

# THE WEB WANDERER

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*This volume of Analytic Teaching contains the third in our series of reviews of websites that promote philosophical inquiry. The sites reviewed in this column have one thing in common - they are designed to encourage and promote the activity of philosophy amongst students of all ages. While principally designed for use in schools, many of these sites provide wonderful resources that can also be used to initiate philosophical inquiry between parents and children or between groups of friends.*

## Staying Connected through [www.p4c.net](http://www.p4c.net)

### W3P4C

<http://www.p4c.net> (pages not longer available)

*In 1995 Terry Godfrey had an idea to connect the Philosophy for Children community through the World Wide Web. Terry was aiming for more than **the usual** webpage of static information - he had a **vision of** creating a site that not only acted as a portal to other P4C sites on the web, but also encouraged collaborative inquiry across the P4C community. After **speaking** with Deakin University, where Terry was teaching at the time, W3P4C was born. It began as an experimental interactive website, growing in scope over the past five years to become one of the most user-friendly, gateways to P4C that I know of on the web today. The site covers the educational world of P4C from theory through to practice - including research discussion lists, links to journals, information about current events, dialogue space for student and class exchanges and links to web-based P4C resources. It is precisely this link between theory and practice, and the provision of tools through the site that allow for engagement in collaborative inquiry, that I think has the potential to make this site so important for the P4C community as a whole.*

One of the most appealing aspects of W3P4C is the way Terry has used colour, information, links and visual effects to help negotiate his website. The links often provide user-friendly support just at the time it is needed - for instance, on the opening page, along with links that take you into the site, there is a connection to inter-tran, a website that translates between languages. If you are not a native English speaker and having difficulty understanding the words on the page, you have a tool at hand to seek out their meaning in any one of 26 languages. This can also be helpful in translating material posted on other P4C sites linked to W3P4C. It is also a site that invites you to sign up, log in and get involved at ever juncture.

Terry has also constructed two 'maps' that provide overviews I find extremely helpful. One is a schematic layout of the organizing principles behind the site itself, the other is a map of the globe where one can find international and national organizations associated with ICPIC by clicking on regions of interest. Both are welcome alternatives to the kind of alphabetical listings more commonly found on websites.

To access the map of the website, go to <<http://www.p4c.net>>, click on the first heading «site guide» (it is in blue), and then click on the fourth item down, `sitemap`. Alternatively, you can go directly to the map at: <[http://www.p4c.net/html/Nv3\\_p4csitemap.html](http://www.p4c.net/html/Nv3_p4csitemap.html)>. You will see that the site is organized around three areas: Inquiry, Community, and Resources. These are the categories I will use in describing the site to you further below. But before I begin with this more systematic task, let me introduce the second map. You will find the world map by clicking on `community` (left-most item in the toolbar at the bottom of each page, or on the sitemap) and then again on «Associations and Organisations». Remember what I said about the provision of handy little `user friendly` support? With international contacts in mind, this map contains a box titled «What time is it there?» linking you to a world clock. If I am in Israel and want to make contact with the P4C association in Mexico, this way I can be sure not to call them in the middle of the night. There is also a link that gives you the weather at the location you are exploring (just kidding!). The international clock link is also included on the page containing a directory of people involved in P4C.

Terry has clearly put a lot of thought into the way the web provides enhanced and unique opportunities for extending the networks and engaged activity of the International P4C community. At each juncture small pieces of information help you to understand how (i) central ideas behind philosophy for Children and how the web extends the potential for building philosophical communities of inquiry, and (ii) practical information on how to use the resources on offer. For example, click on `community` (in the toolbar at the bottom of the page) and, along with the relevant links, you are offered a short paragraph addressing how the web can serve as a resource in building international communities of inquiry. Each of the sections in the toolbar contains such descriptions.

## INQUIRY

The primary brief of this web-page review is to introduce sites that encourage participation in the activity of philosophical inquiry amongst students and teachers. This is one of the strengths and innovations of W3P4C. It is, however, also one of the more `hidden` features of the site and, according to Terry, one of its least used features, perhaps because they require users to sign up before they can participate. However signing up is free and the forms are clearly organized. Two of the interactive features are listed on the w3p4c toolbar at the bottom of each page of the website: Dialogue (in green) and Conference (in grey). Both are specifically designed to facilitate sustained interactive engagement between individuals and groups. Clicking on Dialogue gives you a description of the collaborative possibilities this space offers. To quote Terry: «The concern of the Dialogue space is to bring the element of text into play in community of inquiry, and to do so in a way which both allows and encourages participants in a philosophical inquiry to become conscious of, and explore the intimacy of the relationship between philosophical thought and text.» This space can be accessed and used for collaboration in real time (for example, allowing students to read and edit each other's work, or write something together), or text can be downloaded, edited and then re-posted. The Conference space is hosted through the RICE facilities at Deakin University. On the workspace is a link to a Teacher's Network in P4C, and several discussions, the most recent of which was begun early this year between members of the Eisenhower High School community in the USA. While both the dialogue and conference facilities are under-utilized at present, they have great potential. I would strongly encourage you to sign up and

explore them. It is a perfect tool for collaboration across schools and national borders. On that track, it could actually provide an ideal space for communication within ICPIC for the discussion of issues, sharing of research and building of joint projects. In linking to these sites users are offered their own @p4c.net email address. With over 200 addresses distributed, there are clearly more hits on these sites than are reflected in the visible public activity.

The final link clustered under 'inquiry' on the sitemap is a webring where you can enter your school as a school in the p4c network. This can also be accessed by clicking on Schools (in pink) on the tool bar. Imagine if we all listed our schools here? There is a space to list your school by name or country if you do not have a URL (web address) to add to the ring.

## COMMUNITY

Community links (click community on the toolbar) essentially provides two features - multiple listings of those involved in the P4C community (by school, college, university, associations and organisations, etc) and email-base networking opportunities; Richard Anthon's p4c list (general networking and email community of inquiry) and a p4c research forum. It also carries the world map of P4C contacts I spoke of earlier. Having participated in the research network for about a year now, I have seen how invaluable this tool is to students conducting research in p4c (school students and university students). Their excitement at being part of this international network, receiving responses to their inquiries and help from around the globe, truly reminds me what communities of inquiry are all about.

A further link under community leads to 'other related sites' linked to Philosophy for Children either through their support or because they are expanding the scope of p4c's work. Included here are (i) ICCB (International Catholic Bureau) in Switzerland. ICCB has assisted in the introduction of Philosophy for Children in such countries as Brazil, Chekoslovakia, France, Guatemala and the Phillipines, and (ii) P4C CAP - Philosophy for Children and Parents - which basically asks: 'Why should the children have all the fun?'

## RESOURCES

The Resources link (brown on the toolbar) provides links to a variety of Philosophy for Children resources for teachers and students. The 'Philosophy for Children on the web' link is visually one of my favorite. Its liberal use of icons from the various projects listed entices us to explore further. Be warned, however, that some of these projects only come alive at certain times of year (for instance, The Philosophy Hotel). Since many of these linked sites will be the focus of future reviews, I will not say more about them here. Resources for teachers, academics and researchers are divided between educational, philosophical and teaching resources - they include curriculum materials and research links (for instance, links to the P4C Journals - including *Analytic Teaching!*). This is an excellent area to explore to find out what is out there and what people are writing and doing.

One final link that fails to appear in the toolbar, but appears under each of these three headings is a link to *Events*. Events in P4C can easily be added to the website by emailing Terry or following the link to 'list your event' by following the invitation to list your event within W3P4C. The most recent addition to this site is a scrolling notice board on the opening page. This is a prime spot to list upcoming events or to report on those immediately past.

For anyone who would like help or guidance in exploring features of W3P4C, Terry is happy for you to contact him. In particular he is happy to guide you through the *Dialogue* and *Conference* facilities that his site makes available. Interestingly Terry is not in the directory (soon to be remedied?). You can contact him, however, by going to 'register' on the opening page of the website, click on 'email' next to the *register for conference* link and ask him to contact you.

This website is brimming with opportunities - why not post your progress on the research network or the P4C list and let us know how you are doing?



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