tour of the stadium. And of course there is the pro shop where you can buy your very own Packer mousepad, barstool or sweatshirt.

There are several other unofficial Packers web sites worth mentioning ([www.packersnews.com/index2.shtml](http://www.packersnews.com/index2.shtml)), ([www.packernet.com](http://www.packernet.com)) ([packers.theinsiders.com](http://packers.theinsiders.com)) and ([www.pacfan.com](http://www.pacfan.com)). The list goes on.

If you dare be a fan of another team, the NFL offers a complete site for all the teams in the league. ([www.nfl.com](http://www.nfl.com)). Just as on the Packer site, you can get official gear for all 32 teams in the league. Be cautious if you are lucky enough to get a ticket to Lambeau.