

One of the windows into the wider world for American Samoa is its presence on the World Wide Web. In the Internet age even paradise needs a digital address. The Web offers instant access and information to anyone who seeks it, and American Samoa's presentation there is an essential component of its image and viability in the 21st century.

Close to a decade ago the American Samoa Historic Preservation Office was a territorial pioneer in the Internet universe when it launched its website at www.ashpo.org. Over the ensuing years its offerings of information about our islands' history have attracted more than a third of a million on-line visitors—"hits" in computer talk.

Curious visitors and serious researchers can do everything from watch a video about Tutuila's role in the Apollo 13 mission to check out historic photo galleries to take a guided walking tour of historic Fagatogo to consult an exhaustive bibliography of works on Samoan history and culture. Internet links to many other pertinent websites are provided along with a descriptive guide and directory to other cultural organizations in the Territory.

Earlier this year ASHPO undertook a major enhancement of its website, supplementing its video and audio offerings (in Samoan and English), updating its bibliography pages, and adding about 5000 pages of new documents to its download section, including many of the Governor's reports from the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. There is also a new section with download links to National Register of Historic Places Nominations for sites in the Territory. A student-helpful Research Tips page has also been added. There is now also a Comments page where you can contribute.

It is a true treasure-trove of free information available to all. Check it out—www.ashpo.org—340,000 other people already have.

The famous American astronomer Carl Sagan (who visited American Samoa in 1986) once said, "You have to know the past to understand the present." Historic preservation serves the future by enlightening the present.