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Digital Library Review 2

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### **Project Background**

Awesome Library can be found at <http://awesomelibrary.org>

In 1995, Dr. R. Jerry Adams, with a background in business, education, health and technology, began creating a personal data base. The project was named "Library-in-the-Sky" and with the use of federal funds from the US Department of Education, access to the internet library was made public in 1996. In 1997, EDI, Evaluation and Development Institute, began sponsoring the database and offered it to the public through the web portal "Awesome Library." Dr. Adams, with over 25 years of experience managing educational programs, is the executive director of EDI. He remains an active participant in the growth and maintenance of Awesome Library. Awesome Library has won many awards including the Ask Jeeves Silver Platter Award, Applesforhealth Golden Apple Award and is Cyber Sitter approved. Because of its high quality resources and security, it is ranked in the top ten Google searches for "library" and "educational directories"

Awesome Library has three program areas, the first promoting world peace, the second enhancing communication through the use of the web and third promoting healthy lifestyles. The resources it

encompasses are specifically selected for use by teachers, students, parents and librarians. All resources are reviewed carefully to meet the criteria for acceptance. Resources provided need to be valuable to parents, students, teachers and librarians. All links need to be child safe, current, load quickly and of the best version available. Because technology is always evolving and improving, links currently available may be removed in the future because they no longer meet the EDI standards.

### **Service Features**

The home page of Awesome Library is visually appealing to adults as well as to children. A graphic of a library is followed by a basic search box. Awesome library does provide a search engines page where buttons for Bartleby, Wikipedia, Education World and Yahoo-Columbia to name a few. Next to the search box is a “spelling” button which can assist with the correct spelling of a term being searched. This button brings the user to the Merriam-Webster dictionary site.

Below the search option is a simple chart providing users with subject buttons such as health, technology, languages, math and the arts. Clicking on one of the subjects brings the user to a subtopic page. Users can narrow the search by grade, types of resources available; papers on the topic, discussions, lessons, projects, worksheets and lists.

Users can also click a category that best describes themselves for example teacher, kid, teen, parent, librarian and college are all choices. A home page for each of these categories with search options and subject buttons tailored to the specific user is displayed. Awesome Library for kids provides youngsters with links to subject areas as well as games, news, projects and friends. Students can find homework help, ask a question or locate a pen pal around the world. When most categories are clicked the user is shown a list of subtopics to choose from. Several of the choices have direct links to sites.

A “path map” is located at the top of each page so the user can easily determine where they are within the site and options for moving ahead or back. A “site map” is also located at the bottom of each page so a user can quickly and effectively move to a new area of the site without going back to the home page.

Through Google Safe Search, Awesome Library is available in many different languages including Arabic, Hebrew, Polish and Chinese Simple as well as Chinese Traditional.

### **Technology**

There is no specific software required to access Awesome Library. No log in is required and all links are free to the user. The Awesome Library prides itself on quick loading pages with most pages loading within 5 seconds when using a 56k modem. Outside of the home page graphic (12k), very few graphics are used and large pages, over 15k, are distributed to several smaller pages to increase the performance and speed of utilizing the site. The awesome Library is labeled with ICRA, formerly the Internet Content Rating Association, provided by FOSI, Family Online Safety Institute to provide users of all ages a safe browsing and searching experience. All sites linked to Awesome Library are filtered for nudity, sexual content, violence and offensive language. This helps to make Awesome Library a safe site for visitors of all ages. Users do have the option of downloading, free of charge, **Awesome Talkster** which is a browser that will read web pages to the user. There are a variety of voices to choose from as well as reading rates from normal to slow. To assist young users, the words can be highlighted as the child follows along with the text. This program can take up to an hour to load because of the size, over 11MB.

### **Reflection**

Awesome Library is rightly named! This digital library is an extensive resource for teachers, parents, students and librarians. It encompasses a multitude of links in a variety of subject areas and provides

users with thousands of valuable resources. Awesome library is working to organize pertinent information on the web and make it more readily accessible to parents, students, librarians and teachers. One area for improvement may be to expand the search options. At this time the site only offers a key word/subject search. An advanced search option would help the user more efficiently search for a specific item instead of having to constantly narrow the search by the pages of subtopics available. Also a direct link to the sites available would speed the process. For example I executed a search as a student in need of information on Harriet Tubman. I initiated my search on the kid's page clicking on the social studies button. From there I chose history and then biographies. A page of subtopics followed and I chose African Americans. After scrolling past 49 other names I located Harriet Tubman. I clicked on her name and was shown three papers to choose from. When I chose one from a site called *America's Story* the link brought me to the website's homepage. I had to then search this site, as it was not a direct link to the information about Tubman. This poor linking is time consuming and could be frustrating for children or anyone in general who are not search savvy. Overall the Awesome Library is a very well built digital library with much to offer parents, students, teachers and librarians. It does its part to organize the World Wide Web and bring quality resources to its patrons. Awesome Library is awesome!

## Sources Used

America's Story from America's Library – <http://www.americaslibrary.gov/aa/index.php>

Apples For Health- <http://www.applesforhealth.com>

Ask(formerly Ask Jeeves)- <http://www.ask.com>

Bartleby- <http://www.bartleby.com>

CYBERSitter- <http://www.cybersitter.com>

Family Online Safety Institute- <http://www.fosi.org/icra/#>

Merriam Webster- <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary.htm>

Vote Jerry Adams For Mayor- <https://www.jerryadamsformayor.com>

Wikipedia- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)

Yahoo-Columbia – <http://education.yahoo.com/reference/encyclopedia>