

Bookmarking Without Borders

By Lorrie Jackson

WHY A TECHTORIAL?

What will I learn today?

You will learn what social bookmarking is, and try one system of social bookmarking for your class!

What hardware and/or software does the techtorial apply to?

The techtorial applies to anyone with Internet access.

Which National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers does the techtorial address?

The techtorial will help teachers accomplish standard I.b. in particular.

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has developed a set of National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers. Standards or Performance Indicators are included for each techtorial to help teachers and administrators improve technology proficiency. For a complete description of the standards indicated, go to [NETS for Teachers](#).

WHAT IS SOCIAL BOOKMARKING?

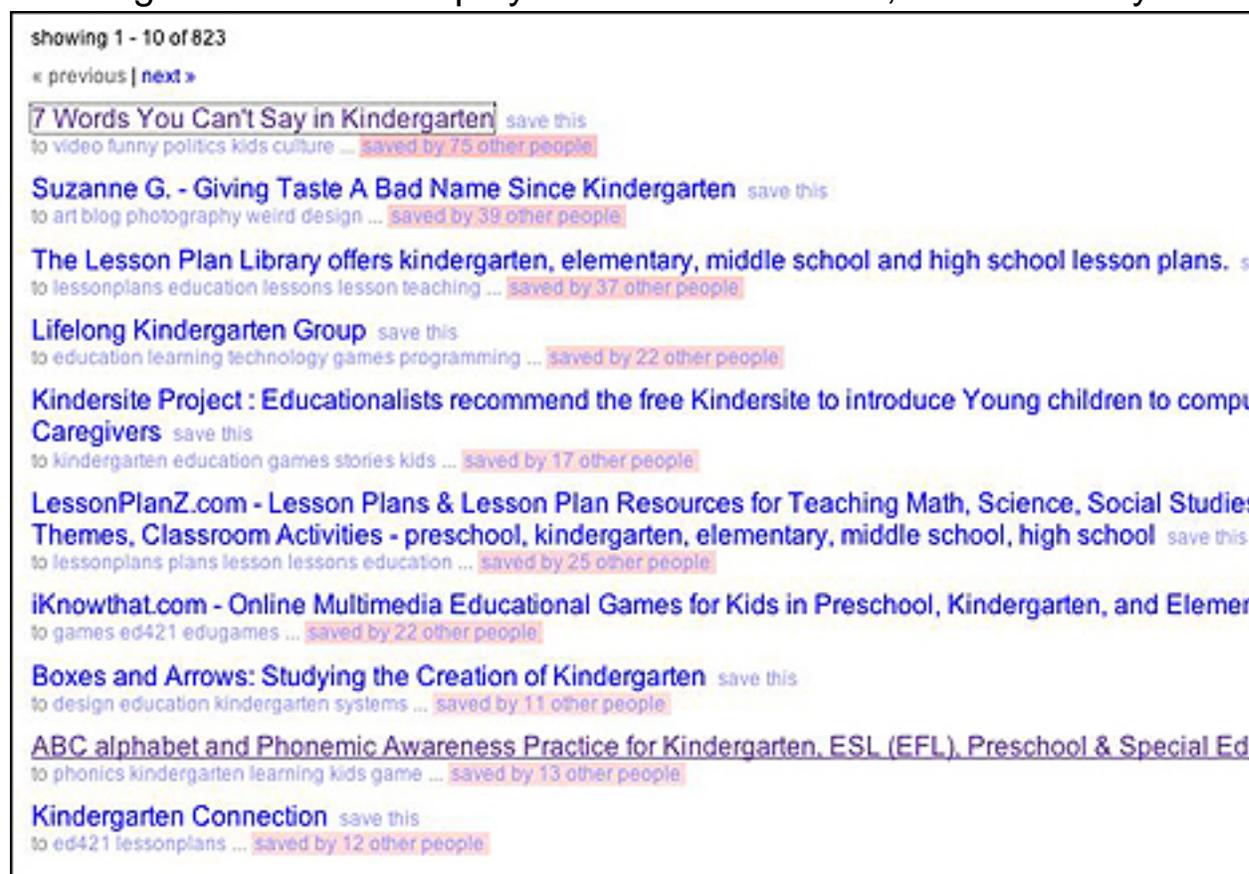
What do you do when you find a Web site you want to save and retrieve later? You probably add it to Favorites or Bookmarks in your browser (Internet Explorer, for example). But there are a couple of problems with that:

- What happens if you bookmark a site at home, and then want to go to it at school, but can't remember the URL?
- Or, let's say you have 100+ author Web sites bookmarked in Internet Explorer and have the sites arranged by authors' last names. You're looking for a great criticism of Jane Austen you had bookmarked, but it's not in the Austen folder. Where is it? And, what do you do when you finally remember it was on a Bronte site? Do you save it twice, once to your Austen folder and once to your Bronte folder?
- Or, suppose you have 23 sites in your Tennyson folder and you need to find one in particular quickly. You remember a phrase from it, but not the actual URL or page title. And your students, year after year, have been discovering some amazing research online and you'd like to take advantage of their efforts by combining their bookmarks with yours. But how?

Social bookmarking solves all those problems! Instead of saving Web sites to your browser's Bookmarks folder, you use an online tool that saves your information on a Web site. Each time you save a new Web page there, you type a few keywords or phrases to help you remember what you liked about the site. Those keywords are called tags. And, most social bookmarking tools allow users to share lists, so you benefit from the hard work of others interested in the same topics.

Sound confusing? Let's look at Del.icio.us, one of the most popular social bookmarking sites.

When you search for a tag -- "kindergarten," for example -- on Del.icio.us, its search engine looks at every bookmarked Web site to find all those saved with the tag "kindergarten." It then displays a list of those sites, much like any search engine:



The screenshot shows a search results page on Del.icio.us for the tag "kindergarten". At the top, it says "showing 1 - 10 of 823" and has navigation links for "previous" and "next". Below this is a list of ten search results. Each result consists of a blue title, a "save this" link, a list of tags, and a pink highlighted box indicating the number of other people who saved the site. The results are as follows:

- 7 Words You Can't Say in Kindergarten** save this
to video funny politics kids culture ... **saved by 75 other people**
- Suzanne G. - Giving Taste A Bad Name Since Kindergarten** save this
to art blog photography weird design ... **saved by 39 other people**
- The Lesson Plan Library offers kindergarten, elementary, middle school and high school lesson plans.** save this
to lessonplans education lessons lesson teaching ... **saved by 37 other people**
- Lifelong Kindergarten Group** save this
to education learning technology games programming ... **saved by 22 other people**
- Kindersite Project : Educationalists recommend the free Kindersite to introduce Young children to computer** save this
to kindergarten education games stories kids ... **saved by 17 other people**
- LessonPlanZ.com - Lesson Plans & Lesson Plan Resources for Teaching Math, Science, Social Studies Themes, Classroom Activities - preschool, kindergarten, elementary, middle school, high school** save this
to lessonplans plans lesson lessons education ... **saved by 25 other people**
- iKnowthat.com - Online Multimedia Educational Games for Kids in Preschool, Kindergarten, and Elementary** save this
to games ed421 edugames ... **saved by 22 other people**
- Boxes and Arrows: Studying the Creation of Kindergarten** save this
to design education kindergarten systems ... **saved by 11 other people**
- ABC alphabet and Phonemic Awareness Practice for Kindergarten, ESL (EFL), Preschool & Special Education** save this
to phonics kindergarten learning kids game ... **saved by 13 other people**
- Kindergarten Connection** save this
to ed421 lessonplans ... **saved by 12 other people**

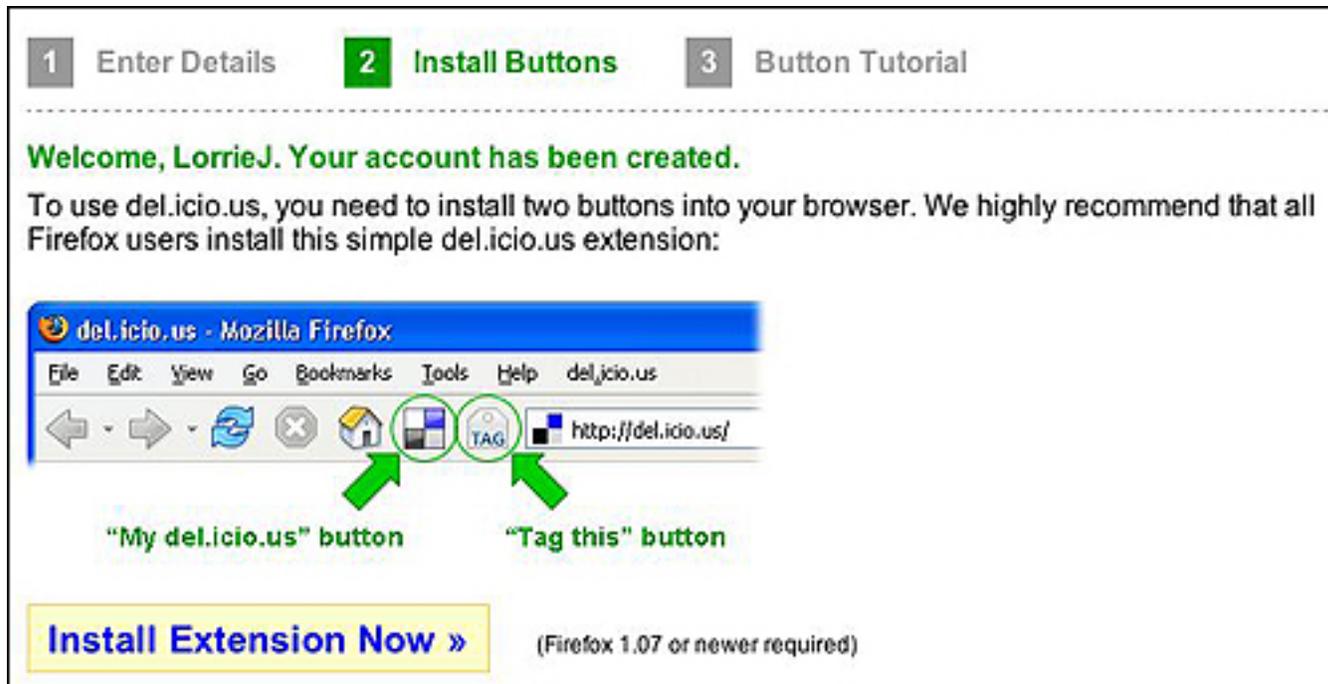
The pink highlighting beneath each listed Web site tells how many users have saved that site tagged with the word "kindergarten."

REGISTER FOR SOCIAL BOOKMARKING

Now, let's find out how to create social bookmarks and use them in the high school environment.

To create social bookmarks, you first must register at a social bookmarking site: Go to Del.icio.us -- or another social bookmarking site -- and complete the one page registration form. Click Register. (You might receive a confirmation e-mail.) Just click the link to confirm your registration.

Del.icio.us and most similar tools install buttons on your browser's (Internet Explorer, Firefox....) toolbar. Click Install Extension Now to add those buttons to your browser. You probably also will have to close and then reopen your browser. Your browser menu bar now should have two new buttons on it:



ADD A BOOKMARK

Now we're all set to bookmark!

- Go to Education World's Techtorial [table of contents](#) page. This is the page we're going to bookmark.
- Click the TAG button you just installed on your menu bar. The window/pane below will appear:

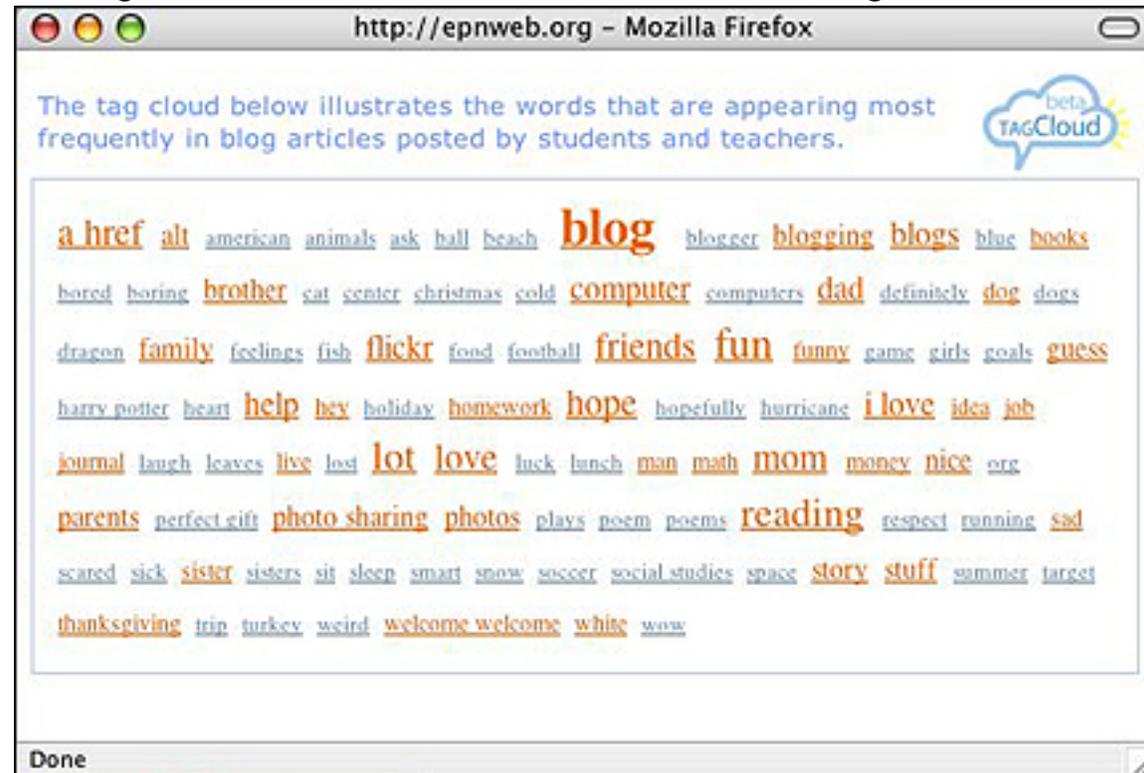
Notice that the site's title and URL appear in the correct blanks. The tags blank, however, is...well...blank. Remember, tags are keywords you might use in a search. So in that blank, type keywords you might use if this is the site you wanted to find. If you were a teacher, for example, who used Excel for grading and Word and the Internet in your early childhood classroom, you might type "Excel Word Internet Early Childhood" as your tags for this site. (Notice that Del.icio.us also has suggested "teaching" as a tag.)

- Click Save.
- Click the blue/black/white checkerboard icon to go to your saved bookmarks. You should see:

Note: As I'm writing this techtorial, you can see from the image above that two other Del.icio.us users also have saved the Education World Techtorial Table of Contents. How many others will have saved it by the time you complete this techtorial?

MORE TRICKS

A couple of other tricks before we move to high-school usage. After you have 12, 120, or 1200 sites saved, you can change the organization of your bookmarks. Look to the right of Del.icio.us page to find the words "view as cloud." That allows you to sort your sites by the tags themselves, which would look something like this:



You would then click on the tag you were looking for and a list of sites you'd saved with that keyword would appear!

Notice how some of the words are bigger or smaller than others? In a tag cloud, keywords are arranged alphabetically, and the size of the words indicates how often they've been used as keywords. The tag cloud above is from a site called [Blogmeister](#), where Blog, reading, and mom are some of the most common tags.

Who knows what the tag cloud for your social bookmarks will look like at Del.icio.us -- osmosis might be the most frequent tag, and basketball the least common tag.

BALANCING INNOVATION AND PRIVACY

Many educators belong to a generation that grew up with Reader's Guide to Periodicals and other research tools that listed information in a linear fashion. Many of today's

students, on the other hand, think in webs and clusters. High school students, therefore, often benefit from social bookmarking because it organizes information as they think.

A lingering concern, however, is that if a tool like Del.icio.us shares bookmarked sites and tags among users, inappropriate content is only a click away from students. In one of the previous screen shots listing the kindergarten search results, for example, one site contained language that was inappropriate even for the high school setting.

So...how can you utilize social bookmarking safely? Consider using a closed system like [BuddyMarks](#), in which only users you designate as your "buddies" have access to your sites and are allowed to combine their tags and sites with yours. That would allow your students to experiment with social bookmarks in a safe environment. Try using them for research projects or science-fair projects, so the information students find can be shared collectively!

TELL ME MORE!

Where can I find more information?

Check out Sites to See article on [Social Bookmarking](#) for the latest on this emerging technology!