

User's Guide to the Research Site on Indonesia, Southeast Asia, the Islamic World, and American Society.

The Research Site on Indonesia, Southeast Asia, the Islamic World, and American Society is found on the homepage of Indonesia Publications. This site is the creation of John A. MacDougall, an independent scholar and editor with over three decades of experience working on Indonesia and Southeast Asia. The current site has gone beyond its earlier Indonesia focus and has become a broad and dynamic Internet research site well worth exploring (for more information click here).

As its name suggests, the homepage is focused on current events, scholarship, and research. Selected Current News Sites are grouped according to the four topics mentioned in the name -- Indonesia, Southeast Asia, Islamic regions, and American Society, with the addition of The World, Current Controversies, and Other Virtual Spaces.

The Online University includes five "courses" (Indonesia, Southeast Asia, the Islamic World, Current Controversies, and American Society). Links to a rich collection of academic and news articles, reports, and documents are updated regularly as the site creator selects new readings. The most recent ones appear at the top of each course. These five interconnected courses help contextualize current events.

Supplementing the Indonesia course are links to the "Apakabar" Database, a free specialized archive on Indonesia and East Timor put together between 1990 and 2002 by MacDougall working with Indonesians and East Timorese online to create a forum for debate and discussion. Also pertinent to the Indonesia course is Today's Indonesian Studies List Postings, a Yahoo group called indonesian-studies.

Then comes a section of research links, Three Panels of Research Links (Panels I, II, and III), where a very large number of web sites relevant to the subjects of the five courses have been organized and displayed. Using these links, one can pursue just about any topic in as much breadth and depth as one wishes. The panels can be used as a browser start page or a start page for doing research.

Panel I presents many topics key to understanding global flows and connections in the world today, while panel II relates these topics specifically to Indonesia and adds a large number of Indonesian news sources. Panel III allows one to look at countries and regions of the rest of Southeast Asia, the Islamic world and beyond.

\* Panel I (Basic News and Research Links) consists of two parts -- the first, Types of Internet Resources, contains general resources for learning how to use the Internet to do research. The second part, Subject-Specific Links, consists of many topics, ranging from politics, international relations, and humanitarian organizations to literature, music, and art.

\* Panel II (Indonesia Links) mirrors the topics of Panel I, with the addition of Indonesian media links in Indonesia. This affords access to news and commentary from Indonesia, which is valuable even for users who do not read Indonesian. Google Current News is a rich resource for news in English about Indonesia. Most of the news sites here, however, are in Indonesian, although a few have English, or partial English, versions as well.

\* Panel III (Southeast Asia, Islamic World, and American Society Links) is arranged alphabetically by country and regional grouping (such as Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East). Panel III also features resources for selected other metropolitan countries with past or present colonial histories, or significant international influence, in these countries and regions (such as Australia, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom.) Included also is a general category called "countries" and a large section on the United States, subdivided into groupings: newspapers, news portals, magazines and journals, radio and television, social groups and organizations, and government.

The premise behind the three panel approach is that to understand social, cultural, and political events, one would do well adopting an interdisciplinary, comparative, and international -- or global -- perspective. The project is informed by a deep and broad understanding of current and recent political, social, and cultural problems facing Indonesia, the rest of Southeast Asia, and the Islamic world as well as a reflexive sense of the importance of what happens in American politics and society. This sensibility is reflected in subject headings such as "law and human rights," "military," "elections and electoral institutions," "war, peace, and terrorism," "public opinion," "environment," "world religions," and "mass media and journalism." Together or alone, the courses and panels provide access to a valuable combination of government, nongovernmental organization, and academic resources.

But not all is geared only toward advanced students and policy makers. Under the heading Music and Art in Panel II, you can listen to a wide variety of Indonesian popular and traditional music, while Songs for Our Times and Encores also lead to music worth listening to. Links in

History and Biography allow you to travel far in time as well as space. The headings Maps, Acquiring Language Skills, Using Academic Resources, and Doing Research offer practical and methodological help in research. Included near the end of Panel I are tips for the fieldworker, expatriate, traveler, and even the armchair anthropologist who surfs the world online from home. There is much more to explore. Then, if you have lost track of the local time and have nothing in the pantry but a handful of odd ingredients, you can search for a recipe in a site found under the heading Daily Living.

Here are a few practical tips for navigating the site:

- \* Since the site is so vast, it is helpful to orient yourself by printing out the short Directory of Research Links and consult it as you look for materials. Even then, it's a good idea to annotate the list yourself.
- \* In general, this is a fairly multilingual site. Panel II is mostly all Indonesian language, although a few of the sites are bilingual or partially so (note that in Indonesian, English is "Inggeris"). Panel III is also somewhat multilingual, while Panel I is mainly English.
- \* For many topics, relevant sites may be found in different panels and under multiple headings. Use your Web browser's "find" a-word-or-phrase function.
- \* An abundance of information is available here. You will want to do a lot of scrolling up and down. Get familiar with the layout. Take time to explore.
- \* One of the most welcome features of this site is the brief comment that follows most links (e.g., whether a site is free or fee or a mixture; what programs the user needs; tips about how to navigate a site). These comments often indicate the readership, i.e. academic, informational, activist, believers, lay, professional, etc. The annotations sometimes identify a site as being especially rich and high-quality. Delivered in plain speech with a sense of humor, these at times quirky notes provide sympathetic guidance and reliable assessment of the links.
- \* Remember that this site is very much a work in progress. As of February 2004, the readings posted under the Indonesia course and the links in Panel 2 have remained up-to-date (as noted before, the most recent ones are on the top). Still, other sites can change quickly, and the site creator invites users to help him keep links and

their descriptions current.

The Research Site on Indonesia, Southeast Asia, the Islamic World, and American Society is a site which brings together information about and from the world in a creative and insightful way. The creator of the site selects and organizes material from a wide range of diverse sources. With his contagious enthusiasm for the Internet as a medium for independent learning, he has put together a resource that will be of value to specialists and newcomers alike. For anyone interested in better understanding current events and international, global issues, this site is well worth visiting regularly and watching closely.

by Elizabeth Coville, February 2004