

# World religions on the Web

## A guide to some of the most helpful sites

by John Jaeger

There is an abundance of materials on the Internet related to the field of religion. This is true in relation to religion in general and also for specific world religions. A simple Google search on "religion" or on "Buddhism" brings forth a great number of results, which is generally encouraging for those who are searching for information related to religious topics. However, the number of results can be a bit daunting; it can become a time-consuming effort trying to sift the solid resources from the weak ones. This can be a particular problem when searching in the area of world religions because the terrain is often unfamiliar, and it can be difficult to know when bias is presented in materials. During times of political tensions, such as the current ones in the Middle East, these kinds of issues particularly come to the forefront. Subtle bias also can appear in sites due to insular or missionary zeal.

Web guides are useful in just these kinds of situations. They can help pull out from the abundance of sites on the Web the ones that are most helpful and most balanced in approach. This Web guide covers several main areas: world religion sites, specific religion sites, religious text sites, historical research

sites, reference resource sites, and electronic journals.

### World religion sites

- **Finding God in Cyberspace.** This is one of the best Web sites on the Internet for



finding information on religion. John Gresham has built and maintained this site for several years. The section devoted to world religion links to some of the best gateways to information available. His site also provides brief annotations. *Access:* <http://www.fontbonne.edu/libserv/fgic/fgic.htm>.

- **Religions of the World.** Minnesota State University's Emuseum is a kind of introduction to the major world religions. The opening page has a "clickable" world map showing how religious groups are concentrated geographically, with links to the specific religions: Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Animism, Christianity, and Hinduism. The information provided on these religions includes history, basic beliefs, terms, and links to other sites.

### About the author

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Access: <http://emuseum.mankato.msus.edu/cultural/religion>.

- **Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion.** Wabash Center maintains this excellent and large site. There are probably more world religion sites here than in any other general gateway. The site is extremely well organized. Access: <http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/Internet/front.htm>.

### Religious text sites

- **The Internet Sacred Text Archive.** Without question, this nonprofit site is the single largest religious text archive on the Internet. The content here is quite broad, taking on religion, mythology, legend, folklore, occult, and esoteric topics. The topical listing of religious materials has 46 categories, not only dealing with such standards as Jainism but also such novelties as Piri Re'is Map, Shamanism, and Tantra. The site states that it gets about 2,000 unique visitors each day and an average of 150,000 hits a day. Access: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/index.htm>.

- **Religious and Sacred Texts.** Here is another excellent source for full-text religious writings. Interestingly, this collection, while far smaller than the Internet Sacred Text Archive, in many ways is complementary to it. There are a number of resources here, such as the Urantia Book, that are not found on the Internet Sacred Text Archive. It should also be noted that this collection is strong in Old Testament and New Testament period texts not found in the Bible. Access: <http://davidwiley.com/religion.html>.

### Specific religions

#### Hinduism

- **The Hindu Universe.** Probably the largest and best single site on Hinduism on the Internet, the Hindu Universe provides links to more than 17,000 sites. The resource directory offers a helpful organization framework for finding resources related to such topics as scriptures, god, worship, philosophy, customs, history, and interfaith relations. The Hindu Universe is a project of the Hindu Students Council and is the Web site for the Global Hindu Electronic Networks. Access: <http://www.hindunet.org>.

#### Buddhism

- **Buddhist Studies WWW Virtual Library.** The Buddhist Studies WWW Virtual Library is one of those sites you wish was available for every religion. It is so thoroughly organized and classified that locating specific informational sites is easy. Buddhism is really not a single thing, but a complex of matters, and this site recognizes this. There are links within the pages to the WWW Virtual Libraries for "Pure Land Buddhism," "Tibetan Studies," and "Zen Buddhism." There is also a link to a Theravada Buddhist InfoWeb. A helpful search engine is available as well. Access: <http://www.ciolek.com/WWWVL-Buddhism.html>.

- **Resources for the Study of Buddhism.** If you need a gateway to general Buddhism resources, this one from Ron Epstein of San Francisco State University is a good choice. His site points to such places as other general resources on Buddhism, sites for Theravada Buddhism teachings, sites for Mahayana Buddhism teachings, sites on Buddhism and science, and online collections of Buddhist texts. His site also, interestingly, links to sites on death and dying. Access: <http://online.sfsu.edu/~rone/Buddhism/Buddhism.htm>.

#### Islam

- **The Islam Page.** The name says it all; this is the page to go to for finding information on Islam. Near the top of the page, one has the opportunity to read the Qur'an in any of more than 20 different languages. There also are several different search tools available for the textual and topical examination of the Qur'an. As one searches further on the Islam Page, one moves into large subject areas of links, which include beliefs of Islam, Muslim character, comparative religion, and Islamic history. There are 20 pages of links on this site. Access: [www.islamworld.net](http://www.islamworld.net).

- **Islamic Texts and Resources Metapage.** Here is another linking page or gateway to Islamic resources. While it is not nearly the size of The Islam Page, there are interesting links here, such as "Islam—Frequently Asked Questions at CalTech FTP," that are worth visiting. The site also links to pamphlets put out by Islamic organizations, as well as links to important ideas in Islamic thought. Access: <http://wings.buffalo.edu/student-life/sa/muslim/isl/isl.html>.

### *Jainism*

• **Jainism: Jain Principles, Tradition, and Practices.** This Colorado State University-maintained site is the best on the Internet in terms of Jain study. The links are gathered around ten basic categories, which include such areas as Jainism introduction, Jain texts, Jain images, Jain pilgrimages, Jainism in the eyes of others, directories and lists, slides, and regional organizations. The listed directory items seem quite small, but this seemingly negative feature also allows the searcher to browse through larger sections at a time (providing his or her eyesight is fairly good). *Access:* <http://www.cs.colostate.edu/~malaiya/jainhlinks.html>.

### *Judaism*

• **Judaism and Jewish Resources.** Andrew Tannenbaum's site has been the premier gateway to Jewish resources on the Web for many years. When printed, the links comprise 29 pages of text. What makes that more impressive is that Tannenbaum has annotated all of the pages of links. This is the place to go to find resources. The table of contents on the first page is helpful in that one can link directly to the part of the site one wants to visit (say, "Jewish Studies"). It is a nearly flawless site. *Access:* <http://www.shamash.org/trb/judaism.html>.

### *Sikhism*

• **Gateway to Sikhism.** The Gateway to Sikhism is among the best resources for finding material on the Sikh religion. The site is organized around key Sikh subjects and themes, such as Sikh gurus, Sikh history, Sikh way of life, Sikh scriptures, and Sikh youth. There is also a search engine feature. *Access:* <http://www.allaboutsikhs.com/home.htm>.

• **Sikhism.** This resource states that it is "the largest Sikhism resource for Sikh and non Sikhs alike." In my own research, I would tend to give that honor to the Gateway to Sikhism listed above. Nonetheless, this really is a good, if not great, site, offering helpful resources on Sikhism of various kinds. What is of particular interest is the large collection of online videos available for viewing in RealVideo format. The videos are instructional and devotional and can be viewed from the computer over a period of several minutes each. *Access:* <http://www.srigurugranthsahib.org>.

### *Taoism*

• **Taoism Information Page.** The title of this site makes it sound as if there is merely general information on Taoism provided, but that is quite misleading. In fact, this is a large and in-depth site offering links for commentaries and interpretations to the philosophical/religious writings of the Tao, as well as links to sites on Chinese philosophy in general. Other subjects are also addressed, such as Taoism and modernity, Buddhism and Confucianism, and Taoism and Martial Arts. *Access:* <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/gthursby/taoism>.

### *Zoroastrianism*

• **Zoroastrianism Page.** The single best Zoroastrianism Web resource for good information is the Zoroastrianism Page. Listed at the top of the page are several awards the site has won, including Study Web's Academic Excellence Award. What I have observed over a period of time is that the site keeps reliable information and is well-maintained. *Access:* <http://palette.ecn.purdue.edu/~bulsara/ZOROASTRIAN/zoroastrian.html>.

## **Internet History Sourcebooks**

Fordham University has developed and maintained the Internet History Sourcebooks Project. Each of the Internet History Sourcebooks focused on here—the Internet African History Sourcebook (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/africa/africasbook.html>), the Internet East Asian History Sourcebook (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/eastasia/eastasiasbook.html>), the Internet Indian History Sourcebook (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/india/indiasbook.html>), the Internet Islamic History Sourcebook (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/islam/islamsbook.html>), and the Internet Jewish History Sourcebook (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/jewishbook.html>)—is extremely large, with links comprising perhaps 30 pages of text and links to primary and secondary resources of all types. The East Asian Sourcebook lists sites for several religious groups, including Taoism, Confucianism, and Shinto. The Indian Sourcebook also covers Hinduism, Buddhism, and some other traditions. *Access:* <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall>.

## **Reference tools**

• **Cybrary of the Holocaust.** This unique reference resource provides a good

deal of information about the Holocaust in a searchable fashion. It is a good educational resource. *Access:* <http://remember.org>.

• **Jewish Virtual Library.** This library, once it is entered, is more like a living encyclopedia than it is anything else. One has options to click on, such as history, women, biography, politics, Israel, maps, and Judaic Treasures at the Library of Congress, with each launching a person into a different realm. The site is extremely well put together. *Access:* <http://www.us-israel.org/index.html>.

• **The Peace Encyclopedia.** Yahoodi Communications, working with the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism, has made available this creative and interesting encyclopedia. Under "A," such entries as abuse, antisemitism, anti-Zionism, apartheid and Israel, Arabs, Arabists, and assimilation appear. The encyclopedia is not solely focused on Israeli-Arab concerns, but that is certainly a major focus of it. *Access:* <http://www.yahoodi.com/peace/index.html>.

• **A Shi'ite Encyclopedia.** The encyclopedia can be viewed section by section,

or it can be searched by keyword or concept. It also is available for download as a zip file. One can tell that a good deal of effort went into the encyclopedia by the size of the document and the efforts that have been made to make it available for searching and accessibility. *Access:* <http://www.al-islam.org/encyclopedia>.

### **Electronic journals**

• **Religious Studies Electronic Journals.** This site is from a page on Sandra Lipton and Cheryl Adam's excellent gateway to religious resources. I view the site as the single best listing of electronic journals on world religions on the Web. The journals are organized according to reli-

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES WEB GUIDE

gious grouping, and the brief annotations provide the reader with helpful information as to what kind of content is available at the sites. *Access:* <http://www.acs.ualgary.ca/~lipton/journals.html>. ■



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