Mormonism on the Internet: Now Everybody Has a Printing Press

Gregory H. Taggart
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Mormonism on the Internet:  
Now Everybody Has a Printing Press

Reviewed by Gregory H. Taggart

What to do? The information superhighway is true to its name. It is loaded with information, both good and bogus. The amount of information clogging the highway is worse than a busy freeway interchange and increases daily. Unfortunately, the ratio of good to bad, or at least valuable to worthless, is not very good. And that ratio holds true when searching websites pertaining to Mormonism. Yes folks, the Christian Research Institute, Bill McKeever, and any other html-literate with time on his hands and a bone to pick with the Latter-day Saint Church can set up shop right across the superhighway from the Church Office Building. Sadly, there is no way to eradicate this blight on the highway, so you are going to have to deal with it or learn to ignore it. If you can disregard the bad, there are some wonderful resources on-line, from doctrinal to practical, from inspiring to illuminating.

The purpose of this article, then, is to help you do a little sifting of wheat from chaff, maybe even point you in the right direction. Be advised though that what follows is not an endorsement of any of the websites mentioned. For one, each website can go on and on, page after page, with no end in sight. Nobody would claim to have read an entire website. For another, websites have none of the permanence of printed material. They are amorphous and can and do change daily. What one day could be a certifiable doctrinally correct website, might be anti-Mormon the next. Caveat surfer!

With that little admonition out of the way, let's go surfing now. You will soon discover that Mormon websites fall into two main categories: those that are simply a collection of links to other

All facts and figures are correct at the time of printing, but the dynamic nature of the Internet may lead to changes by the time you access the sites. The website addresses are case-sensitive.
websites and those that have something substantive to offer. Sometimes the two categories mix it up a bit. But it doesn’t take too long to discover when a site has something really valuable or interesting to offer.

The next breakout occurs between those that are offering something entirely new—for example, a forum for discussion of things Mormon or a collection of personal essays on the Mormon experience—and those that have collected previously published material together at one site. The material may be readily available in your own book collection or it may be something arcane or out of print. For me, the net becomes valuable when the old, arcane, or out of print is found there. I also appreciate the attempts of various faithful members of the church who have used their access to the Internet to publish their defenses of the church. Even when their defense is a simple testimony, it is wonderful to see that testimony online and available to those who may otherwise only find anti-Mormon material on the Internet.

Ah, the anti-Mormons. They are a busy little bunch. Give them anything resembling a printing press, and they’ll inundate you with helpful hints to recovery and everlasting life. A word of warning: You get on the wrong page—literally—on the Internet, and you will soon find that you have spent hours linking through and reading some very dispiriting stuff. And believe me, you will feel dispirited. Take care. Answers exist to everything you read out there. Take the time to link back to a site developed by a faithful Mormon to refresh your memory of that fact.

Substantive Websites

Church Doctrine

Deseret News Conference Talks (http://www.desnews.com/confer/talks.htm)

To my knowledge, this is the source for almost immediate access to general conference talks. One link to this site claimed that the talks were online within two hours after they were given. For the really hungry among you, this site is a must!

FARMS Home Page (http://www.farrnsrcsearch.com)

This site is a great improvement over the initial effort. You can now find current issues of the monthly newsletter, Insights. You
will also find articles from the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, *FARMS Review of Books*, various criticism papers, numerous transcriptions of talks from the Book of Mormon lecture series, and monthly specials.

**Joseph Smith’s Documentary History of the Church, 1935 Edition** (http://www.math.byu.edu/~smithw/Lds/LDS/History/History_of_the_Church)

Do you think somewhere in there he said something that could be interpreted to mean that he would someday be published in html language?

**BYU Department of Religious Education** (http://reled.byu.edu)

Apparently, you will find all kinds of information here. For example, the information on the General Authorities discussed below comes from this site; unfortunately, the search engine for the site is currently disabled.

**Standard Works of the Church** (http://erdos.math.byu.edu/~smithw/Lds/LDS/LDS-scriptures)

The complete Standard Works are online; however, they are not formatted well.

**BYU Religious Studies Center** (http://reled.byu.edu/relstctr/relstctr.htm)

Other than their free newsletter, which you can order from the site, not much is here.

**Jeff Lindsay’s Unofficial Introduction to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints** (http://www.athenet.net/~jlindsay/LDS_Intro.shtml)

Jeff, a research scientist for Kimberly-Clark, lives in Appleton, Wisconsin, with his family. He is a 1986 graduate of BYU with a Ph.D. in chemical engineering. Kimberly-Clark apparently isn’t keeping him too busy because he obviously spends a lot of time on his website. Much of the site is devoted to an introduction to the church; however, a wealth of well-researched and well-written answers to some of the more interesting questions a critic of the church might ask is included. Of particular interests are Jeff’s answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). For example, there is an excellent discussion of the temple ceremony and
Masonry, as well as the age-old grace/works controversy. All in all, Jeff’s is one of the better LDS websites. My favorite spot on his site is semicommercial, Jeff’s CultMaster 2000 Software. As Jeff warns, it is not for the “comically impaired.” To develop his revolutionary software, Jeff used the powerful concept of “Semantic Redefinition for Exclusivity,” a marvelous programming technique.

WWW LDS Visitors Center (http://www.mich.com/~romulans/lds.html)

The creator of this site has brought together a lot of previously published material about the church under the title of Online LDS Institute. Included are the Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith and Gospel Doctrine.

Book of Mormon (www.hti.umich.edu/relig/mormon)

Topical/searchable Book of Mormon by word or phrase. Very useful.


Among other links and information, you will find seven separate accounts of the first vision.

World Wide Web Links Related to Mormonism (http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~dbowie/mormwww/mormonwww.html)

This site, run by David Bowie, has its share of links to Mormon sites, including a passel of those anti-Mormon critters (euphemistically called “sites unfriendly to Mormonism”). But my reason for coming to Bowie’s site is his Disputed Mormon Texts Page (http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~dbowie/dispute/dispute.html), which contains all sorts of documents purporting to be authentic and inviting a response from someone as to their authenticity. Another reason to visit is Lighten Up! (http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~dbowie/armlc/armlc.html), a site that says it represents the best in LDS humor. No, I don’t think this is the cartoon page of the New Era. Check it out and let David know what you think.
Religious and Sacred Texts (http://webpages.marshall.edu/~wiley6/rast.htmlx)

If you are looking for links to most of the world’s religious texts online, look no further. And of course, you will find Mormon texts here too. Lots of the “best books” to “seek ye out of.”

Facets of Religion, Virtual Library of Religion (http://sunfly.ub.uni-freiburg.de/religion)

An award-winning site, providing a wide array of interesting and informative material on the world’s religions, including Mormonism, which is found under Christianity.

LDS Index (http://www.cyberhighway.net/~vchopine/ldsindex.htm)

This is another link site, but with a difference: The creator of the site links only to articles on another site. So instead of a link to FARMS, for example, you go to a topic on the LDS Index site and click on the topic. An index of articles on the web on that topic appears with links to the various articles. I found it very easy to use, quite well-organized, and useful.

Allen Leigh’s Mormon Page (http://www.shire.net/mormon)

Another effort by a faithful member of the LDS Church to help people understand LDS beliefs. You will find Allen’s book The Immortality and Eternal Life of Man here.

History


What a resource! Here you will find links to the Encyclopedia of Mormonism, to journals, and to short biographies of important Mormon people. You will find a link to David Kenison’s Church History Stories Collection, also found at www.xmission.com/~dkenison/lds/ch_hist/chron.html. The story of Mary Fielding Smith and the blessing of her oxen is here. So is the inspiring journal entry of Joseph Millet, “the Lord knew there was such a person . . . .”
Joseph Smith Daguerreotype (http://www.comevisit.com/lds/js3photo.htm)

Maybe I have been on another planet. Maybe I have seen it and just failed to pay attention. Visiting this site and actually paying attention, for the first time I saw what is supposed to be the only actual photograph of the Prophet. It stirred my blood to look into the eyes of the man I have known and loved, but have never actually seen. A must visit.

Dave’s LDS Resources (http://www.xmission.com/~dkenison/lds/index.html)

I really enjoy this site for two reasons: Dave Kenison created the LDS-Gems Listserver, and you can sign on here. He has also collected over 280 church history stories, all available here.

Genealogy

Cyndi’s List of Genealogy Sites on the Internet (http://www.oz.net/~cyndihow/sites.htm)

This lady is not about to let you forget to redeem the dead. At the time of printing, her web page advertises over 16,550 genealogy links, “categorized and cross-referenced, in over 60 categories.” If you are into redeeming your dead, you cannot pass up this website.

Kindred Konnections (http://www.kindredkonnections.com)

This is another incredible genealogical site with free downloadable software and extensive databases. This site is already getting over 11,500 hits a day, and that is just from this side of the veil.

The Genealogy Lady (http://www.new-jerusalem.com/genealogy/questions.html)

Go ahead and ask her. She promises answers within three working days. I have talked to very knowledgeable genealogists who give her high marks.
**Missionary**

The Official Home Page of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (http://www.lds.org)

If you know nothing about the LDS Church, you may find this site interesting. If you want to know the top ten languages spoken by members or which countries have the largest membership, you may want to visit this page, which also features a Global Media Guide with basic information about the church. If you hope that this page will grow and someday take advantage of the Internet as a publishing medium, you may want to visit this page to be there when it happens.

General Authorities of the Church (http://reled.byu.edu/pres/genauth/genauth.htm)

Photographs and biographies of all current General Authorities of the church. Just click on the picture and read away.

World Wide Web 1st Ward (http://www.uvol.com/www1st)

A fun site with some good resources, built around the theme of “Proclaim the Gospel, Perfect the Saints, Redeem the Dead.” You will find resources here, whatever your calling in the church, from ideas for ward Christmas parties to inspiring testimonies.

New Jerusalem (http://www.new-jerusalem.com)

This is one of the most complete LDS sites on the Internet, with links galore. The Book of Mormon Answerman (Walter Martin reincarnated and repentant?) is a fun place to stop for the weird question and the appropriate answer. Home of the Genealogy Lady.

The LDS Second Coming of Christ Research Group (http://users.aol.com/clintg777/private/lastdays.html)

A list, with scriptural references, of events leading up to the second coming.

Gene’s LDS Page (http://wymple.gs.net/~gene/lds.html), which includes the “Anti” Rebuttal Page (http://wymple.gs.net/~gene/anti.html)

One of many pages on the Internet devoted to answering the numerous Mormon critics who have set up shop in cyberspace.
All about Mormons (http://www.mormons.org)

A well-constructed site with excellent introductions to basic Mormon beliefs, most of which come from the Encyclopedia of Mormonism. There are also attempts by unidentified writers to answer critics. I think it was at this site where I first became a little frustrated that very few websites on Mormonism identified the people behind them.

LDS Evidences Home Page (http://www.geocities.com/WallStreet/1777/ldsstuff.html)

I like this page; it is one man’s attempt to meet the critics head on. Most of the material is written by Gerald Smith, the creator of the site.

Mission.net (http://www.mission.net)

If you are looking for the place on the net where you spent the best two years of your life, this is the place. It links to five different sites of indexes of mission home pages, describing the advantages of each.

Mormon Investigator/New Member Home Page (http://www.nettally.com/lds/chur.html)

The site is almost entirely home spun by Richard Hardison of Tallahassee, Florida. In the main, it seems to do a pretty good job of explaining the church to its intended audience. He even points out that new members should soon expect home teachers to show up. One unintended funny spot: In his questions and answers on Mormonism, he responds to the following question: Do Mormons dress funny? “No, just modestly. Perhaps you are confusing us with the Amish of Pennsylvania.” So it is the Amish who dress funny? Now, I remember.

Testimonies and Personal Essays

Nauvoo (http://nauvoo.com)

Nauvoo is an effort of Orson Scott Card and others to create, among other things, an online forum for discussion of issues of interest to faithful Latter-day Saints. Originally only available on America Online, it recently moved to the Web. Having used the AOL site, I can say that the new website has potential if it follows in the footsteps of its predecessor. You will find the Nauvoo
Forum for discussion and Vigor and the Red Brick Store for Mormon fiction and essays.

Calcum Fides (http://members.visi.net/~atom/totally/TEST_MAIN.html)

This site is worth visiting to read the fervent testimonies and thoughtful conversion stories of faithful Mormon websurfers.

Miscellaneous

LDS Statistics Center (http://www.webcom.com/gutches/statist.html)

Drew Gutches, the creator of this site, makes no claims to accuracy; nevertheless, this is a fun site for those interested in the growth of the church, viewed from many different angles. Unfortunately, the site is in transit. You can reach Drew at gutches3@aol.com to get the new address.

Brigham Young University Home Page (http://www.byu.edu/newhome.html)

Ricks College (http://www.ricks.edu)

BYU—Hawaii (http://www.byuh.edu)

BYU Athletics (http://www.byu.edu/~byusport)

These sites include just about anything you need to know about church colleges and universities, including faculty and student directories, program descriptions, and coming events.

FatherWork (http://fatherwork.byu.edu/fathrwrk.htm)

An interesting site developed by Drs. Dollahite and Hawkins, together with Family Science students at BYU, to promote good fathering. Here you will find the stories of fathers in all kinds of circumstances, as they do their best to be fathers to their children.

Bonneville LDS Radio Network (http://www.bonneville.com/Ids)

Just what the name says. You will find all you need to know about what, where, and how to receive their signal.

Nick’s done his homework. This site includes every published temple dedicatory prayer. He has even worked with the webmaster of the online version of the Billings Gazette to have a link to that paper, so members can keep up on the Billings, Montana, temple news.


Prepared jointly by Jared Demke and Scott Vanatter, this site contains one of the most comprehensive discussions of chiasmus I have seen. I am not an expert on chiasmus, but if the breadth of this site and its organization are any indication of content, this is worth a stop, but bring a lunch. You may be here a while.

The LDS Deaf Connection (http://www.bolingbroke.com/LDC/deaflds.html)

Hats off to Drew Gutches. This is apparently the second site developed by him, each filling an important niche. The first is the LDS Statistics Center, devoted to an interesting array of church statistics. The LDS Deaf Connection, on the other hand, is devoted to deaf church members. Symposia, meetings, missions, and the like, all pertaining to the deaf, are listed here. This site also includes Mormon’s Story,¹ an adaptation of the Book of Mormon “written for anyone who has difficulty understanding the Book of Mormon.”

LDS Hymns-MIDI Page (http://www.uleth.ca/~anderson/midi.htmlx)

I cannot vouch for the contents of this page. I can only tell you it is here. [Ed. note: the midi files are good quality.] My browser is not set up to listen to music. If your browser is set up properly and you have the right equipment, you can listen to LDS hymns, the children’s songbook, and other music stored here.

LDS Scouters Page (http://www2.dtc.net/~mpearce/scouts/scouts.htm)

For you who think scouting came first and then the Book of Mormon, this is the place.

LDS-Singles Connection (http://www.singles.lds.net)

LDSSingles.com (http://www.ldssingles.com)

LDS Singles.online (http://www.ldssingles.com)

LDS Friends Worldwide (http://www.downtown-web.com/cfw)

You can track the divorce rate in the church by the number of websites devoted to matchmaking for the heartbroken. These are my four favorites (I am divorced). The first two give you a trial membership and then charge for the service thereafter. The third is free.

Around the Punchbowl (http://members.aol.com/itstessie/sngl/index.htm)

This is not another dating service. Instead, it tries to fill the needs of the LDS singles community with talks to singles by General Authorities, singles conference announcements, and other things of interest to single members of the church.

Zarahemla Book Shoppe (http://www.xmission.com/~zarahmla)

The Amazon.com of Mormonism. 

Links to Websites of Faithful Mormons

Eby’s CyberScroll (http://www.teleport.com/~arden/religium.htm)

Maintained by Arden L. Eby, this site has links to websites pertaining to most of the world’s religions, including a large number of LDS links. A very good place to start.

LDS Info (http://www.ldsinfo.org/index1.html)

Another, of many, comprehensive link sites. Links to LDSSA, ward and stake homepages, the Book of Mormon. And on and on and on.

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2 Amazon.com is arguably the largest source of books on the Internet, currently at 2.5 million in and out of print.

The Yahoo list of resources on the LDS Church on the Internet. This fairly extensive list includes what Yahoo labels as opposing views, which include much of the same anti-Mormon information you are familiar with and a new stripe you may not know about: Recovery from Mormonism.

LDS World (http://www.ldsworld.com)

Brought to you by Infobases, the company that brings you so many of the LDS CD-ROM on the market. Though this site has its commercial aspects, it provides well-organized links to a variety of Mormon sites, including news sites such as KBYU and Bonneville International, and mission homepages. It also purports to have 493 links to other Mormon sites.

Pearls, The Best LDS Websites (http://drzeus.cache.net/lds)

Pearls appears to be the unofficial judge of LDS sites, based on suggestions to and the opinion of Pearls’s creator, John Visser (DrZeus@cache.net). Visit his site first and you are assured of the best on the net, maybe. By the time I reviewed Pearls, I had already written about 34 websites and had visited many more. The color of hypertext on the Pearls site tells me that I have visited only half of the 37 sites listed there. Better get a move on!

Mike Pearce’s LDS Church Page (http://www2.dtc.net/~mpearce/church.htm)

Yet another page of links to LDS sites with a nice addition: Mike has a link to his page of LDS Graphics.

And Now for Something Completely Different

I have held off as long as I can. There is another side to Mormonism on the Internet, and it looms large. I even read one post in the Nauvoo Forum (http://nauvoo.com) where an LDS web surfer complained that all he found on the Internet was anti-Mormon material. You get into the wrong set of links, and you will begin to think the same thing. If you are just dying to get mad at the distortion, the misrepresentation, or the condescension (this is the only word that describes the Recovery from
Mormonism movement) of the anti-Mormon faction on the Internet, then let me be your guide. But I will only take you so far because I cannot stand it any more. Your first stop should be the Yahoo Search site at (http://www.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture/Religion/Christianity/Denominations_and_Sects/Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter_day_Saints). Click on Opposing Views, and you are off. The first site, Alpha Internet Ministries (http://www.alphamin.org) asserts their objective pretty clearly:

We cordially invite you to come in and find a seat in the Main Reading Room. We have built our site entirely in the spirit of a statement made by Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt, who, in 1853 said these words: “... convince us of our errors of doctrine, if we have any, by reason, by logical arguments, or by the word of God, and we will be ever grateful for the information, and you will ever have the pleasing reflection that you have been instruments in the hands of God of redeeming your fellow beings from the darkness which you may see enveloping their minds.” The Seer, pp. 15-16 (1853).

If that is all they are doing, no problem. But of course, the cordiality goes out the door as quickly as you can say, “Fawn M. Brodie,” and it is all down hill from there.

Mormon Matter (http://www.rainfrog.com/bill/mormon.shtml) gets rave reviews on the anti-Mormon circuit. This site is where the word condescension came to mind as I prepared this article. I guess if you are going to expose my religious beliefs as a fraud, it is nice to be cute.

Mormon Links (http://www.california.com/~rpcman/MORMON.HTM) is about as good as it gets for comprehensive links to what is “wrong” with Mormonism. The creator of the site brings B. H. Roberts to do battle for him and takes on FARMS (“the Foundation for Acquiring Rich Mormons’ Salary,” he calls them) by out ad hominemizing them. He even provides you with a link to the definition of ad hominem (in case you are Mormon and don’t know what it means, I suppose).
Of course, this is just a short list of all the websites dealing with Mormonism, pro- and anti- alike. Remember, Infobases's site claims to link to over 493 sites, and that was just the so-called faith-promoting sites. Still, in my opinion these are the best of the lot. If you wander the web enough, you will discover that many, if not most, of those 493 sites are little more than links to other sites (now you know why they call it the Web) with little new and substantive added. Besides, you should be studying your scriptures anyway.

If I have left a great site off the list—and I am positive I have—please feel free to e-mail me at gtaggart@fiber.net. And remember, spamming (offensive practice of sending unsolicited e-mail to vast numbers of individuals) is not good Internet etiquette.