

IAT INFOBITS

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About INFOBITS

Infobits is an electronic service of the Institute for Academic Technology's Information Resources Group. Each month we monitor and select from a number of information technology and instruction technology sources that come to our attention and provide brief notes for electronic dissemination to educators.

[Humanities Education Web Site Debuts](#)

[Technical Support Gap -- Part 2](#)

[Polls of U.S. Students Reveal Educational Aspirations](#)

[Future of Scholarly Publishing](#)

[Going Around in Circles and Riding the Rails on the World Wide Web](#)

[Scary Women](#)

HUMANITIES EDUCATION WEB SITE DEBUTS

EDSITEment, a Web site designed to improve computer-based education in the humanities, made its debut Oct. 27, 1997. The site was developed by a public-private partnership among the National Endowment for the Humanities, MCI Communications Corporation, and the Council of the Great City Schools. EDSITEment "will list and provide links to the top sites in the subject areas of history and social studies, English and language arts, foreign languages and art history; it will provide online Learning Guides to the materials; it will suggest activities that reinforce learning through the Internet using the EDSITEment resources." Humanities Web sites are selected from among hundreds of submissions by review panels of humanities specialists meeting twice a year. Submissions are judged on the quality of content, effectiveness of design and potential for positive impact in the classroom. Among the first 20 sites featured on the site are: the University of Pennsylvania's African Studies Web pages, the American Association of Teachers of French Web site, the American Verse Project, Columbus and the Age of Discovery database, the National Archives and Records Administration's Digital Classroom, the Latin American Network Information Center, and the Victorian Women Writers Project.

The site is located at <http://edsitement.neh.fed.us/>

For more information about EDSITEment, call the National Endowment for the Humanities at 800-634-1121.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT GAP -- PART 2

The higher education administrators who responded to *The Edutech Report's* information technology annual poll ("Hot Issues 1997-98" by Thomas Warger, *The Edutech Report*, vol. 13, no. 6, September 1997, pp. 1, 3, 6-7) confirm the predictions reported in last month's Infobits (see "Technical Support Gap Grows on Campuses," September 1997 *IAT Infobits*) that hiring and retaining IT staff will continue to be a major problem in 1998.

Many software companies are turning to Web-based technical support to improve services and hold down costs. The article "Web-Based Tech Support Offers Savings and Convenience" (*The Heller Report: Internet Strategies for Education Markets*, vol. 3, no. 4, October 1997, pp. 3-5) offers several ideas that could also be adopted by campus IT centers to improve support services. For example, some of the time-consuming troubleshooting via the telephone might be reduced or replaced by using the Web as the user's first stop for technical help. A Web-based help desk could include answers to frequently-asked questions, online forms that users could use to describe and submit their technical problems, and searchable collections of support materials and manuals.

Support centers that turn to more automated services can also use the Web to maintain a more personal connection with their users. Some companies report higher user satisfaction when their Web pages include pictures and biographical data for support personnel. Although the IT support staff shortages are disturbing, centers should not discount the value of these simple, low-cost tactics to make and keep the lines of communication open between staff and users.

The Edutech Report [ISSN 0883-1327] is published monthly by EDUTECH International, 120 Mountain Avenue, Bloomfield, CT 06002-1634 USA; tel: 860-242-3356. Annual subscriptions are \$97 (U.S.)

The Heller Report: Internet Strategies for Education Markets is published monthly by Nelson B. Heller, 9933 Lawler Avenue, Suite 560, Skokie, IL 60077 USA; tel: 847-441-2920; fax: 847-674-2882; email: info@hellerreports.com; Web: <http://hellerreports.com>
Annual subscriptions are \$397 (U.S.); \$197 (schools & teachers); \$437 (international airmail).

POLLS OF U.S. STUDENTS REVEAL EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

Two surveys of U.S. high school students reveal optimism for their futures and the desire for more challenges in their current education.

In July 1997 the Drexel University Center for Employment Futures asked 2,001 teenage students their opinions about their future employment opportunities and their educational aspirations. The survey results were published in "Drexel University Futures Poll: Teenagers, Technology and Tomorrow." Asked about their educational aspirations after high school, 51 percent of the students polled plan to obtain at least a four-year college degree, about 61 percent strongly agreed that a college degree is necessary for success in their careers, and 46 percent strongly agreed that a degree from a graduate school will soon be necessary for success. The survey respondents said that the most important high school courses for their career success were mathematics, English, biology, chemistry, social sciences, and physics. The complete report is available on the Web at <http://www.drexel.edu/univrel/FuturePoll/fpindex.html>

The Drexel University Center for Employment Futures, comprised of Drexel faculty, studies changes in the way people make their livings. For more information see <http://www.drexel.edu/univrel/FuturePoll/fpindex.html#poll001>

"Getting By: What American Teenagers Really Think About Their Schools" is a report of a study based on a national telephone survey of over 1,300 high school students conducted in November 1996 by Public Agenda. The poll found that "most teenagers believe that 'getting an education' is important to their lives. Contrary to popular belief, they would like to do well in school, and youngsters across the board -- white, African-American, and Hispanic -- say they admire, rather than look down on, classmates who make good grades. Like most adults, they express some skepticism about people who are 'highly educated,' but they clearly recognize the value society places on a college degree. Most say they plan to continue their education beyond high school; few see any alternative path to an acceptable future." In contrast to the Drexel report, the survey also revealed that students see "little reason to study academic subjects such as history, science, and literature." They also felt that they could and should be held to higher achievement standards than they are now expected to attain in high school. The complete report can be ordered for \$10 (U.S.) from Public Agenda, 6 East 39th Street, 9th Floor, New York City, NY 10016 USA. A summary of the study is available on the Web at <http://www.publicagenda.org/aboutpa/aboutpa3b.html>

Public Agenda is a non-profit public opinion research and citizen education organization founded in 1975 by social scientist and author Daniel Yankelovich and former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. For more information about Public Agenda, see their main Web page at <http://www.publicagenda.org/>

FUTURE OF SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING

In "The Specialized Scholarly Monograph in Crisis; Or How Can I Get Tenure If You Won't Publish My Book?" (a conference held in September 1997) participants examined the current state of scholarly publishing in the humanities and social sciences and "explored the potential of new technologies to provide both new means of dissemination and

new formats for conducting research and communicating the results." The conference was sponsored by the American Council Of Learned Societies, the Association Of American University Presses, and the Association Of Research Libraries. Papers presented at the conference include "Why Do We Write Stuff that Even Our Colleagues Don't Want to Read?" by R. Stephen Humphreys (Professor of History, University of California, Santa Barbara); "Just-In-Time Scholarly Monographs, or, Is There a Cavalry Bugle Call for Beleaguered Authors and Publishers?" by Scott Bennett (Director, Yale University Library); and "University Publishing in the Electronic Age: A Collaboration among University Presses, Libraries and Computing Centers" by Sheila Creth (University Librarian, University of Iowa Libraries). Most of the conference papers are now available at <http://www.arl.org/scomm/epub/program.html>

More information on conference sponsors is available on the Web:

American Council Of Learned Societies: <http://www.acls.org/>

The Association Of American University Presses, Inc.: <http://aaup.uchicago.edu/homepage.html>

Association Of Research Libraries: <http://www.arl.org/index.html>

For other readings related to the conference see:

"Academic Presses Look to the Internet to Save Scholarly Monographs" by Karen J. Winkler, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, vol. XLIV, no. 3, September 12, 1997, pp. A-18, A20.

"Scholarly Monographs are Flourishing, Not Dying" by Ken Wissoker [Editor in Chief, Duke University Press], *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, vol. XLIV, no. 3, September 12, 1997, pp. B4-B5. The article argues that scholarly publishing is not in a crisis.

"The Future of Scholarly Publishing" by Sanford G. Thatcher [Director, Pennsylvania State University Press], in the Letters to the Editor section of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, vol. XLIV, no. 9, October 24, 1997, p. B10. Thatcher's letter counters Wissoker's argument.

For further reading on the future of scholarly publishing, see also these recently-published books:

Robin P. Peek and Gregory B. Newby, eds. *Scholarly Publishing: The Electronic Frontier*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996. ISBN: 0-262-16157-5.

Elizabeth Logan and Myke Gluck, eds. *Electronic Publishing: Applications and Implications*. Medford, NJ: Information Today, Inc., 1997. ISBN: 1-57387-036-6.

Geoffrey Nunberg, ed. *The Future of the Book*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. ISBN: 0-520-20451-4.

GOING AROUND IN CIRCLES AND RIDING THE RAILS ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

You've learned all the idiosyncrasies of Web search engines. You carefully collect and organize your Web bookmarks. Still, as you follow the network of Web links do you often ask yourself how did I get here and how do I get back to where I started? Rings and Rails are two devices designed to help users travel among topically-related Web pages without losing their way.

The Webring (or Web Ring) strategy links together sites or pages with similar content in a circle, or ring. The user enters the ring at any point and then can move to the next or previous link in the ring by clicking a navigational link on the page. Since all the links are connected to each other in a circle, you can move between links without getting completely lost. Eventually the ring will return you to your original starting point. At RingWorld, the online directory of the Webring system, over 15,000 active rings are listed covering areas such as education, literature, social sciences, and science. For more details visit Webring at <http://www.webring.org/>

Using the metaphors of trains, railroads, and train station junctions, The Rail helps users navigate between related subjects in a linear, rather than circular, fashion. The user does not eventually return to his starting point as in a Webring, but is given the option of "changing trains" or moving to another set of related links on another topic at any point in his travels from link to link. You can start your rail journey at <http://www.therail.com/>

At this time The Rail has fewer links than the Webring system; however, there are many sites using both the Webring and The Rail connections, so that a user can choose the navigational device that he prefers.

Another navigational tool that holds the promise of helping Web users visualize where they are and how Web links are interconnected is the Hyperbolic Tree, developed by InXight, a spinoff of Xerox PARC (Palo Alto Research Center). The Hyperbolic Tree approach works much like "dragging a magnifying glass over a circular organizational structure, with parts of the structure expanding or shrinking depending on where the mouse pointer alights." A demonstration of Hyperbolic Tree using the Infoseek Web site is available at <http://www.inxight.com/products/hw/infoseek.htm>

SCARY WOMEN

For your Halloween video viewing check out the "Scary Women" Web site. The site grew out of a symposium, held in January 1994, that was sponsored by the University of California - Los Angeles Film and Television Archive Research and Study Center, with the support of UCLA's Center for the Study of Women and the Academy Foundation. Symposium speakers presented papers analyzing how women are portrayed in such horror movies as "Curse of the Cat People," "The Exorcist," "The Bad Seed," "Carrie," and "Psycho." The Web site includes texts of the presenters' papers, video clips from the movies discussed, audio clips of parts of the symposium, bibliographies, and links to film studies and women's studies resources on the Web. Scary Women is at <http://www.cinema.ucla.edu/women/>

URL: <http://www.unc.edu/cit/infobits/bitoct97.html>

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