

## **Online Resourcing in a Time of COVID-19**

The Internet is great you say. Why do I need libraries or staff expertise? Well, that has been said to me before, but you do need libraries: for free print and e-books and other take-outs, for on-site and virtual adult and children's programming, and to guide you to informed, entertaining, and enriching resources. There is no argument that the Internet is a great resource, of course, but only once you have learned to navigate it knowingly, and to separate the informed from the uninformed, truth from falsehood, fact-based from fiction. Library staff can help by being our lifetime guides.

So, in a homebound time of COVID-19, I want to raise your expectations from your public library. Speaking with my Westmoreland Library Network™ hat on, as Board President, I am going to challenge all our library staff to provide and more actively make you aware of free and informed resources that you can either enjoy at your library in normal times or access from home. And, challenge you to ask them for help in finding those resources. I am going to give you here only a small starter set, in three categories; they include resources from only English-speaking countries.

**For a broad range of subjects:** (1) SmithsonianX Free On-line Courses (<https://www.edx.org/school/smithsonianx>); (2) Royal Ontario Museum On-Line (<https://www.rom.on.ca/en/exhibitions-galleries/exhibitions/online-exhibits>).

**For STEM subjects:** (1) Star Net Community (NASA) (<http://www.starnetlibraries.org>); (2) Chemistry at Home ([www.acs.org/chemistryathome](http://www.acs.org/chemistryathome)).

**For the Arts:** (1) Art Institute of Chicago (<https://www.artic.edu/visit-us-virtually/videos>); (2) Museum of Modern Art (including Storytime) (<https://www.metmuseum.org/learn/kids-and-families>); (3) Guggenheim at Large (<https://www.guggenheim.org/video>).

As it is true generally that free resources such as these may be time-bound, so it is that the 2020 summer season for great, free, online, archived stage performances from Ontario's Stratford Festival (<https://www.stratfordfestival.ca>) and London's National Theatre Live (<http://ntlive.nationaltheatre.org.uk>) are now "on demand" only. But watch for more from them in the future, and maybe your library will even want to stock Stratford's DVD's, if you ask.

Some of these web links are for adults and some for kids. All can be family togetherness experiences at home, and on-site at libraries too. Either way, it is not always necessary for librarians to invent their own programming for adults or children from scratch. Here they come preprepared as offerings from which to build for local programming, on a home TV or computer, or, for groups in the library, on a large-area TV screen, which I'll address next time, when I tell you about TechNook 365.

Asking your librarian to help you find online resources is not really that different from asking for help to find books or other resources on a subject of interest. You will be

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encouraging your library to serve in a broader capacity and help it build on an already very strong value proposition. And you will make some library staff member happy for the asking!

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