

Hands-On Lesson

to accompany

Curriculum Webs

A Practical Guide to Weaving the Web into Teaching and Learning

By Craig A. Cunningham and Marty Billingsley

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LESSON 4: Creating a simple web-based lesson

Composer

This lesson was written by

Craig A. Cunningham and Russ Revzan

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Goals for this lesson

- Learn how to create a web page from your bookmarks or favorites file.
- Use the bookmarks to create a simple web-based lesson.

Ten steps to a successful web-based lesson

Generally, your first web-based lessons will consist of students visiting a small number of sites (previously "vetted" by you to obtain some information and then do something with that information, either retelling it in another form or using it to solve a problem or understand a situation.

As you become more skilled at creating web pages (and eventually, web sites), you will develop more extensive activities, simulations, problem-based learning situations, or open-ended web searches. Don't move too fast: you will feel better about what you do if you start with easy, simple lessons and achieve some early success.

The process we have been describing in this book for developing a curriculum web can be simplified somewhat for the development of a web-based lesson. Most importantly, if you put everything on one web page, you do not have to spend any time worrying about web site design, or creating a navigation scheme for your site.

These are the steps to creating a simple one-page web-based lesson:

- Step 1: Describe your learners
- Step 2: Decide on the subject matter for the lesson
- Step 3: Decide on specific learning objectives
- Step 4: Search for existing web resources related to subject matter
- Step 5: Plan a learning activity
- Step 6: Create a student web page to support your lesson
- Step 7: Evaluate your web page and refine as needed
- Step 8: Publish your web page to a server
- Step 9: Implement your lesson with your students
- Step 10: Evaluate your lesson and revise

Most of these steps are similar to what is normally done in creating a paper-based lesson plan. The major difference is that we need to search for relevant web-based resources

to support the lesson, we need to create at least one page, and we need to publish the page to a web server.

In this lesson, we will concentrate on Step 6.

Let's assume you are working on a web-based lesson and have already completed Steps 1 through 4. If you want, you can use the curriculum goals you developed in Chapter 2, one of the learning activities you planned in Chapter 3, and some of the resources you have identified in Chapter 4. If you do this, when you complete this lesson you'll have a start on constructing your larger curriculum web. This lesson will not discuss Steps 7 through 10.

For what follows, let us assume you have defined your learners as a set of fourth grade students who already know how to browse the web. The subject matter for our sample lesson will be the geography of a state in the United States that the students are not currently familiar with. This will include terrain, area, major features, population, and general information about tourism and recreational activities. (This lesson could be the beginnings of the "Our United States" curriculum web.)

Let us also assume that we have used the Chicago Academic Standards to help define a set of learning objectives. Looking at Social Studies standards for grade four, we have selected the following objectives.

Upon completing this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Locate a state with which they were previously unfamiliar on a map of the United States.
2. Utilize state-specific web resources to identify the following information about the given state: capital city, population, rank in population, area (square miles), largest city, population of largest city, largest lake, highest mountain, most common terrain.
3. Draw conclusions from geographical data about the state as to what kinds of recreational activities are common in the state and whether tourism is a common industry.
4. Make judgments about the quality of life and whether they would enjoy living in a state based on geographical data about the state.

Let us also assume we have completed some of the searching activities described in Chapter 4 and created Netscape bookmarks to a set of resources. Finally, let us assume that we have decided on the following instructional plan:

1. Students choose partners
2. Partners pick a state they are not familiar with (or pick one out of a hat)
3. Partners use the web sites located above to find specific information about a state and write that information on a worksheet. (The worksheet could be created just on paper, but could also be a separate web page that students download or print out.)

This activity will take about 40 minutes with a motivated group of 4th graders who have previously learned how to use the web.

Opening your bookmarks

Now we need to create our web page. The first step is to convert your relevant bookmarks into a simple web page that can serve as the core of your web-based lesson.

You have several choices here depending on which web browser you used to make the bookmarks.

If your browser is Netscape Navigator...

If you are using Netscape Navigator as your web browser, you can copy the bookmark URLs individually from the Netscape Bookmarks window and paste them into your web editing software. (You can simply drag them onto a page you are editing in Composer.)

Or, you can open your entire Netscape bookmarks file into your web editing software and delete the bookmarks that aren't relevant. The bookmarks.htm file used by Netscape is itself an HTML file (that is, a web page). You'll find it in a subdirectory of your Netscape directory. Generally, you'll have a subdirectory called "users" and within that directory another directory called "temp" where your bookmarks.htm file is stored. (If you cannot find the directory, open Netscape, click on the Bookmarks button and choose Edit

Bookmarks.... Then use File|Save As... This will show you the current directory of your bookmarks.htm file.)

- Use File|Open... and find bookmarks.htm. If you are opening your Netscape bookmarks file, the file should be in the Temp directory in the Users directory in the Netscape directory. If you are opening a file you just exported from Internet Explorer, it will be where you created it.
- If you're opening the Netscape bookmarks.htm file, immediately save it under a new name, into the folder you are going to use for your web-based lesson. This could be your Desktop if you do not have a specific folder in mind. Name the folder something descriptive, such as "Geography Lesson." Name the file using the filename conventions listed in the Technology Appendix in *Curriculum Webs*.

The page will contain a title like "Bookmarks for Craig Cunningham," the names of any bookmark folders you have, including the folder you used for the bookmarks relevant to your web-based lesson. (Netscape comes with many folders already created and filled, so there may be many bookmarks you didn't create yourself.) The bookmarks are listed by their page titles, linked to their URLs.

- Delete all the bookmark folders except the ones you want. Change the heading at the top to something descriptive of your web-based lesson.
- Use File|Save or File|Save As... again to save your edited file.

If your browser is Internet Explorer...

- If you are using Internet Explorer as your web browser, and GoLive or FrontPage as your web page editor, you can click and drag individual Favorites from the Favorites window in Internet Explorer into your web page editor.

Or, all of Internet Explorer's Favorites are stored in a folder on your computer's hard drive. On Windows machines, these are usually in the Favorites directory in the Windows folder. You can view these favorites with Windows Explorer. (On a Mac, the Favorites.html file is in the Preferences folder in the System folder.)

- To insert individual Favorites into GoLive click and drag the Favorites from the Windows Explorer onto your web page. This creates text (from the title of the page) linked to the URL.

- You can also export some or all of your Internet Explorer Favorites to a Netscape-type bookmark file. Use File | Import and Export... in Internet Explorer. This launches the Import/Export Wizard. Click Next. Then choose Export Favorites and click Next. Choose the folder of Favorites you wish to export. Click Next. Then choose Export to a File or Address, and browse to where you want to create the file. Give the file a name (with an *.htm extension). Click Next and then Finish. The file is automatically created. You can then follow the instructions above for opening a Netscape bookmarks file into your web page editor.

Creating your web-based lesson

See the companion web site at <http://curriculumwebs.com> to see a completed web-based lesson. Notice the following features:

- A descriptive title
- Learning objectives clearly spelled out at the top of the web page
- List of prerequisite skills so students can check themselves
- Suggestions for the students for using the computer to make the lesson easier to use
- Clickable links to previously found web resources
- Link so students can send feedback to the teacher via e-mail
- Date last updated (useful for knowing whether it is most recent version)

Now create a page with similar features. You should have learned how to do everything in Lesson 3.

When you are finished, it is good idea to share your web page with another teacher to help you evaluate the page and make sure that it is easy to use. You might also ask someone to go through the lesson and make sure that the links work, that the information you have asked the learners to find is actually on those pages, and in general to make sure the page is clear. You might also apply the following questions to evaluating the web page:

1. Are the language and concepts appropriate for your target audience?
2. Are the objectives appropriate and realizable in the given time?
3. Are the prerequisite skills realistic for your students?
4. Is the text easy to read? Is it well formatted? Are sections well separated?

5. Are any graphics sized so they will fit on the screen?

Once your page is done and evaluated, it is time to put it on a web server so your students can access it from where ever they are. This procedure is covered in **Error!**

Reference source not found.