

February 2004

VITAL News

Virginia Initiative for Technology and Administrative Leadership



Living History

Logging On to Follow the Elections

It's an election year, and come November, students all over the nation will be participating in mock elections as they have for many elections over the years. What makes this year different? The World Wide Web, of course!

Howard Dean started it all by using his website for fund raising, creating the first candidate blog, and taking advantage of the "meet up" website to organize Dean rallies. Now, every campaign has a blog, and their websites usually include videos and campaign ads as well as press releases and position statements. Students can really get a sense of what it is like to run for elected office and have access to primary source documents that just were not available to educators in past elections. For information on the campaigns as well as links to candidates' websites, visit an online news source like [CNN's Inside Politics](#) or the [Newshour with Jim Lehrer](#). For the high school students, don't forget MTV's website called [Rock the Vote](#).

But present-day politics is only one area in which the Web can be useful for history and social science teachers. For instance, the [Federal Elections Commission](#) includes historical election information including data on voter turnout and a description of the Electoral College. In addition, the [Federal Register](#), which is part of the National Archives, includes box scores for all previous elections. [Ben's Guide to U.S.](#)

[Government for Kids](#) has a whole section on elections.

Of course, both major political parties have websites. The Democrats can be found at <http://www.democrats.org> and the Republicans make their web home at <http://www.rnc.org/>. What you might not realize is that there are lots of other political parties in the United States and the non-profit [National Political Index](#) provides a comprehensive list.

Integrating these web resources into the classroom helps provide authentic learning experiences for students. They can learn about how to "read" campaign ads, compare and contrast different program proposals, and even communicate with the candidates. Hop on the election express and enjoy the exciting ride to Election Day 2004!

*Happy Voting,
Karen*



Newsletter Contact: Karen Work Richardson ,
karen@ivyrun.com

*Palm's Newest PDA***Tungsten C Offers Versatility at an Affordable Price***A Review by Patrick Whitaker*

The new Tungsten C PDA from Palm is their most powerful handheld to date offering more versatility for educators. I had been considering one of the pocket PCs from HP or Toshiba but the price tag for something that's "not quite there" left me greatly hesitant. However, the changing of the calendar year brings one to the point of making a decision to either take the plunge to a handheld or put out \$20-\$40 for a Daytimer. After taking a look at Palm's offerings, I found that the Tungsten C offers similar features as the top end pocket PCs with a smaller price tag. Currently it is \$499 with a \$100 rebate.

The C features a thumb keyboard allowing easy input of data. For people like me who often hit the wrong letters with the stylus and never quite mastered graffiti, this keyboard is a good alternative. With a little practice, you can become rather proficient. Of course there are always the optional portable keyboards that fold up for easy travel.

My favorite feature is the built in Wi-Fi. If your school has a wireless network, you will enjoy being able to check your email and news updates while eating lunch, waiting for a parent or colleague, or even in the restroom! The powerful 400 MHz Intel processor is fast and boots up in seconds making the C more time efficient for those quick checks than any lap top or desktop. It also works very well with your home wireless network or those free public locations that are springing up in many places.

The Palm C comes with 64 MB of RAM and an expansion slot that allows you to expand by an additional 128 MB. The slot can also be used for backing up data and additional programs such as dictionaries and language translators. (Note to language teachers: you might want to check your student's PDAs before that next test.)

Compatibility with MS Word, Excel,

and PowerPoint (additional software needed for PowerPoint) provides versatility. You can download documents from home, edit them as you go, and send them as email attachments when you have wireless access. You can even use your digital camera with this Palm and have your own portable slide show of favorite pictures.

If you have been waiting for the perfect PDA, you might have a long wait. If you want to get started but not lay out \$600-\$700 for a top of the line pocket PC, check out this Palm. You can find more information at:

<http://www.palmone.com/us/products/handhelds/tungsten-c/>.

Editor's Note: Patrick is our long-suffering graduate assistant who has obviously been having lots of fun with his new PDA. What about you? What kind of handheld are you using? How are you using as part of your job? Drop us an email, and we'll print your review in the next *VITALNews*.

*Quick Picks***The BEST History Website**

I am sure I have mentioned the [Library of Congress website](#) before, but since our focus is history and social science, it only makes sense to bring it up once again. This is THE place to go for anything about American history with links to primary sources, photographs, audio files and videos. [The WISE Guide](#) is a good place to start with monthly updates and features.

Each time I visit the Library website I discover something new. You can view old Coca Cola advertisements and watch cybercasts with authors, listen to slave narratives and folk music, browse pictures, and read letters, diaries, and essays. Enjoy this wonderful resource!