

The Smithsonian Learning Lab

Collaboration

Cognitivism

Constructionism

Social Learning

[The Smithsonian Learning Lab](#) is a **collaborative web-based learning platform** that features videos, audio files, texts, and historical artifacts from the Smithsonian's 19 museums, 9 research centers, and zoo. Created by the Smithsonian Center for Learning and Digital Access, the Smithsonian Learning Lab is meant to be a resource that inspires educators, youth, and the public to explore the Smithsonian's digitally archived content. Users can create "collections" of materials on specific topics, share their collections, and add to other users' collections as well. There are millions of texts, recordings, artifacts, and videos accessible through the Smithsonian Learning Lab, and accessing these digital materials is made simple through a search using keywords or phrases relevant to a topic of interest. The Smithsonian Learning Lab allows students to think and explore like a historian, organize collections like a museum curator, and even draw connections between history and any subject they are studying.



[Watch on YouTube](#)

[Watch on YouTube](#)

Tool Snapshot

Price	Free
Learning	Constructionism , Cognitivism , Social Learning
Ease of Use	★★★★☆
Privacy	★★★★☆
Accessibility	★★★☆☆
Class Size	Unlimited
Login	No
ISTE*S	Empowered Learner; Knowledge Constructor; Creative Communicator
COPPA/ FERPA	Yes

Ease of Use

The site earns 4 out of 5 stars for its ease of use. This tool is easy to figure out and there are two [instructional videos](#) on how and why to use the Learning Lab on the homepage. Simply using the navigation bar to search for content will bring the user to the resources they are looking for as well.

Privacy

This tool earns 4 out of 5 stars for privacy, because while their policies are comprehensive, they still collect some data from their users. Upon creating an account, users are greeted with links to the [Smithsonian Institution's Privacy Statement](#), as well as the [Smithsonian Kids Online Privacy Statement](#). Both statements outline the protection users are afforded while engaging with this tool. Users are provided with options to opt out of communications or to delete account information at any point and the Smithsonian provides a detailed description of ways user and child data are maintained and used. According to their policies, users will always be notified of changes and updates to existing privacy policies and statements.

COPPA/FERPA Compliant: The Smithsonian Learning Lab pays specific attention to articulating COPPA and FERPA compliance in its general [Privacy Statement](#). The Smithsonian Learning Lab undergoes a yearly certification of compliance by iKeepSafe through the [COPPA Safe Harbor Program](#). The Smithsonian Learning Lab also holds the [iKeepSafe FERPA Assessment Badge](#), which they describe as a badge that indicates to schools and parents that their content is in compliance with FERPA regulations.

Accessibility

This tool only earns 3 of 5 stars for accessibility because the navigation options are somewhat limiting. While users can use keyboard shortcuts to navigate the search bar, selecting content and collections of materials is slightly challenging if a user only has access to a keyboard. Additionally, further research into the tool yielded no published accessibility statement, which may indicate noncompliance with ADA standards, and additional accessibility options remained unclear after testing.

ISTE Standards

Empowered Learner

- Students can customize their learning environment by curating collections of digital artifacts and materials to support their learning.

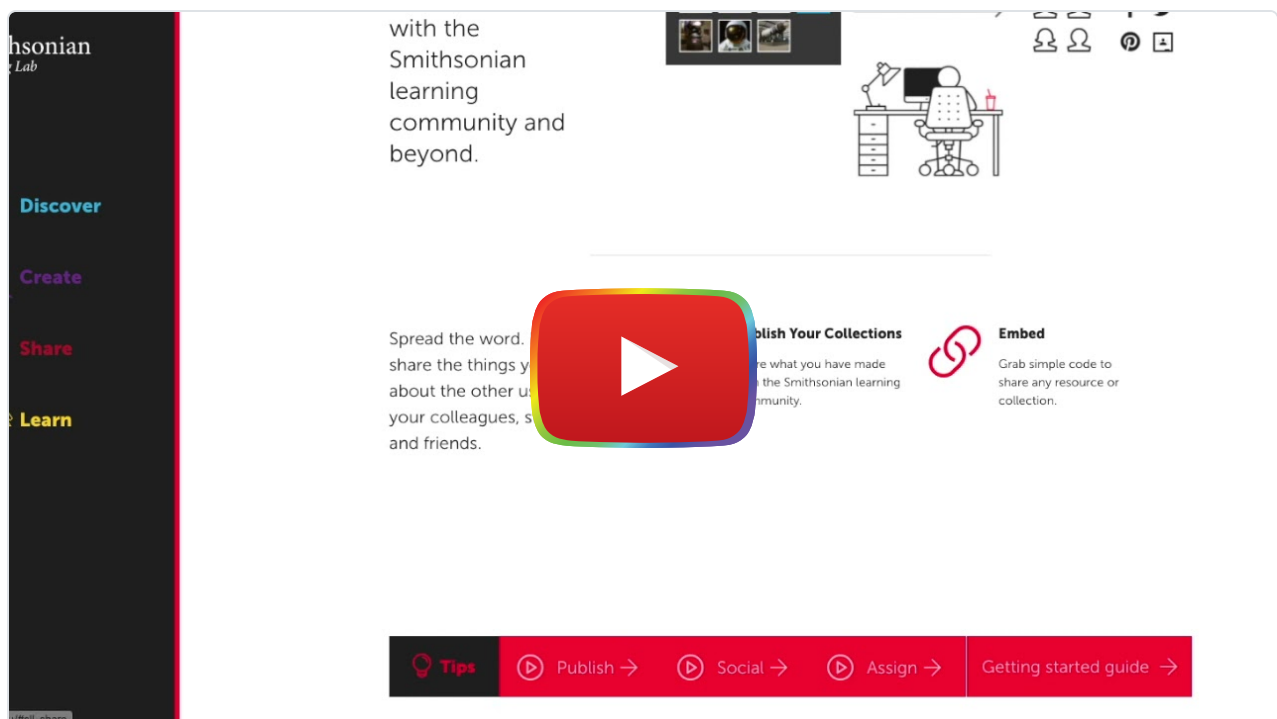
Knowledge Constructor

- At its core, the Smithsonian Learning Lab is a content curation tool that allows students to construct knowledge by collecting and organizing digital artifacts from the Smithsonian.
- When interacting with the site, intellectual criticality and examining resource diversity are encouraged through exploring examples of others' collections.

Creative Communicator

- Students can remix digital resources into new creations and collections to express their vision and personality for assignments.
- Students can construct and share their creations through a variety of platforms, tools, and digital media.

4 Reasons to Use the Smithsonian Learning Lab



[Watch on YouTube](#)

The Smithsonian Learning Lab & the SAMR Model

Dr. Ruben Puentedura's [SAMR model](#) offers a lens for examining how technology is adopted in a classroom. Here is an example of how the **Smithsonian Learning Lab** might fit within the SAMR model:

- **Substitution:** Students use collections to research and learn more about a specific topic, which substitutes the need for a visit to the library to seek resources.
- **Augmentation:** Students can explore pre-designed collections by others which might include audio, video, or hyperlinks to further resources.
- **Modification:** Students have the ability to organize videos, essays, photos, and artwork into a thematic collection of their specific area of interest.
- **Redefinition:** Students who might not traditionally have access to visit the Smithsonian museums, research centers, or zoo in person can still engage with and access millions of digital materials from these places

Far too often, technology is used as a direct substitute for other low-tech tools (e.g., pencil and paper). While substitution has some benefits (e.g., students develop their technology skills and knowledge), we encourage you to think about how you might use the Smithsonian Learning Lab to modify or redefine learning.

Learning Activities

Science

Students can search the Smithsonian Learning Lab database to see archival materials used in innovative scientific research programs, as well as articles or related resources that help to explain or define a certain scientific concept. For example, if a student is working on a project about space exploration, they could input “space travel” in the discovery search bar, which would present resources and collections of space exploration materials to analyze.

English/Language Arts

Students have the ability to see source documents within the Smithsonian’s collection and can investigate these documents for reading activities. Documents such as field journals, diaries, and letters, as well as biographical information about historic writers and their written works are accessible through the Smithsonian Learning Lab. Students can search as specifically as they like for content that relates to their interests, research, or assignment requirements.

History/Humanities

History and the humanities are interwoven throughout the majority of the content available through the Smithsonian Learning Lab. As is the case with many museums, the content provided by the Smithsonian is an archive of historical documents, materials, artifacts, and information. Students could research The Reconstruction Era to see artifacts and documents that show the complex history of American Democracy.

Other

Students have access to resources available via the entire Smithsonian, providing a myriad of opportunities for learning relevant to historical and archival content. If a topic or idea has been recorded in history, it is highly likely that the Smithsonian Learning Lab can provide access to it and/or related content.

Resources

- [Online Resource Review of the Smithsonian Learning Lab](#)
- [What is the Smithsonian Learning Lab?](#)
- [Why Use the Smithsonian Learning Lab?](#)
- [Common Sense review for The Smithsonian Learning Lab](#)

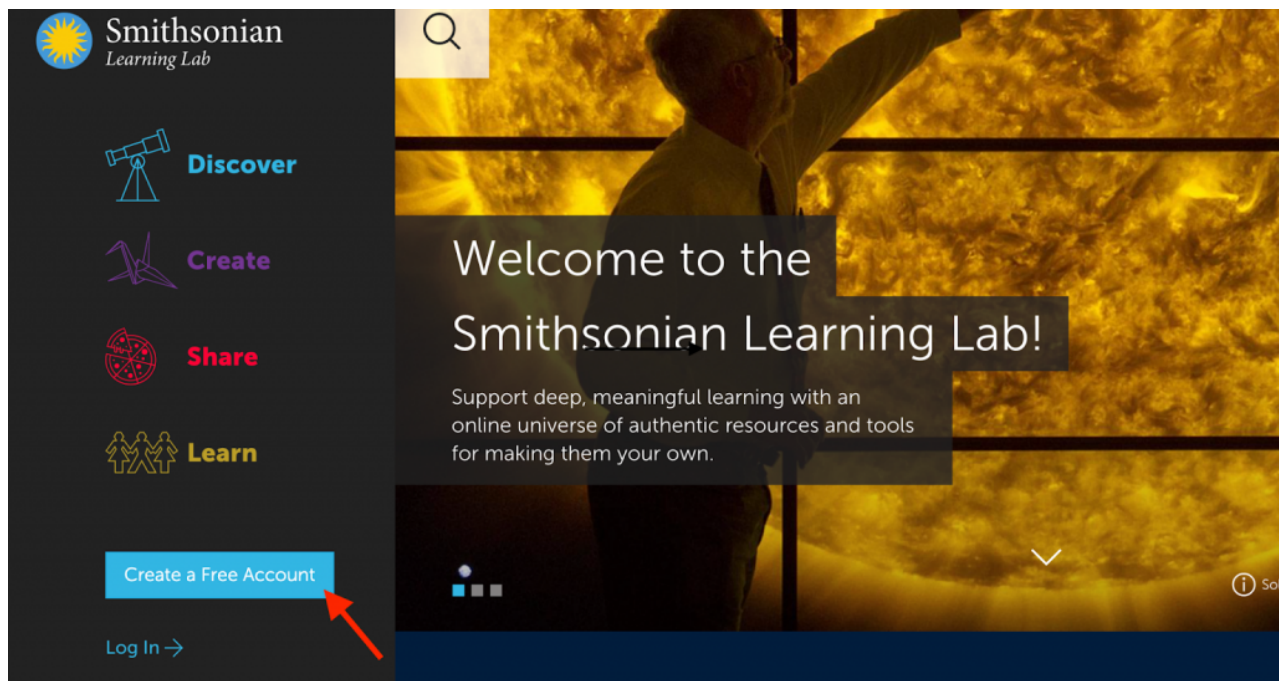
How to Use the Smithsonian Learning Lab

Users can peruse the [“Getting Started Guide”](#) or follow the directions below to begin using the Smithsonian Learning Lab.

1. Go to <https://learninglab.si.edu>.



2. Click “Create a Free Account” and sign up for an account.



Create a Free Account

What is your date of birth?

Month Year

Continue

[Smithsonian Privacy Policy](#)

[Smithsonian Kids Online Privacy Statement](#)

3. Begin using the Learning Lab.
4. Click the “discover” icon on the navigation bar to open a search bar to search the Learning Lab’s content.

Smithsonian Learning Lab

Discover

Create

Share

Learn

Discover

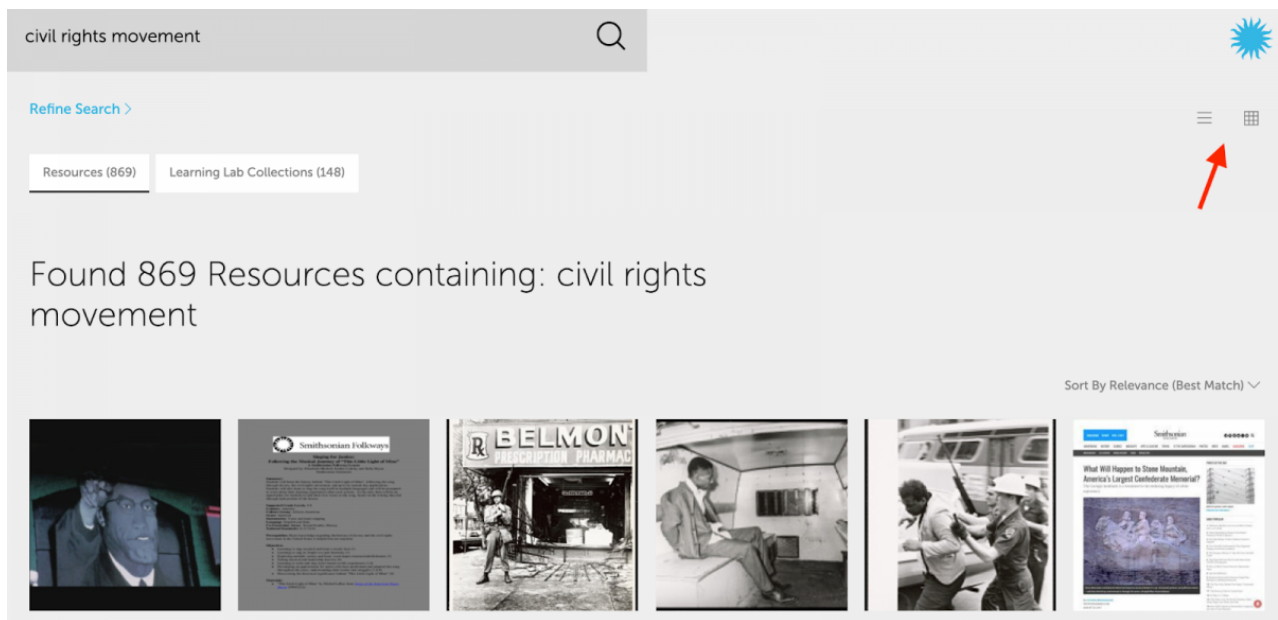
Try your first search for resources or collections.

What will you find in Smithsonian Learning Lab?

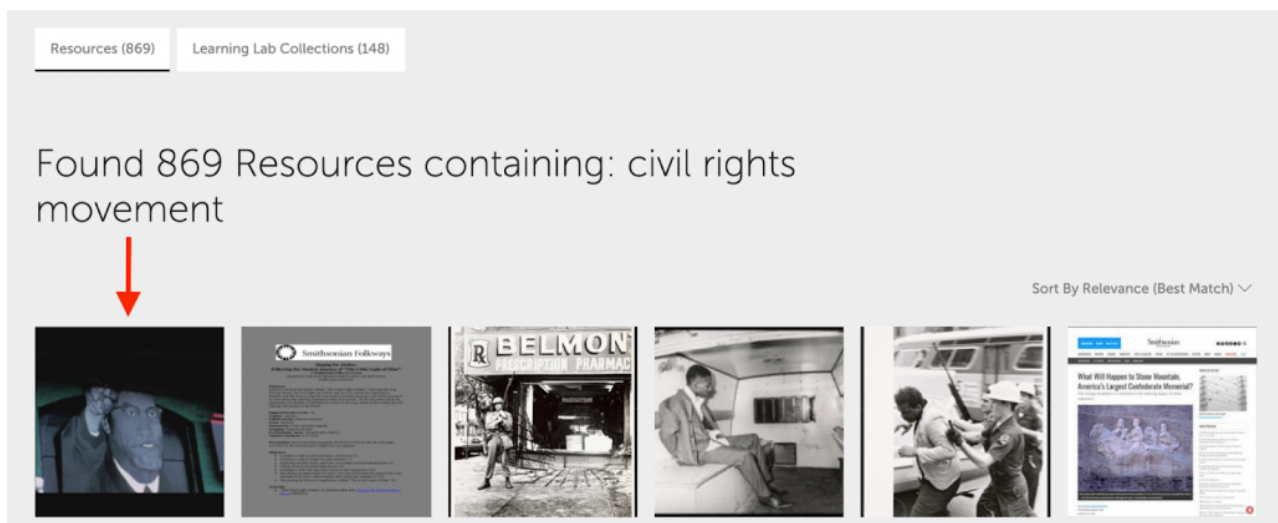
Resources
Millions of Smithsonian digital images, recordings, texts, and videos in history, art and culture, and the sciences

Collections
Thousands of examples of resources organized and structured for teaching and learning by educators and subject experts

5. Choose grid or list view to scroll through collections of materials on any given subject.



6. Select a collection by clicking on it to view or read the content within.



7. Click the “Info” icon (blue box with “i” symbol) to find a description of the original source, the material type, the medium, dimensions, and description of the content you are viewing or interacting with.

Malcolm X Liberation University (Black Journal segment)

SOURCE
National Museum of African American History and Culture

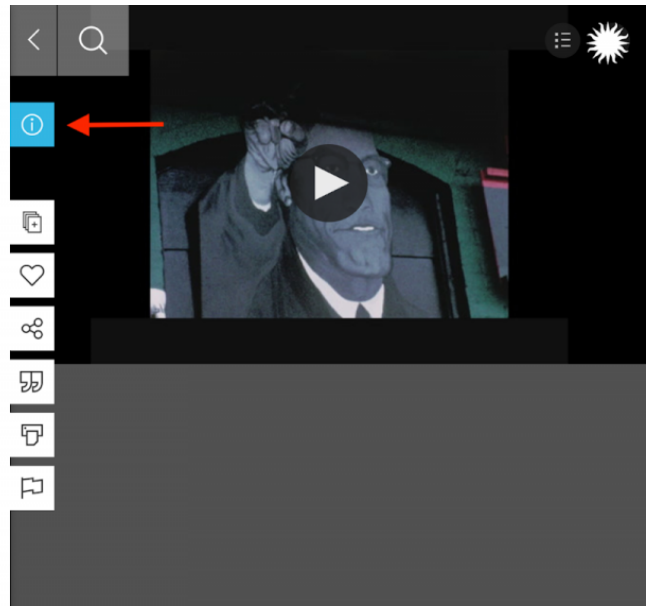
OBJECT TYPE
color films (visual works) • short subjects • 16mm (photographic film size)
• sound films

MEDIUM
acetate film and metal

DIMENSIONS
Duration: 10 Minutes
Length (Film): 320 Feet

DESCRIPTION
This 16mm color film is a short documentary subject made for National Educational Television's Black Journal television program. Producer St. Clair Bourne chronicles the opening of Malcolm X Liberation University in North Carolina. It consists of: a 16mm film (a), original 400 foot film reel (b), and original 400 foot film canister (c).

2012.79.1.68.1a: The film opens with a student meeting/rally at Duke University, in which one unidentified student speaker (male) states why they longer wish to participate in a system they don't believe speaks to the needs of African American college students. A male narrator begins to speak, explaining what the Black Student Movement at Duke University was and how it originated and morphed



Research

Milligan, D., Wadman, M., & Ausland, B. (n.d.). [Discovering, creating, and sharing digital museum resources: a methodology for understanding the needs and behaviors of student users](#). MW17.

Rappoport, P., & Liguori, A. (2019). [Digital Storytelling in cultural and heritage education. Reflecting on storytelling practices applied at the Smithsonian center for learning and digital access to enhance 21st century learning](#). *Andreas Moutsios-Rentzos*, 63.

Zinger, D., Naranjo, A., Amador, I., Gilbertson, N., & Warschauer, M. (2017). [A design-based research approach to improving professional development and teacher knowledge: The case of the Smithsonian learning lab](#). *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 17(3), 388-410.

Authors

This page was created by Sam Torres.



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