

[P8] The Resource Discovery Network (RDN): using the best of the web in teaching and learning

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WHAT IS THE RDN?

The Resource Discovery Network (RDN) is a set of **free** subject gateways that provide access to fully searchable catalogues of expert-selected high quality Internet resources, and to a variety of other value-added services. All these services are designed for use by UK further and higher education, for both learners and teachers.

WHAT SUBJECTS DOES THE RDN COVER?

The RDN currently comprises eight subject gateways covering the following areas:

- Arts and Creative Industries (Artifact)
- Biosciences and Medicine (Biome)
- Engineering, Mathematics and Computing (EEVL)
- Geography and Environment (GEsource)
- Humanities (HUMBUL)
- Physical Sciences (PSIgate)
- Social Sciences (SOSIG)
- Sports and Leisure (Altis)

Four of the gateways specialise in the sciences; Biome, EEVL, GEsource, and PSIgate.

WHAT DO THE RDN SUBJECT GATEWAY CATALOGUES OFFER?

Each gateway maintains its own catalogue, comprising informative descriptions of specially selected high quality Internet resources. All resources are searchable by subject keywords, or by browsing subject headings. As all the resources are pre-selected, this means that those looking for information will only find resources that are informative, useful, and relevant. In other words the user is 'two clicks away from rich information'. In total there are about 100,000 resource descriptions in the RDN catalogue covering a wide range of resources including: lecture notes, tutorials, FAQs, news, reference, government publications, image banks, animations, etc.

HOW CAN I USE THE FREE RDN SERVICES FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING IN SCIENCE?

The RDN gateways offer a range of additional services that provide alternative routes into the resources listed in the catalogues, or exploit particular subject themes. Focusing specifically on science/engineering, some additional services include:

Virtual Training Suite (VTS). The popular and successful RDN Virtual Training Suite aims to help students, lecturers and researchers in UK higher and further education to develop their Internet information literacy and ICT skills (though it is also freely available for any one else to use).

It offers a set of FREE 'teach yourself' tutorials, delivered over the Web, each of which offers Internet skills training in a particular subject area. There's a tutorial for most of the subjects taught in universities and colleges.

The tutorials offer 'any time, any place' training and include quizzes and interactive exercises to lighten the learning experience. They offer a subject-based approach to Internet skills training, enabling you to: Tour key websites, discover how to search the Internet, review and judge websites, and reflect and plan to work efficiently. <http://www.vts.rdn.ac.uk>

Full Text Tutorials and Lecture Notes in the Sciences. PSIGate provides free access to nearly 4,500 full text tutorials and lecture notes in the sciences, accessible via the catalogue. <http://www.psigate.ac.uk/newsite/>

Spotlight. This is an award-winning science webzine authored by a well-known science journalist. *Spotlight* provides monthly articles on topics of current interest in science. All articles are searchable by keyword or browsable by broad subject area. The archive covers all areas of science including such varied topics as: extra-solar planets, DNA, viruses, the Gulf Stream, and toxic wallpaper. *Spotlight* is useful as a source for project and essay ideas, teaching material, keeping abreast of hot topics in science, for promoting science to the public, and for those interested in the process of making the esoteric in science accessible. <http://www.psigate.ac.uk/spotlight/>

World Guide. A very successful series of guides to over 270 countries and territories. The Guide includes articles, features, interactive maps, demographic data, satellite images, scrollable city images, and a data comparison tool. Bringing together a wide range of resources into one place, this popular service is useful for learning and teaching projects and ideas, with a wide variety of visual aids. <http://www.gesource.ac.uk/worldguide/>

Interactive Tutorials and Subject Packs. A set of 92 interactive tutorials covering the basic principles of chemistry and physics provide both problems and worked solutions. This is available from PSIGate. <http://www.psigate.ac.uk/newsite/reference/chemlecs/>

A full text online course in chemistry is also provided by PSIGate, comprising over 70 separate topics in physical and inorganic chemistry. <http://www.psigate.ac.uk/newsite/reference/plambeck/chem1/ua101.html>

Subject Packs are provided on specific topics in chemistry, physics and the earth sciences. Each pack lists and describes ten high quality information-rich web resources that may be accessed immediately. Additional sources of information are also provided. <http://www.psigate.ac.uk/education/>

Hot Topics. *EEVL Hot Topics* is provided in conjunction with Cambridge Scientific Abstracts (CSA), and offers in-depth reports on topical engineering, mathematics and technology issues <http://www.eevl.ac.uk/hottopics.htm>

PSIGate Hot Topics currently contains over 50 separate features on all aspects of science <http://www.psigate.ac.uk/newsite/featured.html>

News and Jobs. *PSIGate Science News and Jobs.* Users can keyword search across 60 news feeds simultaneously for the latest science information. <http://www.psigate.ac.uk/newsite/allnews.html>

EEVL OneStep Industry News. Users can keyword search across 70 news feeds simultaneously for the latest technology and engineering news information. <http://www.eevl.ac.uk/onestepnews/>

In addition, look for **Timelines** and **Quizzes** provided by some gateways.

HOW IS QUALITY ENSURED?

All resources added to the RDN catalogues are individually selected by subject experts or information professionals. Ongoing reviews ensure that the quality and currency of the catalogued material is maintained.

HOW DO I ACCESS THE RDN GATEWAYS?

All the subject gateways are freely accessible via either the central RDN website:

<http://www.rdn.ac.uk/> or via the individual science and engineering related gateways:

<http://www.psigate.ac.uk/newsite/>: Physical Sciences

<http://www.gesource.ac.uk/>: Geographical and Environmental Sciences

[http://www.eevl.ac.uk/Engineering/Manufacturing / Computing/Mathematics](http://www.eevl.ac.uk/Engineering/Manufacturing/Computing/Mathematics)

HOW DO I MAKE CONTACT?

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