LifeSteps

Using the Internet for...

Art

www.lifesteps.ie

Using the Internet for **Art**

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Clare County Library.

Lifesteps offers you a range of online and printed guides. Written by staff from Irish public libraries, each guide contains easy to follow, step by step explanations of how to use the Internet to achieve a specific goal or 'life step.'

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For updates, news on the project and for a full listing of all the guides, log on to *www.lifesteps.ie*

You can contact the Lifesteps team at *lifesteps@librarycouncil.ie*

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Introduction

This guide will help you to discover what art is available on the Internet. It will show you how to access art online, how to follow links to find sites of relevance and interest, how to locate the collections of galleries and museums around the world, how to find the work of particular artists, and even how to buy art and art-related products on the Internet. It will also include a section outlining some of the online art resources that are available for children.

Why look at art online?

While it is impossible to beat the experience of standing directly in front of a piece of art, looking at art online allows you to see a huge variety of works located all around the world. It allows you to sign up for online art newsletters that will keep you informed of current events in contemporary art. For children there are interactive art activities as well as educational sites.

What art is available online?

Almost any type of art that you can think of can be seen on the Internet. You can take a virtual tour of the Musée du Louvre or view the construction of a Tibetan Sand Mandala on the Smithsonian Institute website. You can watch an interactive web interview with Tracey Emin on the Tate website, or buy Aboriginal Art direct from the artists.

What art-products are available online?

Almost every art-related item you can imagine is available online – it is just a question of finding it. You can buy original artworks, copies of artworks, posters of artworks, parodies of artworks, teapots, socks and every conceivable kind of object embellished with artworks, art supplies for creating your own artworks, art-books, art journals, art magazines, art games, art jigsaws – the list is endless.

What resources are available online for children?

There are many websites or sections of websites devoted to art-based activities for children, which are usually fun and educational. There is art-related software for children that you can download for free, and often printable downloads.

Need to Know

A basic familiarity with the Internet and PC is required. Also, given the vast amount of art available online, you should have some idea of what you want to look at.

Need to Have

1. Some sites that you look at may require you to download a Plug-in such as Macromedia Flash, Shockwave or QuickTime. These allow designers and developers to integrate video, text, audio, and graphics into the website. They are available as free downloads – you will usually be directed to click a button which will download the appropriate plug-in onto your computer.
2. Some sites, particularly those for children, will have printable downloads; these are often in a PDF format. These are read with Acrobat Reader which is also available as a free download.
3. If your monitor is set on 256 colours, the graphics on many sites will probably look terrible. If possible, increase the number of colours to thousands or millions of colours. This can be done by clicking on **Start > Settings > Control Panel > Display > Settings**.

In Colours make sure that True Colour is highlighted as shown.

Related Guides

Internet Basics covers the **Need to Know** requirements for this guide.

Using the Internet for… Shopping will assist you if you wish to buy art or art supplies online.

Quick Guide

The following are the most important steps to looking at art online:

- Decide what it is that you want to see online – identify the name of an artist, a style of art, a gallery or even a country.
- Take keywords from your selection and type them into your browser.
- Scroll through the results that your search engine brings up until you find one that looks appropriate. Use the homepage of the site to see what material is available on that site.
- When you find a site that you like, always check out their links. These will often take you to interesting related sites that you might not otherwise find.
- When you find a site that you like, use the tools of your browser to add it to your bookmark or favorites.
- If you type 'art online' into your search engine you will find a number of sites that serve as portals, with links to most of the major cultural institutions of the world.

Step by Step Guide

This section of the guide focuses on searching for art on the Internet, using the Mona Lisa as an example. We will, first of all, look for information about the painting – the historical context and modern interpretations. We will then look at art-based activities for children, stemming from the Mona Lisa. This guide will also show you how to find Mona Lisa related products that can be purchased online as well as other art-related items.

Step 1: **What do you want to see?**

The primary means of accessing art online is through a search engine such as Google or Yahoo. Typing the word 'art' into Google will bring up a list of more than 300,000,000 possible sites! With a subject as broad as art, it is useful to narrow down your search through the use of keywords. Narrowing down your search through the use of appropriate keywords is the most challenging aspect of looking at art online.

Step 2: **Finding the right site.**

Once you have decided that you want to find out more about the Mona Lisa, type 'Mona Lisa' into Google. This generates a list a list of several million different results.

While this is a huge list of results, many of those listed on the first page (results page) look interesting [which is not always the case!]

Once you get a results page, it is very important to read the information under the headline and the name of the website you are being directed to. These can give you clues to the relevance of the site and can save you the frustration of waiting for a site to load, only to discover that it is of no interest to you.

One of the results listed has the headline 'WebMuseum', which suggests something substantial, and the information below the headline clearly refers to the subject of the original painting.

The name of the site www.ibiblio.org is not necessarily familiar, but on the basis of the headline and the information provided, it seems worth a visit.

Step 3: **What to look for on Relevant Sites.**

Clicking on the result has brought us to this page, which has information about the painting and provides us with a number of links. In this text, these are the pieces of underlined blue script. We can follow the link to the **Renaissance**, which will give us a sense of the historical context of the work. Also, when the cursor moves across the small image it changes to a hand, so clicking on the image brings us to a much larger version of the painting.

Step 4: **Using links.**

As well as internal links, many sites have a page of links to other sites, and these external links are an invaluable tool, bringing you to pages you might never reach through a search engine. Having explored WebMuseum, we have not come upon a page of external links. So, using the Back button to take us to our original search page, we can scroll further down the list of results, where we find the following link:

Having looked at the painting and the historical context, this seems to offer a new range of options. In this case, we are interested in accessing the versions of the Mona Lisa by other artists indicated in the text. While the design of the homepage is basic, the content – and particularly the links – is very quirky and interesting.

The Mona Lisa Home page, with links.

By clicking on **Go to List of Images** (at the very bottom of the page) we can see everything from a Mona Lisa made of toast...

...to a computer-generated 'morph'.

However, we do not find versions by other artists, so through the Back button we can look at our list of results again. Mona Lisa Mania (www.monalisamania.com) brings us to this homepage;

This page looks like fun – Mona Art also sounds promising, and indeed it is!

Here you can find a huge store of images by other artists, from recent art history to more contemporary works, advertisements, cartoonists – it is exactly what we want.

Step 5: **Bookmarking a page.**

Since this is such a good site, we will bookmark it. Depending on the browser that you are using, you will find a tool to mark the page. In Internet Explorer the tool to use will be **Favorites**.

In Netscape or Firefox that tool is called **Bookmark**. You will find this in the toolbar at the top of the screen. Whenever you want to return to this page, you simply click on **Bookmark**, scroll down through the list and click on the entry for this page.

Online Art Resources for Children

Almost all of the major cultural institutions, galleries and museums have children's sections on their website. These are loaded with fun educational activities and ideas for rainy days. There are also many sites dedicated specifically to children's art and art activities. As with all art-related activities online, the search can be the most challenging part.

Type in 'art activities for kids mona lisa' into Google search box again [keeping to our Mona Lisa theme]. One of the results takes us to a site called Scribbles Kids Art;

This site contains really good art activities for children, some related to the Mona Lisa and others based on the work of artists.

Amongst the many interesting things on this site is a page of Free Downloads. Click on this link, which is on the left-hand side of the page.

These are drawing/art programmes for children that will be available for use offline once you download them.

Click back until you have our results page on your screen again. Another listing is www.kidsdr.com.

This is a fantastic list of links to all kinds of sites relevant to children, not just art links. Another site is **The @rtroom** (www.arts.ufi.edu/art/rt–room).

There is enough material here to keep children going for an entire wet weekend! A visit to the sitemap (using the link at the bottom of the homepage) brings us to a Mona Lisa gallery (mona lisa gallery listed under @rtifacts) –

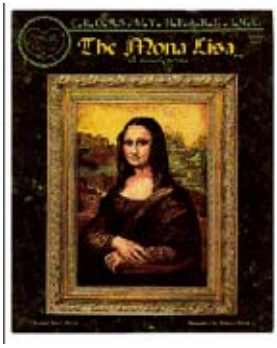
– in the @rchives there is a list of @rtroom's favourite 100 sites for children (e.g. screenshot below), with links! Not to mention all kinds of art projects.

Once again, you will find that following links can bring you to some fantastic sites.

Buying Art and Art Supplies Online

Our searches have already brought us to sites with links to Mona Lisa related products for sale. These products include facsimiles of the Mona Lisa painted on canvas, posters of the Mona Lisa and versions of the Mona Lisa, and, just for fun;

teapots, ties, socks, light-up pillows and even...



...a Mona Lisa Cross Stitch Sampler!

If you are interested in buying original art online you probably won't be able to buy the Mona Lisa! However, there is plenty of art available – just remember that images, in terms of scale, surface quality and colour on the web can be very misleading. You should ensure that you are buying from a site that has a returns policy. Art supplies and art books are also available in abundance – in fact, any kind of art-related product you can imagine is probably available online. However, before you buy anything online, it is worth reading the Lifesteps guide Using the Internet for…Shopping (also available at in your local library and on www.lifesteps.ie), and remember, the old adage 'Buyer Beware' also applies to art.

Exploring the Collections of Museums and Galleries Online

The Mona Lisa is housed in the Musée du Louvre in Paris. You can type 'Louvre' into your search engine and follow the links to view many of the works in that vast collection. This is true of nearly all of the major museums and galleries.

A wonderful starting place for an exploration such as this, is a site called the Virtual Libraries Museum Page [VLmp] which is supported by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) at: http://vlmp.icom.museum.
This site has direct links to many of the major art institutions of the world.

The site www.art-online.com also has excellent links to the institutions of the world and many other resources as well.

Once you find sites that you like, don't forget to bookmark those pages and explore any links you find on these sites.

Glossary

Back/Forward: Buttons in most browsers' Tool Button Bar, upper left. BACK returns you to the document previously viewed. FORWARD goes to the next document, after you go BACK.

Bookmarks/Favorites: The Bookmarks/Favorites option allows you to record web pages that you found useful and or that you visit regularly. You can then go directly to the chosen site next time you use the Internet, by clicking on the Bookmarks/Favorites button and choosing the relevant site. This serves as a shortcut, as it saves you having to enter the website address everytime you wish to visit that site.

Browser: A computer program, running on the human user's PC, which gets information from Web servers and displays it on the screen. These instructions are usually in the computer language HTML.

Download: The process of copying a computer file from the Internet onto your own PC is called downloading. A file such as a music (MP3) file or a document is made available to the Internet by storing it on a server. To download the file, you usually click on a link to it, or else right-click and choose 'Save target as' (in Internet Explorer) or 'Save link as' (Mozilla Firefox). A box pops up asking you where on your hard disk you want to store the file; you choose the location for storage, click the button and file is copied onto your hard disk (or downloaded).

Homepage: The main or introductory page of a website.

Interactive: **(e.g. Discussion Boards, Nurse 24/7)**
Services that the user can respond to or change.

Internet: A large collection of computers, connected together to allow them to share information with one another.

Keywords: A word or words used by a search engine in its search for relevant Web pages. The user must try to identify the words most likely to produce relevant Web pages; these become the keywords when typed into the search engine.

Links: A link, or hyperlink, is a part of a web page that, if clicked with a mouse, opens a different web page. Links are usually shown in blue and underlined on a web page.

Online: A word used as shorthand for 'on the Internet' or 'connected to the Internet'.

PDF Format: **(Portable Document Format)**
A PDF is a type of computer file (in the same way that an MP3 or a Microsoft Word file is a type of file), which is commonly used on the Internet for presenting documents. PDFs are excellent for printing out – a printed PDF generally looks much better than a printed (HTML) Web page. PDFs are thus mainly used for material which the user is expected to print out (such as Government forms, brochures, reports), rather than material which is meant to be viewed online. PDFs require a specific piece of software, a PDF viewer, to be viewed and printed out. By far the most common PDF viewer is Adobe Acrobat, which is available for free online.

Plug-in: A (usually small) piece of software that adds features to a larger piece of software. Common examples are Flash player and Shockwave, used to view video files

Results Page: This is the page of results displayed by your search engine in response to the keywords you have typed in.

Search Engine: A program running on a web server computer which creates and maintains a directory of web pages on the Internet. The engine has a web page with a form; you type in words describing what you are looking for; the engine looks up its directory and sends back a list of web pages that it thinks will fit your search criteria.

Web: Also called the WWW or the World Wide Web. A service that sends information over the Internet from web server programs to web browser programs. The browser then displays this information to the user on his computer screen.

Website: A website is a collection of web pages that displays information on a particular topic. Common types of websites include company websites (information about the company), online shops (where you buy goods and services and pay by credit card) and personal websites (where individuals share their interests). A website may consist of just one page of information, but will usually contain several pages, all linked together. All the pages in a website usually share the same 'domain' name. For example, all the pages in the large online shop Amazon have an address (URL) that starts with 'www.amazon.com'.

Links

For more website links please see our website at www.lifesteps.ie.

Final Notes

Looking at art online is simple and enjoyable, once you have learned how to get to the sites that will be of interest to you. Some art websites can take quite a long time to load if you do not have broadband, because graphics are generally large files. These sites are best viewed off-peak.

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