

Lucaccept - intercepting the Web

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APRIL 12, 2009...10:52 AM

ProCon - Secondary School debators take note

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I've spent a bit of time looking at ProCon, a website that has as its mission;

“Promoting critical thinking, education, and informed citizenship by presenting controversial issues in a straightforward, nonpartisan primarily pro-con format.”

It's origins are from the United States, so Australian schools will find it limited to some extent, but it does provide good overviews of controversial topics like Drugs in Sport, Euthanasia, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, the US decision to invade Iraq, the Death Penalty and various others. These are issues students in my school investigate so I'll be pointing them to it when they are in the process of formulating their research.

They provide a one minute overview page, did you know facts, and in some cases top 10 pros and cons about issues. Here's a screen capture of part of the Israeli-Palestinian page;

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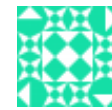
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I've had a look at their about us page to try and find out more about the creators of these pages. There are a number of contributors and if you click on their names you are taken to a [profile page](#) where their educational backgrounds are detailed. You can find on this page information about the researcher who is handling topics on the site. All of these researchers can be contacted via email addresses that are available on their about us page. You can sign up for RSS feeds, share the pages and even follow them on Twitter - they are procon_org.

If you're in a school in Australia and looking for a site that explores current issues, you should consider getting a subscription to [Echo Education Services](#). It's a small organisation doing a really great job for Victorian students but their services are valuable for other Australian States and Territories. Here's what they do;

What is Echo?

The Echo's information content is drawn from newspapers and the Internet. Echo selectively indexes three major Australian newspapers and provides a searchable index on-line.

Echo also publishes regular issue outlines. These are analyses of newspaper treatment of events, controversies etc. The outlines set out the arguments for and against (as put forward by journalists and commentators) and provide background information on the particular issue.

The issue outlines also contain links to vetted, relevant documents and sites on the World Wide Web.

What I have found particularly helpful are the issues outlines pages. The lady who compiles these pages is an English teacher. She scans the newspapers for current issues and puts together a very detailed analysis drawing on the information she has obtained from various newspaper reports, all of which are

referenced at the end of her outline. They have recently started including YouTube content to provide the multi-media angle so necessary in today's ever increasing digital media world. I can't tell you how many students at my school this lady has assisted. Students who are finding it difficult grasping what is required in a critical analysis of a media issue are very often shown the way from her insightful and easy to access information. I was fortunate enough to be able to relay my thanks to her personally when I attended an in-service Echo ran a couple of years ago, She was genuinely surprised. Their service is very cheap; a subscription costs around \$340.00. Well worth the investment.

Check out both of these resources for your students to use. Thanks to [Richard Byrne](#) for sending me to [ProCon](#).

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 1 Comment

1 Comment

[tsheko](#)

April 13, 2009 at 12:00 pm



Thanks, Jenny. Pro-Con looks good and I'll pass it onto English teachers.

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▪ [@EvilSue](#) She said she is quite enjoying it Sue. And no whinging yet I can truthfully report.
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