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Internet Reviews: Smithsonian Ocean Portal

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RED will delight students of literature, history, and culture. Researchers will get lost in this resource, not because it is complex to use, but because it is so enjoyable.—*Emily Hamstra, University of Michigan Library, ehamstra@umich.edu*

Smithsonian Ocean Portal. Access: <http://ocean.si.edu/>.


This captivating and highly visual initiative of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History will draw in users from a variety of academic disciplines and levels of interest. The primary organizational structure consists of five major tabbed sections on the homepage—"Ocean Life & Ecosystems," "Planet Ocean," "Ocean Through Time," "Conservation," and "Human Connections." The homepage tabs provide access to more than 40 sublinks containing a vast and almost dizzying array of data. Each of the sections provides a wealth of materials, including current feature articles and news releases, consistently updated blog posts,

timelines for species, high-resolution photographs and videos, further links to stories, audio and video archives, and outstanding image galleries.

"Ocean Life & Ecosystems," for example, leads to dozens of articles on all aspects of the world's oceans, from deep-sea dinoflagellates and other phytoplankton to sharks and large marine mammals. "Planet Ocean" leads to dozens of articles, photographs, and videos describing aspects of tides, storms, underwater vents and volcanoes, the sea-floor, ocean temperature and chemistry, and characteristics of ice in the polar regions. "Ocean News" on the homepage links to current articles from a variety of reliable resources, including the *National Geographic*, the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, and the National Science Foundation, and to hundreds of archived news articles dating back to 2009.

The five main sections contain links to a series of "For Educator" materials for each primary topical area, including lesson plans for K-12 educators and science education students and more articles from collaborators, such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. A simple but powerful sorting function allows the user to retrieve hundreds of lesson plans sorted by grade level and by subject, many of which offer engaging interactive games and activity books.

The "Media Archive" section contains dozens of videos, audio presentations, slide-shows and stories, from videos of orcas and searches for giant squid to stories of right whales, which include the natural history and diversity of the species, evolutionary trends, and cultural connections among native peoples across the planet.

The Smithsonian Ocean Portal will dazzle undergraduate audiences seeking topical data on any aspect of oceanic research. Science education majors will be especially well served, as will teaching faculty looking for further information or serendipitously browsing the site for fun, for classroom assignments, or further research ideas.—*John Creech, Central Washington University, john.creech@cwu.edu* 

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