



CAROLE on GENDER

Why bother to look at gender issues and the Internet?

Men outnumber women on science and computer courses in Britain. When you look at new technology, like the Internet, the same pattern exists. There is a long way to go before there is equality of the sexes, at least in terms of numbers. In recent years there has been an explosion in number of sites on the World Wide Web dealing with womens interest and issues. These sites cover areas from gender and sport, through to medical issues, to radical feminism.

Because much of the information on the World Wide Web is American the information given relates mainly to the USA. As you visit these sites and examine the information it would be useful to consider how gender differences in the American system compares with those in the UK.

This annotated list concentrates in the first link on the issue of women and computing and the sample site will, I hope, make you consider access to computing in your school. Why do you think women are under represented in science and computing? Are girls under represented in science and computing at your school?

[The Ada Project \(TAP\)](#)

This is a large database concerning women in computing. Some sections are especially interesting. I recommend you look at the

sections on [News and Announcement about Women in Computer Science](#). This gives you details of the last 6 months press releases concerning women in technology (see especially the NASA release concerning 'Sojourner') and [Women of Computing - Past and Present](#) (yes, there are some and yet I doubt you will have heard of them). You might consider why this section is necessary and as you look at this database you might consider why the authors decided to collect this information. TAP allows you to add information to the database. I think the feedback section is interesting in giving you a pointer on the most useful sections.

The next link takes the issue of famous women and shows how the Web can add to knowledge and self image of girls by building a database of famous women.

[Schools Encyclopaedia of Womens History](#)

I think this site is interesting because it shows how pupils can influence the information on the Web. These pupils saw an issue (the fact that a lot of history excluded female figures) and attempted to address the problem by building their own database. It invites you to add contributions so you can watch the way the database grows!

Why is it necessary to have sites especially for womens?

The image of women displayed in the media is often a stereotyped image. This serves to reinforce a womens image of herself. Whereas the previous links looked at addressing this image this next link documents media bias.

[Women in Comics](#)

This paper looks at the stereotyped image of women in comics. Most sites on womens issues have links to articles of this kind and with a little research are easy to find.

To interest women in the Web there have been attempts to set up areas of interest specifically for them. The next link is an example of one of these. The online magazine for women is called Women's Way.

[Women's Way](#)

This magazine covers womens interests, the experience of women on the Internet, womens poetry and an examination of the media. You might be interested in looking at the [In the News](#) section which is regularly updated and, for fun, [Overheard](#)

The final two links look at general sites on the Internet concerning gender issues. They are useful in examining the different approach they take to issues.

[The National Organisation for Women](#)

NOW is interested in women's rights. The organisation keeps a watch on the way women are treated in society, especially in terms of the economy and equal pay.

[Planet Woman](#)

A visual and fun resource for women. This site does deal with serious issues but in an attractive and varied way.

One of the most exciting aspects of the Web is the ability of individuals and small groups to publish their own information. I think it is really important that women share in this ability to publish, which is why the inequality in access and use of the Web does cause me concern. I believe that it is really important that womens views, issues and ideas are represented. As women we have a real chance here to make our presence felt and set our own agenda, without letting men set it for us.

I hope that these links inspire you to see women in a positive light! Having visited the links did any of them offer information you found interesting, stimulating or helpful? What was the most imaginative/interesting site? If you are in a UK schools use the button at the [top of this page](#) to post your views about gender.

Quick summary of links from Carole's Annotations on Gender

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Ada Project• Schools Encyclopedia of Womens History• Women in Comics | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Women's Way• The National Organisation for Women• Planet Woman |
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