

Primary Mathematics
Spring 1999 volume 3 Issue No. 1

Using the World Wide Web for Teaching Primary Mathematics Part 5 Surfing The Net

by Malcolm Sanders, Deputy Headteacher, Gunter
Primary School, Birmingham.



The **M** *Mathematical*
Association

©1999 The Mathematical Association, 259 London Road,
Leicester, LE2 3BE.

SURFING THE NET

[Please note comments on security for this section - see part one of this series of articles].

With a good search-engine you can find just about anything you want to know about on the Internet, (and quite a lot that you don't want to know about!). It can be used for any school project by entering the right key words into the search - children need to know how to do this.

Example project on holidays:

A Year 5 class considered where they wished to visit, e.g. France, Blackpool.... By entering in their selected resort as the first key word, they were able to download maps, tourist information, places to visit, places to stay.....

How to get there. The preferred method of travel was searched, e.g.

<http://www.eurail.on.ca/railsched.htm>

This site provides rail timetables for all of Europe including national and international times, routes & fares. For Birmingham to Lyon (our twin city) :

Birmingham, New Street to Lyon, Part Dieu		
Changes	Depart	Arrive
2	23:09	16:00
2	08:45	19:10
4	09:35	20:07

This is far more realistic than standard text book exercises on reading timetables.

Just about every airport now has its own web site. Birmingham comes under the code BHX :

BirminghamBHX to Lyon (Satolas)			
Airline	Flight No.	Time	Days
B.A.	BA8300	0900	MTuWThFSa
B.A.	BA8300	1335	Su

The durations of the travel options were compared, the children realised that waiting times at airports had to be added on from their own experiences. The costs were also compared.

Currency rates for holidays abroad were considered using a very simple 'money converter' :

<http://www.towerofbabel.com/moneyconverter/>

Money Converter	
1000	ESP Spanish Pesetas
	Compute
4.18	GBP British Pounds

Other sites were also researched, such as the costs of holiday packages in comparison to do-it-yourself.

By the end of the project, each group of children had visited no more than about ten sites in order to gain all of the mathematical (and other) information on which to work. Some children also visited other sites which yielded nothing, but looked interesting. They certainly enjoyed

the activity and especially the sense of independence they had in conducting their own lines of research.

Throughout the project I kept a careful watch over the sites visited by the children as I am not yet convinced about the effectiveness of the security provided by the ISP. There was also a tendency for the children to be side-tracked, e.g. when looking for airline prices they discovered an on-line shopping service, and this led to an on-line toy-store with a range of teddy-bears - irresistible for them! [It was not just the children who got distracted from the main task. I ended up booking my Summer holiday through one of the sites they visited!].

Was the project worthwhile? I believe so - it certainly interested the class and even when viewing other sites they were looking at prices, (in dollars) making comparisons to UK currency, reading for information, learning about the WWW..... Like any other open-ended project a close supervision has to be maintained by the teacher to ensure that learning continues and set tasks are completed.