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Research and Education

Toward a More Accurate Measure of the Cost of Living (Boskin Report) [.pdf]
http://www.stat-usa.gov/BEN/boskin.pdf

This report, issued to the US Senate Finance Committee by the Advisory Commission to Study the Consumer Price Index (chaired by Michael J. Boskin), has been made available by PoliticsNow (discussed in the August 16, 1996 issue of the Scout Report) and Stat-USA (from the US Department of Commerce). The main conclusion of the report is that the Consumer Price Index "is not a true cost of living index," and "that changes in the CPI have substantially overstated the actual rate of price inflation." The main recommendation of the report is that the BLS (Bureau of Labor Statistics) should develop a Cost of Living Index (COLI) to measure inflation. The PoliticsNow site contains a special report analyzing the issues involved in this arcane yet controversial report. Note that Stat-USA, although a generally for-fee site, is offering free access to the report at this time. [JS]

Pursuing Excellence: A Study of US Eighth-Grade Mathematics and Science Teaching, Learning, Curriculum, and Achievement in International Context
http://www.ed.gov/NCES/timss/

This study, recently released by the US Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, claims to be "the most thorough international study of math and science education ever conducted." The report's main conclusions include: "The content of US eighth-grade mathematics classes is not as challenging as that of other countries, and topic coverage is not as focused; and evidence suggests that US teachers do not receive as much practical training and daily support as their German and Japanese colleagues." In addition to the report of initial findings (in HTML and Adobe Acrobat .pdf versions), there is a news release from the Department of Education and information about a videotape classroom study that accompanied the main study. This is the first of a series of reports that will cover "US mathematics and science education for fourth, [eighth] and twelfth grade students in an international context." [JS]

Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation I.D. (Institution Directory)
http://192.147.69.47/drs/
FDIC
http://www.fdic.gov/

The US FDIC has recently made its Institution Directory available. This searchable database allows users to "obtain demographic data and financial profiles of each FDIC-insured depository institution derived from quarterly reports filed with Federal regulators." Users can search by certificate number, bank, geographic location, charter, chartering agency, federal regulator, primary insurance fund, and asset and deposit size. Retrieval can be sorted by any of 7 variables. Information returned includes balance sheet and income, loan portfolio/asset quality, and balance sheet details. Each report is linked to a glossary of terms. Quarterly and annual data is available back to December

1993. This is a significant addition to a site that already carries a staggering amount of information about United States banking. [JS]

Polymers and Liquid Crystals Virtual Textbook [Frames, Shockwave]
http://abalone.cwru.edu/tutorial/enhanced/files/textbook.htm
Previous version (less browser intensive):
http://abalone.phys.cwru.edu/tutorial/old/main.htm

This newly enhanced site is the result of a cooperative effort between the Department of Physics and the Department of Macromolecular Science and Engineering at Case Western Reserve University in conjunction with the Center for Advanced Liquid Crystalline Optical Materials (ALCOM) at Kent State University. The project aims to demonstrate the potential of the hypertext multimedia medium for instructional use, and is still under development (occasionally users will come across an "under construction" notice). Topics covered include polymers, liquid crystals, polymer liquid crystals, polymer dispersed liquid crystals, polymer stabilized cholesterics, and liquid crystal displays. The previous version, which debuted in January 1996, has been enhanced with more video and audio, frames, and a glossary. Throughout the text, users are invited to enter the Virtual Laboratory, in which browser applets allow control of experiments demonstrating the principles under discussion. A CD-ROM version of the textbook is planned. [ML]

Frank Lloyd Wright Designs for an American Landscape 1922-1932
http://lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/flw/

The US Library of Congress has recently made parts of this exhibition (November 14, 1996 - February 15, 1997) available at its web site. It includes an overview and introduction, along with text and graphic information on five of the great architect's projects (none of which was ever realized): Gordon Strong Automobile Objective, Lake Tahoe Summer Colony, Doheny Ranch Development, A. M. Johnson Desert Compound, and San Marcos in the Desert. Each of these projects explored "advanced building technologies and untried geometric patterns" that attempted to integrate architecture and environment. The site is a fascinating glimpse at an architect who was far ahead of his time, and perhaps ahead of ours as well. [JS]

Photovoltaic Energy—Electricity From Sunlight—Bibliography
http://www.doe.gov/phv/phvhome.html

The US Department of Energy has recently opened this web site, a searchable and browsable collection of "hypertext bibliographic citations of current worldwide information available on all aspects of photovoltaic amorphous technology, polycrystalline thin films, gallium arsenide, crystalline silicon, concentrator technology, and systems research." PHV is updated on a bimonthly basis. Current releases are browsable and back issues searchable. Retrieved items contain bibliographic information, abstracts, and full text when available. When full text is not available, acquisition information is given. [JS]

Tulip Book of P. Cos—1637
http://www.bib.wau.nl/tulips/

Those with an interest in the historical side of commercial horticulture will enjoy the efforts of the Wageningen Agricultural University Library (Netherlands) in bringing a facsimile of a 1637 manuscript tulip book to the web. Published by nurseryman P. Cos of Haarlem, the 75-page book contains 54 gouaches of tulips, followed by 14 additional drawings and 7 watercolors of carnations added at a later date. "In comparison with other tulip books, this one is special because not only their names are mentioned, but also their weight and the price for which each bulb was sold." Each page of the book occupies its own web page, and the image files average 30KB. A table of contents lists the name of the flower depicted (as indicated by the book itself), its selling price, and its weight. The site's content and navigation system are presented in English. [ML]

DISABLED—Disability within a social and relational context mailing list

DISABLED aims to examine ways of exploring disability within a social and relational context. It takes a dialectical approach to the body and psyche which attempts to resist both social or biological determinism. The forum aims specifically to examining the emotional experience of disability, from the perspective of both sides of the "disability"/"ability" binary. It is interested in: therapeutic work, self-help and social forms of empowerment, as resources in challenging disabling barriers in contemporary society; fostering critical dialogue among medical, social and psychological perspectives on physical impairment and learning difficulties; and discussion of post-structuralist theory, in deconstructing current assumptions about normality and difference. [JS]
To subscribe send email to:
        LISTSERV@SJUVM.STJOHNS.EDU
In the body of the message type:
        SUB DISABLED yourfirstname yourlastname

General Interest

10 Downing Street
http://www.number-10.gov.uk/
Text only:
http://www.number-10.gov.uk/to/index.html

The British Prime Minister's Office has recently opened a web site, 10 Downing Street. Although it does contain selected Prime Minister's speeches, transcripts, and interviews, Prime Minister's biographies (back to Harold Macmillan at present), and a tour of #10, its greatest utility is as an entry point to British executive department government sites. The Cabinet Ministers' Biography section contains information on 23 ministers and links to cabinet web sites. There is also a page of government department pointers. [JS]

Three Region-Specific News Sites
Central Europe Online
http://www.centraleurope.com/
Russia Today
http://www.russiatoday.com/
Inside China Today
http://www.insidechina.com/

These three websites, all services of the European Information Network, bring English-language news and background to users each weekday. Central Europe Online covers the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and Slovenia; Russia Today gathers news about Russia, the Confederation of Independent States, and the Baltics; Inside China Today covers Mainland China, Hong Kong and Macao, and Taiwan. All three sites offer current headlines (along with the time that they were most recently updated), business news, travel information, and links to local media. New stories are drawn primarily from Reuters. Each site has its own system of organization which, though easy to navigate, is not directly consistent with that of the other sites. An archive holds issues dating back two weeks. Users who want to stay current on issues affecting these regions will benefit from the professional approach these sites bring to coverage. [ML]

Internet Public Library Online Text Enhancements
http://www.ipl.org/reading/books/

The well known Internet Public Library has recently revised its online texts collection (a beta revision) to make it available for searching and browsing by author, title, and Dewey Classification. The significance of this enhancement lies in the way the site is organized. Here is an actual "book" library, arranged in ways that users can quickly make sense of. Each entry is accompanied by bibliographic information, including title, author, date, Dewey Classification(s), and hypertext URL(s). There is an interesting, though not yet perfected, feature that allows users to link to similar works. A key feature is the listing of books under multiple classifications; one of the prime advantages of a virtual book collection, it dramatically improves access. At present, the library contains pointers to over 3,400 books. [JS]

Companies Online—Dun & Bradstreet and Lycos
http://www.companiesonline.com/

Dun and Bradstreet, the business information provider, along with the Internet search directory Lycos, has made available this database containing cursory information on over 60,000 public and private US companies with web sites. The quantity of the database is more important at this site than the amount of data available about each site (which is rather scanty, even for the enhanced registered user's retrieval). There are several search options, but the main feature of the site is a hyptertext connection(s) to each retrieved company. [JS]

World's Widest Web—Venice Beach (California) Virtual Tour   [Frames, QuickTimeVR, Shockwave]
http://www.powershot.com/widestweb/index.html

Canon Computer Systems, in a thinly veiled advertisement for its PowerShot 600 digital camera, presents this innovative "scroll on the beach webumentary" of Venice Beach, California. The unique aspect of this multimedia tour is not so much the tour itself as the navigation method used to take it. Rather than anything so simple as a bulleted list, the creators have made a horizontal menu (in the middle frame) that is fifty feet (42,000 pixels) wide. Click on graphical menu items while scrolling across this menu, and the tour items appear in the bottom frame. Of course, the menu could have been half as wide, but it would only have been half as much fun. And the tour itself, based on the book *Venice Beach, Coney Island of the Pacific*, by Jeffrey Stanton, gives the viewer a very nice taste of one of the more bohemian of American cities. Note that those with slow connections need not apply. [JS]

Christmas96.com—A Photographic Celebration
http://www.christmas96.com/

There are many, many sites devoted to aspects of the Christian holiday on the web this year. Christmas96.com goes beyond the usual carols, dancing reindeer, and egg nog recipes to present a unique photographic view of Christmas around the world. Last year, fifty photojournalists traveled the globe, capturing images of seasonal observances in many cultures; the results are available on the site, as well as information about this year's shoot. Visitors to the site can read the stories behind the photos, send digital greeting cards featuring the images, and suggest an idea for new photos (or submit their own!). The site is commercially backed, so there are many opportunities for users to gather ideas from several sponsors in the areas of holiday travel, Christmas in New York, gift giving, and entertaining. There are also brief summaries of other seasonal observances and links to sites giving fuller coverage of Hannukah (see last week's Scout Report for a site we recommend) and Kwanzaa (to be covered in next week's Scout Report). [ML]

Vacation-Talk Mailing List

Vacation-Talk is an open, unmoderated discussion list to bring vacationers, travelers, timeshare owners, exchangers and renters, hotels, condos, dude ranches, rv parks, airlines and travel agencies together. Join for free and start discussing your vacation plans. Seek advice or provide advice. Ask for offers or offer your condo, timeshare, apartment, RV etc. Ask for special offers or submit your special holiday offers. Exchange your view about Disney World, Sea World, SixFlags WaterMania or Wet'n Wild. Put your timeshare up for sale or place a request to buy one. [JS]

To subscribe send email to:
        MAJORDOMO@MISSION-A.COM
In the body of the message type:
        subscribe Vacation-Talk

Net Tools

InterNIC WebFinder
http://ds.internic.net/ds/webfinder/WebFinder.html

InterNIC Directory and Database Services has recently released a new Internet search directory that "finds web pages associated with organizations." Rather than search the text of pages, titles, or URLs of web pages with spider technology, "WebFinder uses the [search query] provided to search an external database of organizations." The external database at present contains over 760,000 items. For each query, many web pages associated with the organization can be returned. Users can receive a partial or complete list of hits. Although the help file is small at this point, this is an interesting concept in the organization of retrieval for a web search engine. [JS]

Web Spoofing: An Internet Con Game
http://www.cs.princeton.edu/sip/pub/spoofing.html   [PostScript, MS Word]
Safe Internet Programming
http://www.cs.princeton.edu/sip/

The Safe Internet Programming group at the Princeton University Department of Computer Science has published a paper on the practice known as "web spoofing," through which an attacker intervenes between an end-user browsing the Web and real Web sites. The attacker sets up a shadow copy of the Web, and as users request pages from sites they will receive pages from the attacker's site instead. This process also enables attackers to gather data (possibly credit card numbers, etc.) submitted through bogus web forms. The nine-page paper describes how the con game works and suggests remedies. The article is available in PostScript, compressed PostScript, Microsoft Word, and zipped Microsoft Word format. Unfortunately, it is not available online as HTML. The SIP web site offers other publications, research, and news about Internet security, though no mention is made of the macro virus problem with Microsoft Word. [PJD]

RealAudio 3.0 Final Version Released
http://www.realaudio.com/hpproducts/player/index.html
Scout Toolkit Web Tools Section:
http://scout.cs.wisc.edu/scout/toolkit/webtools/plugins.html

Progressive Networks RealAudio has ended its beta test period for the 3.0 version of its streaming audio software. The 3.0 player is freely available. The basic advantage to the 3.0 version is improved sound quality, especially over ISDN or better bandwidth. RealAudio also offers an enhanced, for fee version of the player which allows scanning of the Internet for radio stations, among other features. For more information on RealAudio see the Scout Toolkit Web Tools Section. [JS]

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