
Ron Vale, Howard Hughes Institute investigator and professor at the University of California-San Francisco (UCSF), has been on a mission since 2006 to make the knowledge and techniques of modern biology available and approachable to students, educators, researchers, and others interested in these topics through open access videos. Advanced high school students certainly could take advantage of these videos, but so could a researcher wanting to learn a new technique, an undergraduate preparing a scientific presentation, or a middle school student wondering what it would be like to be a scientist. Librarians would find these resources useful for understanding the scientific process in the many areas of modern biology research. The growing list of over 300 videos is divided into three easy-to-navigate categories: iBioSeminars, iBioMagazine, and iBioEducation.

In the iBioSeminars, world-renowned scientists discuss their own research on topics such as “Cancer & Medicine,” “Genetics & Gene Regulation,” “Plant Biology,” and “Neuroscience.” During the one-hour seminars, the researchers discuss the scientific process as it unfolded in their work and in their collaboration with others. Their enthusiasm for their research is infectious as they share the historical perspective of their work, explain how new techniques enabled their research to advance, and discuss the potential for new applications to develop.

iBioMagazine is a collection of short videos including “Careers,” “Discoveries,” and “How I Became a Scientist,” which feature the human side of research. The importance of serendipity in the discovery of SNURPs (small nuclear ribonucleoproteins) in 1977 is discussed in a ten-minute video by the discoverer, Joan Steitz. One of the career stories from Bruce Alberts at UCSF, “Learning From Failure,” is an important lesson for any discipline. Other videos include the importance of scientists contributing to Wikipedia and the story of an astronaut competing on the TV show, Survivor.

iBioMagazine publishes new videos quarterly.

iBioEducation is for educators and requires registration to access the comprehensive discussion questions and assignments that supplement the iBioSeminars, including a flipped cell biology course originally designed for senior undergraduate biology majors at the University of California-Davis in 2013.

iBiology is highly recommended not only as a resource to introduce research in modern biology, but also as a way to see the human side of science.—Carol McCulley, Linfield College, cmccull@linfield.edu


Created by the Oregon Historical Society, this site offers a selection of essays, photographs, and primary sources that provide a view of Oregon history as told by participants and observers of the events described.

A row of navigation buttons is located near the top of the page and lead to a variety of resource types. “Narratives” takes the researcher to a collection of essays written by scholars of Oregon’s history and culture that cover the state’s regions and the forces that helped form them. Topics range from “Commerce, Climate, and Community: A History of Portland and Its People” to “Nature and History in the Klamath Basin.”

The “Teachers” tab leads to a page that provides teacher’s guides, including lesson plans, interpretive essays, and expert pages that list specialists in areas like cartography, archaeology, and anthropology. “Biographies” provides personal histories of key, as well as lesser known, individuals from Oregon history, with listings both alphabetical and chronological.
“Timeweb” is a set of interactive timelines that allow the user to create by era, spotlight, or featured record. “Historic Viewer” has selected images and maps that allow users to compare the changes over time, say, of Indian lands in Oregon, or the Portland skyline.

“Permissions” leads to information about crediting the use of sources and shows examples of how to cite pages; “Feedback” provides contact information for comments and questions. A “Search” option is provided, as well.

Images arranged in the middle of the page lead to featured documents, as does the page’s central image. There are 867 of these “Historic Records” and they include primary documents such as newspapers, manuscripts, maps, and art. The downside of this arrangement is that although some individual documents are directly accessible from the homepage through the featured images, there is no labeling as such, and to access the full list, you either need to use the search function or backup from the particular image selected, using the breadcrumb trail to access the complete list of documents.

This is a small complaint when considering the wealth of resources contained on this website. This is a valuable resource for those doing research in Oregon history and related studies and is highly recommended for a general audience as well as to students from middle school onward.—Ford Schmidt, Willamette University, fschmidt@willamette.edu


The Digital Archaeological Record (tDAR) is an amazingly rich resource that librarians can point students to for archeological projects, datasets, images, documents, etc. Housed at Arizona State University, tDAR is an international repository for the digital records of archaeological investigations and is governed by Digital Antiquity, a collaborative nonprofit organization dedicated to “ensuring the long-term preservation of irreplaceable archaeological data and to broadening the access to these data.” There is a fee to upload records to the database, but there is no cost to use the database. The database has more than 382,000 records, and new records are being added weekly. The majority of records are documents and citations, but there are thousands of images and hundreds of coding sheets, projects, datasets, etc. The University Press of Colorado provides full-text access to many of their archaeological publications, and the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology have included datasets with their publications.

Users can search the site in different ways: “Search,” “Browse,” and “Explore.” To get a sense of the range of records in tDAR, start with “Explore.” The map in “Explore” shows the countries represented the most (to get a full sense of what is included by country, do a country search) and graphs show the decades covered. You can also explore by different types of archeological investigation, sites and material, or by cultural term.

The search feature allows you to take full advantage of the site. You can search by resource, name of collection, and name of institution or researchers (person) involved in the investigation. The browse feature is a bit trickier for novices. All search results provide useful filtering tools on the left side, where you can see the number of records associated with each type of resource.

By registering and getting a username and password (free of charge), it is much easier to download documents, images, datasets, etc. Using their data integration tool it is possible to combine two or more disparate datasets into a single, new dataset. The resulting dataset can be easily downloaded and fed into SASS, SPSS, or R for analysis.

With its many useful tutorials and help sections, the archaeological information in tDAR is a rich resource for students.—Susanne K. Clement, Utah State University, susanne.clement@usu.edu