

# E-researching in the History classroom

Susanne Popp (University of Augsburg)

Presentation at the MIH-conference, University of  
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*Computer Based Tools for Learning in a Multicultural Perspective*  
*14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011 in Salamanca*

## **E-researching in the History classroom**

### **Outline**

Introduction

Minimal standards of e-research in the History classroom

Work steps in the classroom

Searching, collecting and evaluating the information in  
the internet

Working on the information

Communicating via internet

Collecting and presenting the results

Conclusion: European relevance of e-researching in the  
History classroom: MIH

# Introduction



"I finished my homework, and half my college freshman courses."

# Minimal standards of e-research in the History classroom

Students should - step by step – learn to understand:

where knowledge of the past is coming from (concept of evidence)

what the difference between primary and secondary sources is

why the primary sources are testimonies of the past – and not the past itself

why complete references to information sources are indispensable

why there is (in most questions) no absolutely certain information about the past and why there is no single historical truth

why there are many different accounts to one and the same historical topic

# Fundamentals about historical sources and accounts

## **Primary source**

The most common definition of a primary source (text, pictorial and material documents) is that which is produced in the time period of the past we are dealing with. In the classroom there can be original sources (seldom!) or reproduced sources (also via internet).

## **Secondary source**

The most common definition of a secondary source is an historical account with an interpretation of the past based on primary sources. They are not from the past but about the past

## **[Tertiary Source]**

Sometimes the term "tertiary sources" is used for collections of primary and secondary sources (e.g. internet)

## **Possible functions of historical accounts**

- | Research based information
- | Popular scientific account
- | Entertainment
- | Imagination
- | Ideology and political propaganda

## Work step 1: Searching, collecting and evaluating the information in the internet

Searching , collecting, selecting and evaluating information

Critical evaluation of the information

- Historical source or historical account? What type of historical source? What type of account (scientific, popular, entertainment ...)?
- Is there any information about the author? About his (ideological, political, social, cultural ...) background? About his knowledge and expertise?
- What type of primary sources does the author use? What type of secondary sources? Are the references done carefully, especially regarding the iconic documents?
- What do the discussion and versions tell about the reliability of a (wikipedia-)article?
- Comparing the internet information with other information (textbook, printed encyclopedia, other internet information) – what is the result? Are there controversial topics?

wiki <http://www.wikibu.ch/> (internet-toolkit to support the evaluation of Wikipedia-articles)

Social bookmarking (zB Mister Wong): structuring of collected links by using conceptual keywords (b) evaluation / ranking of the links

## Work step 2: Working on the information

Basic introduction about the background and the problems of historical information in the internet

Producing **timelines** and connecting the information with it

→ Re-construction the historical context of information about the past; historical coherence against historical fragmentation

→ Free online-tools ("xtimeline", ligne du temps); integration of pictorial documents, maps, videos ....

**Graphic reconstruction** of the main idea of the information

Coping the challenge **of pictorial sources** and illustration in the internet: comparing; creative manipulating of pictures to get aware of the possibility to manipulate iconic information

Working with maps from the past and about the past

→ Google maps → producing thematic maps ("stepmap", "uMapper", virtual tours, historical 3D-models in google earth)

## Work step 3: Communicating via internet (chat, videoconferences)

### **Expert interviews from the History classroom**

(text chat, audio chat, Skype)

### **International history partnerships and projects: Looking at the same topic by a variety of lenses**

→ MIH : Looking to the same European historical topic from different national and regional point of views

Starting from different (national) didactical materials and textbooks and internet information, comparing commonalities and differences, discussing and explaining the differences, producing a common version with historical sources from all partners

- > Insight in the perspecitivity of historical accounts
- > Insight in the differences and commons of historical experience in Europe



## Work step 4: Presenting the results

Reflecting the work process from the beginning to the results

Presentation of the results together with the historical sources used and a time line in power point ...

Discussing – if possible – the results with international partners or experts via chat, weblog ....

## Conclusion: European relevance of e-researching in the History classroom: MIH

Importance of e-research activity in the History classroom as part of media competence in the age of internet and web 2,0

Importance of creating European platforms for dealing with European wide history topics → dialogue and mutual understanding

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