President's Letter

When Thomas Jefferson drafted the Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge in 1778, he argued that the surest defense against tyranny was education on a broad scale. He called for the Virginia General Assembly to establish a widespread system that would "illuminate, as far as practicable, the minds of the people at large." The spread of information to all, instead of the privileged few, was critical to his idea of what made a true democracy.

Fast forward over two centuries. The "people at large" are reaping the benefits of the Information Age in a way Jefferson couldn't have anticipated. Thanks to continual improvements to Monticello's Web site and the incorporation of advanced information technology throughout the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, we are able to educate visitors both near and far.

The Jefferson Library's online catalog, the Thomas Jefferson Portal, is an easy-to-use gateway to a wealth of sources on all aspects of Jefferson's life and times, including books, essays, maps, music, photographs, and more. Podcasting and streaming media options available through our Web site offer the opportunity to listen to or watch lectures from just about anywhere. The new Monticello Mountaintop Acoustiguide audio tour allows on-site visitors to hear detailed information while exploring the property at their own pace, and Monticello Explorer, our online in-depth tour, has received numerous accolades both at home and abroad since its launch in April. On average, visitors to our main site stay an average of 14 minutes per visit – an impressive amount of time in the Internet world.

For more focused interests, the Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery allows researchers based anywhere in the world to analyze artifacts and sites at an unprecedented level of detail, while the Family Letters

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Monticello

President's Letter

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Project, a companion to *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, offers more than 450 previously unpublished letters written by Jefferson's immediate and extended family, providing a unique perspective on both the Jefferson family and life in the early 19th century. Forthcoming is the Demographic Database of the Monticello Plantation, which will provide long sought-after details about Monticello's enslaved population. And planning for a Digital Monticello Classroom, a resource specially geared for the needs of teachers and students, is on the horizon.

All in all, it is an exciting time for the Foundation and for students of Thomas Jefferson all over the globe. We encourage all of you who can make a visit to please do so, and see first-hand the many changes and improvements to the visitor experience. For those who cannot visit, our Web site has so many possibilities you'll feel as if you had. This issue discusses many of these exciting possibilities in detail.

Daniel P. Jordan

President

COMMENTS? newsletter@monticello.org

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