

## Internet Resources for Rural and Regional Education

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Project Title	Science and Mathematics Internet Resources for Rural and Regional Education: Curriculum mapping project
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Organisational Base	SiMERR SA

### Description

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This project sought to analyse available online resources to identify those with particular potential in the context of regional and rural schooling in the sciences and mathematics, and provide teachers in these locations with access to a database of links to the resources. It involved developing an approach that could identify science and mathematics resources of relevance to rural learners and educators. Various relevant rural industries and issues were identified and used in search engines to identify resources. The resources were then categorized using Loong's typology of web objects and relevance to particular methodologies of teaching. The database of these items was made available as a pilot to 12 mathematics teachers from Port Augusta in 2007. This database is now available broadly on the Internet.

### Participants

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Teachers of Port Augusta Area Schools

### Findings

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While a definitive characterisation of the notion of "rural and remote relevant science and mathematics materials" could not be achieved, some very practical pointers to teachers and educators were found that will be of value for learners in these areas. In particular every rural industry or sector has a corresponding suite of relevant educational materials on the web. Some can be found through straight forward searching but this does not generally give teachers or learners a direct sense of the relevance of the resource to teaching and learning. What remains important will be a middle level (the database itself could be considered middleware) that can sustainably identify the resources and indicate such resources as relevant to educators and student through their connection to curriculum and pedagogy. The pilot of the resources suggests an enthusiasm for such resources generally but especially from younger teachers and teachers new to the rural context.

### Outcomes

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The major outcome of the project was the addition of evidence to the case that a direct focus on 'rurality' of resources for teaching and learning mathematics and science, adds to that teaching and learning. This is not unexpected but in the context of universally available web materials accessible both in school time and out of school time, both from home and from schools, such "middleware" could be a useful supplement to teaching and learning. It is anticipated that a research paper on this project will be published in 2009. The project coordinators will also be seeking competitive research grants to further this and similar initiatives.

### Impact

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Potential exists for rural and remote teachers, and students of the sciences across Australia, to benefit from the database. While the initial 'impact' was tested on a small group of teachers, further dissemination will broaden the impact.

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