

Organic Education: Nine Best Internet Tools

by John Paull

The Internet offers unprecedented opportunities for a free organic farming and food education, allowing instant access to the most recent through to seminal works. Nine of the best tools for a free organic education are described.

I World Organic Statistics: IFOAM

www.ifoam.org

The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) is the umbrella organisation of organic organisations worldwide. It was established in 1972, and is headquartered in Bonn, Germany.

IFOAM publishes annually *The World of Organic Agriculture, Statistics and Emerging Trends*. These annual summaries are the best guides to world organic agriculture statistics. All editions, back to 2000, can be downloaded free, excepting the latest version, which can be purchased as hard copy or PDF.

At the IFOAM website follow links for definitions of organic agriculture, statements of organic principles and standards, certification specifications, and upcoming conferences. The major international organic conference is the IFOAM Organic Congress held every three years; the most recent Congress was held in Adelaide, Australia in 2005, and the next one is 2008, in Modena, Italy. The Adelaide Congress was held in conjunction with the International Scientific Conference on Organic Agriculture presented by ISOFAR (International Society of Organic Agricultural Research, www.isofar.org).

IFOAM is a patron of BioFach (www.biofach.de) which presents organic trade fairs internationally.

II Organic Research Articles: Organic ePrints

www.orgprints.org

Organic ePrints is an international depository for articles on organics, a multi-language archive for research in organic agriculture, developed by the Danish Research Centre for Organic Farming, DARCOF (www.darcof.dk). Search by keyword or author; click *advanced* for additional search options. The site includes journal articles, book

chapters, research reports, theses, book reviews and other organic research publications. Abstracts are available on the title page, and most articles are available for downloading as full-text PDFs.

The site offers free subscriptions for email notification updates; subscribers nominate areas of interest, and a preferred frequency of update emails.

III Australian Organics Information: DAFF
www.daff.gov.au

The Australian Organic Industry, A Profile, by Darren Halpin, 2004, is available as a free PDF download. This 149 page report includes 85 tables of data and presents a summary of the Australian organics industry.

IV Organic Historical Works: Project Gutenberg
www.gutenberg.org

Project Gutenberg is the largest collection of free electronic books and this site offers 20,000 full-text ebooks for free download. All books are out of copyright and have been generated electronically by volunteers, (new volunteers always welcome), and new books are added each month.

Click on the *Advanced Search* link and search under the subject: *Agriculture*, for titles of organics interest.

Franklin Hiram King's seminal 1911 book *Farmers of Forty Centuries, or Permanent Agriculture in China, Korea and Japan* is available. The King book will download as plain text, and so, is searchable and can be reformatted in a word processor. Lord Northbourne, who coined the term *organic agriculture*, recommended King's book as a must read for students of organic farming (Paull, 2006a).

Cyril Hopkins' *The Farm that Won't Wear Out* (1913) is also available for download at gutenberg.org, and alternatively is available as HTML at www.soilhealth.org.

V Core Historical Literature of Agriculture: Cornell University
chla.library.cornell.edu

At this site there are almost a million pages available online, including journals and 1,849 books. Cyril Hopkins' book *Soil Fertility and Permanent Agriculture*, 1910, (preceding King's use of the term *permanent agriculture* by a year), is available as GIF images and as HTML.

There is a click path for online reading, or use *view entire text now* to view the whole book as a single web page. Use the drop down menu, *view page as*, to select viewing options: image (GIF), text (HTML), or PDF.

VI Search Inside Books For Sale: Amazon

www.amazon.com

Amazon offers the world's most complete listing of books in print. Some books listed have a "Search Inside" feature.

In-text online searching within books for sale is subject to the publisher enabling this feature. It can be a tremendously useful research feature, although in the Amazon implementation there are some irritating constraints on searching and printing which may require some work-around strategies; the retrieved pages are presented as images rather than text, and the number of consecutive search requests, and the page returns, are restricted.

The foundational work on organic agriculture (Paull, 2006b), Lord Northbourne's book *Look to the Land*, originally published in 1940, has the in-text search feature enabled on amazon.com and is particularly useful, since the index of the original publication is unfortunately absent from this recent reprint.

VII Organics News: Newsletters

Free newsletters delivered by email are an excellent way of staying up to date.

The Organic Federation of Australia, (OFA), (www.ofa.org.au) was established in 1998 as the peak body for the Australian organics industry. The site provides useful links to organic websites, and the monthly E-newsletter *Organic Update* is available free.

Biological Farmers of Australia, (BFA), (www.bfa.com.au) was established in 1988 and is a major Australian organic certifier. BFA uses the bud logo, BFA and *Australian Certified Organic*, and publishes the hard copy journal: *Australian Organic Journal*. Subscribe to the free monthly E-Zine *Organic Advantage*.

The Organic Consumers Association (USA) publishes *Organic Bytes*, a fortnightly newsletter; subscribe at: www.organicconsumers.org.

The Soil Association, leading UK organic certifier, publishes an occasional *organic news email update*; subscribe at www.soilassociation.org.

VIII Web Alerts: Google

www.google.com

Google, founded in 1998, is now the leading World Wide Web search tool. By clicking *more>>* users can select *Alerts* and nominate topics of interest to receive Google Alerts by email, reporting web pages and news (www.google.com/alerts). Users nominate the frequency of receiving Google Alerts (once a day, as-it-happens, or once a week).

For journal articles, users can start their search at <http://scholar.google.com>

IX Encyclopedia Plus: Wikipedia

www.wikipedia.org

Wikipedia, founded in 2001, is now the world's biggest encyclopedia, with more than six million articles. It is operated by the non-profit Wikipedia Foundation, has servers in the US, Korea and Netherlands, and it is written by volunteers. Any page can be edited by any user.

Wikipedia is already the first port of call for many web users, and its functionality and inclusions continue to grow rapidly. Its associated web sites may also prove useful. Wikibooks (<http://en.wikibooks.org>) offers open content text books. Wikiversity (www.wikiversity.org) is described as "a centre for the creation and use of free learning materials". Wikisource (www.wikisource.org) is a free library of documents.

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