



Smithsonian
National Museum of Natural History

SELECTED WEB RESOURCES ON THE MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East is a large region stretching from Morocco in the west through Pakistan in the east and from Turkey in the north to the Gulf of Aden in the south. This diverse region includes many people of different ethnic backgrounds, sets of beliefs and ways of life. The following list of annotated websites will touch on that diversity, but emphasizes the religion of Islam and the Muslim people who practice it. Once again, the Internet provides teachers and students alike with access to primary sources and teaching/study materials not often available in schools or even smaller colleges and universities. Below are some examples:

General Resources

Middle East Studies Internet Resources

(<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/mideast/cuvlm>) Compilation of resources by subject specialists at Columbia University. Gateway to a large number of sites with information about Islam, Middle East, and North Africa, covering historical and current events. Organized by region, country, and subject. Also includes sections on images and graphics, news sources, electronic journals, and newspapers.

Library of Congress Country Studies (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html>) Online versions of books previously published in print between 1988 to 1998 by LC's Federal Research Division. Each study includes a description and analysis of a country's historical setting and its social, economic, and political systems and institutions. Check out the "Research Completed" data at the beginning of each study to verify timeliness. See also the 2001 volumes of **The World Fact book** (<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>), a somewhat similar series produced by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

Internet Islamic History Sourcebook

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/islam/islamsbook.html>)

Great site with a large number of links to Islamic history as well as some art, religion, and culture. Organized chronologically beginning with pre-Islamic Arab world and continuing to modern times and events. Includes primary source material (much in translation), secondary articles, reviews, and topical discussions, and other web sites and resources. A part of Paul Halsall's **Internet History Sourcebook Project**.

LookLex Encyclopedia, originally known as Cias Encyclopedia of the Orient, (<http://looklex.com/contact/about.htm>) focuses on media relating to North Africa and the Middle East. Format offers reference material organized into an encyclopaedia, traveller's guides to the North African countries and a basic language course in Arabic.

ABZU: Guide to Resources for the Study of the Ancient Near East Available on the Internet (<http://www.etana.org/about>) An excellent gateway to a vast array of exciting sites on this topic.

Teaching Strategies/Resources

Teaching Islamic Civilization with Information Technology

(<http://www.albany.edu/jmmh/vol1no1/teach-islamic.html>) Published in the *Journal of MultiMedia History* 1(1), Fall 1998 by Professor Corinne Blake. A critical review and selection of primary materials on the Internet and on CD-ROM for teaching Islamic civilization and a discussion of methods and issues related to incorporating them into courses. Includes sections on the religion of Islam, Islamic literature, Islamic art and architecture, and miscellaneous tools (maps, etc.).

Islam for Children (<http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/carolrb/islam/islamintro.html>) A clearly written and well illustrated presentation of Islam, Muhammad, the Qur'an, the Five Pillars of Islam, festivals, mosques, Islamic art, family and daily life, etc. Part of the RE Agreed Syllabus for Oxfordshire, England students learning about world religions. See also **Islam UK** (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/index.shtml>), produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation for a concise introduction aimed at an older group. For advanced students and teachers, see Professor Godlas' **Islamic Studies, Islam, Arabic and Religion** (<http://islam.uga.edu/>), a scholarly overview with links to a variety of other sites, including September 11 and its aftermath.

A number of teaching videos have companion websites with lesson plans, activities and the like. Among these are: **Islam: Empire of Faith** (<http://www.pbs.org/empires/islam/>), which accompanies the PBS video series by same title and **Meet Sa'ud** (<http://islamicunitstudies.wordpress.com/2009/10/23/meet-saud/>), which accompanies *Young Voices from the Arab World: The Lives and Times of Five Teenagers*. Videos available at sites.

Middle East Center <https://www.sas.upenn.edu/mec/resources/freematerials> Teaching modules and pamphlets on Arabs, Islam, Muslims, and the Arab language.

Art and Culture. The material culture of the Middle East and of Islam is rich and varied and has a strong aesthetic appeal for many. A clear, concise introduction to Islamic art and architecture is offered at the BBC website (<http://www.bbc.co.uk>). Once at the site, type "Islamic art" in the search box in the upper right hand corner. Also look at **Islamic Art** through the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (http://www.lacma.org/islamic_art/intro.htm) and at its architecture, calligraphy, coins, and oriental rugs as explained by the Islamic Arts and Architecture Organization (<http://www.islamicart.com/index.html>). **Islamic Belief Made Visible** (<http://asiasociety.org/countries/religions-philosophies/islamic-belief-made-visual>) looks at the geometric patterns in Islamic art to gain insight into the culture.

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In the Encyclopedia Smithsonian there is a reading list about Islamic art, including topics such as architecture, ceramics, metal-work, painting and calligraphy and textiles (www.si.edu/Encyclopedia_SI/freersac/islamart.htm). The Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery provide overviews and gallery guides to the Islamic world <http://www.asia.si.edu/explore/listByArea.asp?browseTopic=3>

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