

A thematic approach

Scoilnet theme pages present teachers with a simple way to use ICT in the classroom

There are currently 58 different theme pages on the Primary section of Scoilnet (www.scoilnet.ie) and the pages are consistently among the most viewed across the entire site. Covering an array of topics across subjects the methodology behind the pages follows the general Scoilnet portal approach – with each page containing a series of external web links to various sources relating to a specific theme.

The topics for the themes and the content for the pages are sourced and described by teachers. In general the pages have a common layout with sections for facts or information; class activities; project ideas; and teachers' information.

Cross-curricular

Many of the theme pages take an integrated approach across subjects while others link specific strands. Integrated learning, both within subjects and between curricular areas, is an important principle of the curriculum and the Scoilnet theme pages allow teachers to use blocks of time in a very efficient way.

From the feedback given to Scoilnet,



placed in the descriptions on the theme pages.

Ancient Greece to inventors and inventions

The collection of theme pages is quite broad with a particularly good subject representation from SESE

History, Maths, SESE Geography, English and SESE Science.

Some of the pages have been on the site for some years and one of the challenges for the Scoilnet team is to ensure that the external links within the pages continue to work. To this end the pages are systematically reviewed twice a year and new links added or deleted where appropriate.

There has been a growing trend for readers to contact Scoilnet and suggest specific links for these theme pages. It might be a cultural thing, but it seems that such suggestions mostly originate from the United States where students are sometimes required to share a new resource with a website they have used in class. The engagement is done through the teacher to whom the link is initially given.

See Scoilnet's Primary theme pages at scoilnet.ie/primary_themepages.shtm.

teachers like using the theme pages as they allow learning to appear more natural and the teaching is more creative and enjoyable. This would seem to be particularly the case when the themes are topical. Last year, the centenary of the sinking of the Titanic saw almost 20,000 views of the 'RMS Titanic' theme page in April alone. Teachers were able to use the theme page to teach SESE History (the events, eyewitness accounts, emigration); SESE Geography (icebergs; geographical location of passengers); Visual Arts (colouring, model making).

If there is a down side, it may be that teachers need to spend time planning, particularly initially, how they are going to engage with the theme page in class – being always conscious of staying within curriculum requirements. This is something that Scoilnet is looking to address in the future with specific curriculum linkages

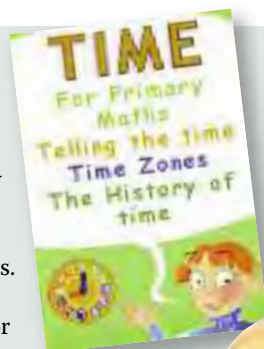
Time

The theme page on 'Time' in many ways exemplifies the approach behind these pages. Time is an important strand unit for all levels of the primary curriculum and the teacher who selected content for the page added material for:

- ✶ helping children tell the time of the day (analogue and digital);
- ✶ time zones;
- ✶ history of clocks;
- ✶ how time was measured in the past;
- ✶ quizzes and crosswords about time.

Literacy is included through a consonants and vowels game played with a countdown clock.

(See scoilnet.ie/Time_Themepage.shtm)



The most viewed theme pages in 2012 were:

- 1 Titanic (scoilnet.ie/themepage_rmstitanic.shtm);
- 2 Halloween (scoilnet.ie/halloween_themepage.shtm);
- 3 St Patrick (scoilnet.ie/themepage_stpatrick.shtm);
- 4 London Olympics (scoilnet.ie/themepage_LondonOlympics.shtm);
- 5 Stone Age (scoilnet.ie/Stone_Age_Themepage.shtm);
- 6 Fractions (scoilnet.ie/fractions_themepage_2012.shtm).

CPD Reminder

PDST Technology in Education (formerly NCTE) continues to provide and fund free courses on ICT in teaching and learning after school through the education centre network. Contact your local education centre for this term's courses or ask them to arrange (free) whole school training in your school. You might want to avail of a short refresher course on the things you learnt during an ICT summer course, for instance. See www.ncte.ie/courses for details.

Short online courses will also be available this term through TeacherCPD.ie, the online learning platform for free courses delivered by PDST Technology in Education. See TeacherCPD.ie for details.



Compiled by **PATRICK COFFEY**,
PDST Technology in Education