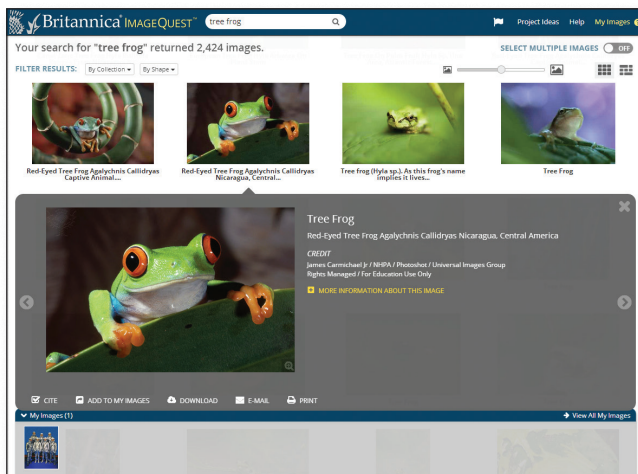


# Best Databases

Watch science spring into action with these must-have resources

By Mahnaz Dar



Britannica ImageQuest

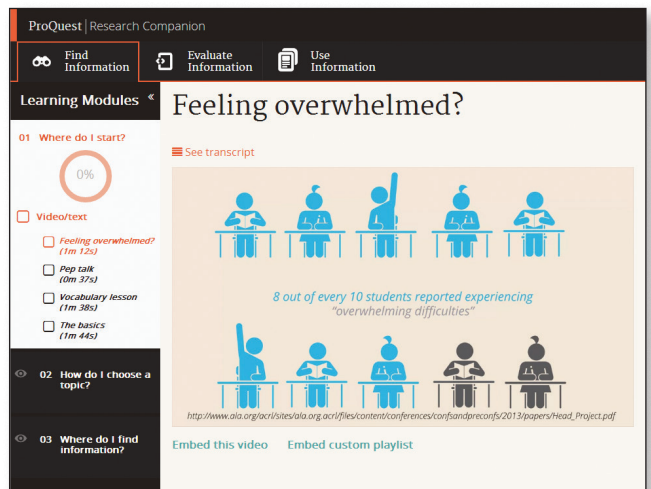
## Britannica ImageQuest

**K Up**—If a picture is worth 1,000 words, then this database is a veritable treasure trove of information. This latest update of Image Quest (first released in 2010) includes two million additional images, up from one million. Ease and simplicity are the hallmarks of this compilation, which allows users to search for images on their own or to choose from well-curated albums. Students and educators are free to use the pictures in reports or school websites or newsletters, and all are accompanied by metadata (including captions, source, and copyright holder). Users seeking specific subjects will easily find what they need, but there's plenty of opportunity for discovery here, too, and along with the tried and true, students may even find some pleasant surprises as they browse. No library should be without this database, which caters to an incredibly wide array of users.

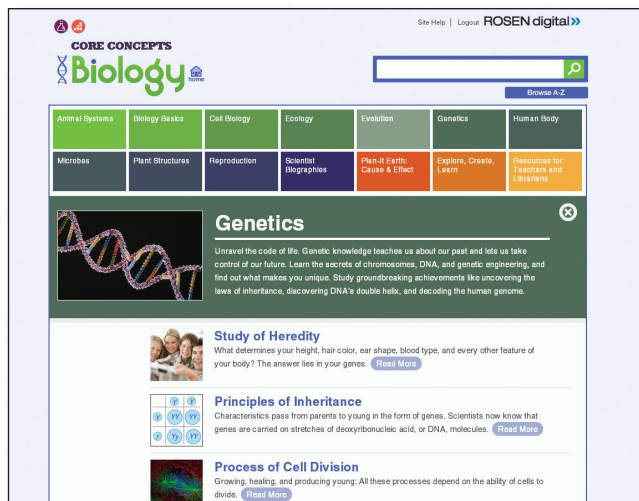
**W**ITH MORE AND MORE LIBRARIANS SCALING back on encyclopedias and thinking twice before investing in expensive multivolume sets, selecting the right database has become more vital than ever. Though there's a plethora of options that have become available over the past year, the best selections go beyond providing students with raw information, featuring interactive elements and activities. The importance of STEM is reflected here, but, even more significantly, these innovative offerings give students a chance to see science come to life. The results are in: a roster of dynamic and on-point databases that will more than meet 21st-century student needs.

## ProQuest Research Companion

**Gr 9 Up**—Perhaps the most important lesson that librarians can impart to students isn't knowledge of any one particular subject area but rather how to collect, evaluate, and read sources: in



ProQuest Research Companion



Rosen "Core Concepts": Biology

other words, a basic guide to research. This database does the trick. It's accessible and intuitive, marked by an encouraging tone—all vital elements for teens facing down their intimidating research assignments. Learning modules comprised of short videos walk students through each step of the process, from how to get started and pick a subject to vetting research sources to finally putting it all together in essay form. This one should be a staple of any high school collection.

### Rosen "Core Concepts": Biology; Chemistry

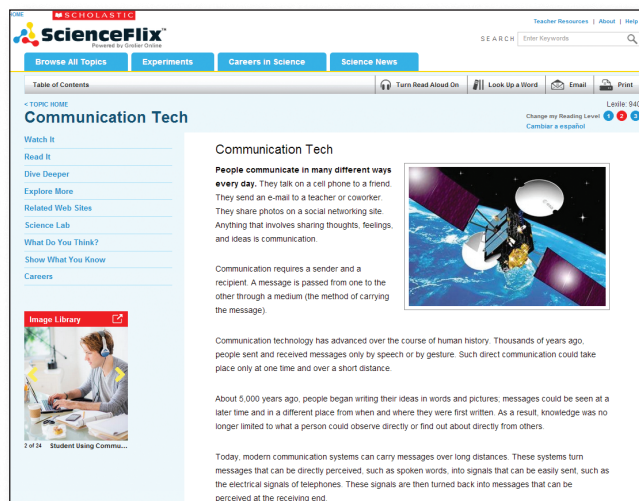
**Gr 6 Up**—Rosen's "Core Concepts" products have long been valuable resources, and these latest additions are no exception. Both databases greet users with an attractive interface, displaying categories such as "Biochemistry," "Chemical Reactions," and "Reproduction." Chemistry and biology can be complex, even daunting subjects, and the accessible, simple language and use of images throughout break down topics and will inspire confidence in users. Strong further reading lists make good foundations for future research, and there are plenty of interactive elements here, too, from games to activities to experiments. Nicely cross-referenced and supporting the Next Generation Science Standards, this resource will bolster middle and high school science curricula.

### Scholastic ScienceFlix

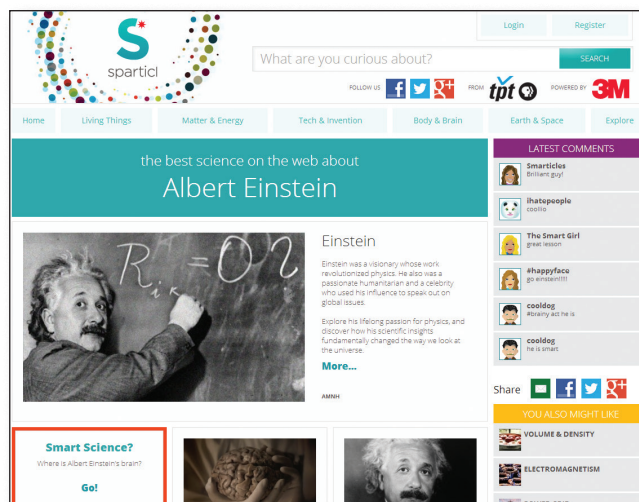
**Gr 4 Up**—Meeting Next Generation Science Standards is a crucial—though often overwhelming—undertaking. With a subscription to ScienceFlix, educators and librarians need not fear. Alluring in design and simple in text, this resource tackles earth science, physical science, the human body, and more. Related websites and relevant experiments distinguish this one from dry, encyclopedic materials: there's plenty of opportunity to experience these topics in action, and aspiring scientists are in for a treat.

### Sparticl

**Gr 8 Up**—Good news for librarians and teachers hampered by a shoestring budget: there's an effective—and free—way to pres-



Scholastic ScienceFlix



Sparticl

ent middle and high school students with top-notch science. Created by Twin Cities Public Television and sponsored by 3M, Sparticl combs through the science on the Web, presenting age-appropriate and valuable websites on everything from "albinism" to "zoonotic diseases," from vetted and respected sources that include PBS, Discovery, NOVA, and the BBC. The interface screams user-friendly. The layout is clean, and though the homepage features vibrant colors and attractive icons, even the most easily distracted student will be able to navigate this one with ease.

Sparticl offers preselected subjects divided by general topics ("Living Things," "Matter & Energy," "Tech & Invention," and more), as well as a search option, making it appropriate for users looking for report topics and for those tasked with assignments. Interactive elements such as games, videos, and quizzes are peppered throughout, jazzing this resource up and keeping it well out of the realm of dry academia.

*Mahnaz Dar is associate editor, SLJ book review.*