

CIT Infobits

Issue 14

August 1999

ISSN 1521-9275

About INFOBITS

Infobits is an electronic service of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill ITS Teaching and Learning's Center for Instructional Technology. Each month the CIT's Information Resources Consultant monitors and selects from a number of information and instructional technology sources that come to her attention and provides brief notes for electronic dissemination to educators.

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ONLINE PURCHASING PRIVACY: "THEY" KNOW WHAT WE'RE READING

On August 20, the online bookseller Amazon.com introduced "purchase circles," a program that uses personal data about its customers to compile online lists of book and music that they've purchased. By using shipping addresses, Amazon.com can create best-seller lists based on geographic areas like towns or foreign countries. Using the Internet domain name in the email address, Amazon can often identify a customer's university or professional affiliation or their employer. While the lists do not identify individual customers, the system is capable of doing so. While the company says it does not sell, trade, or rent your personal information to others, their privacy policy states they "may choose to do so in the future with trustworthy third parties."

Shortly after the service was announced, critics raised privacy concerns. Responding to the criticism, Amazon.com will now allow customers to opt out of participating in purchase circles if they send an email request to the company. However, customers who never read the privacy policy or visit the purchase circle pages may not know that information about their buying habits is being collected and made public.

For more about Amazon.com's purchase circles, go to <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/subst/community/community.html>

VIDEO AND PRESENTATION TECHNOLOGIES ARTICLES

Video and Presentation Technologies is the theme of the latest issue of *Syllabus* (vol. 13, no. 1, August 1999). Articles include "Video Literacy Series: What Video Does Well in Education-and What It Doesn't," by writer-director Barry Hampe [available online at http://www.syllabus.com/aug99_magfea.html]; "Immersive Imaging Technology: VR for the Web in Academia," by Stephen D. Comer, professor in the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science at the Citadel; and "The Case for Visual Media in

Learning," by Sarah McCormick, chair of the General Studies Program at the University of Advancing Computer Technology in Tempe, AZ. The issue also includes a buyer's guide to video and presentation hardware and software.

Syllabus [ISSN 1089-5914] is published ten times a year by Syllabus Press, Inc., 345 Northlake Drive, San Jose, CA 95117-1261 USA; tel: 408-261-7200; fax: 408-261-7280; email: info@syllabus.com; Web: <http://www.syllabus.com/>

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REPORT ON VIRTUAL EDUCATION AROUND THE WORLD

"The Development of Virtual Education: A Global Perspective," by Dr. Glen Farrell, is a study of current trends in the virtual delivery of education. It was conducted with funding provided by the Commonwealth of Education and the Department for International Development, London, UK. The report provides a detailed look at the differences in the development of virtual education around the world and concludes with a number of suggestions for policy makers and education leaders regarding the construction of models for virtual learning.

The complete report (170 pp.) is available on the Web at <http://www.col.org/virtualed/index.htm>
The chapters are in PDF format and require the free Adobe Acrobat Reader for viewing (available at <http://www.adobe.com/supportservice/custsupport/download.html>).

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is an international organization created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning/distance education resources and technologies. For more information about COL see <http://www.col.org/>

EDUCATION AND TRAINING GREY LITERATURE ARCHIVE

Education-line, a part of the Electronic Libraries Programme (eLib), was established so that researchers, practitioners, and policy makers from the worlds of education and training can present their work at early stages for immediate review by colleagues world-wide. The archive, which consists mainly of conference pre-prints and "grey" texts, features over 1,000 full-text documents, nine fully searchable programs from recent conferences, and a conference listing service. Authors are encouraged to submit reports, working papers, conference documents, and speeches for inclusion in the archive. Education-line is available at <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/>

For more information about eLib and its other digital library projects, see the Website at <http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/services/elib/>

TWO RESOURCES FOR USING THE WEB UPDATED

The Guide to Network Resource Tools (GNRT) was revised and updated this year. The GNRT is produced by TERENA (Trans-European Research and Education Networking Association) for the user community of its member academic and research networks, but is made freely available to anyone via the Web. The GNRT provides overviews of some of the most popular general and specific Web and search tools, including intelligent agents, collaboration software, and Web publishing aids. GNRT is located at <http://www.terena.nl/libr/gnrt/>

For more information about TERENA, see their Website at <http://www.terena.nl/>

The Institute for Learning and Research Technology (ILRT) at the University of Bristol has released a second edition of the Internet Detective, an interactive online tutorial on evaluating the quality of Internet resources. The tutorial can be used for self-directed learning, classroom or distance learning, or hands-on workshops. A PowerPoint Slide presentation is available to introduce the Internet Detective tutorial to students. Free registration is required to allow users to return to the site as necessary and work through the tutorial at their own pace. The Internet Detective is located at <http://www.sosig.ac.uk/desire/internet-detective.html>

ILRT also sponsors the Social Science Information Gateway (SOSIG) which helps users locate high quality sites on the Internet that are relevant to social science education and research. SOSIG is available at <http://www.sosig.ac.uk/> and http://scout18.cs.wisc.edu/sosig_mirror/ (for North American users).

FRUSTRATION WITH INFORMATION APPLIANCES

"We were frustrated with computers a decade ago, we are frustrated with them now, and will continue to be frustrated in the future." In "The Visible Problems of the Invisible Computer" AT&T researcher Andrew Odlyzko says that "technology gurus assure us that the PC is passe, and we are entering a new era of computing, often referred to as ubiquitous or pervasive computing. It is to be dominated by information appliances ["smart" houses, cars, coffee makers, refrigerators, cameras], specialized and easy to use devices that avoid the complexity of the PC...[however,] while information appliances will proliferate, they will not lessen the perception of an exasperating electronic environment." Odlyzko's point is not to denounce information appliances, but to suggest that systems should be developed with different levels of different users in mind. The paper is available at <http://www.research.att.com/~amo/doc/networks.html>

Andrew Odlyzko is also author of "Tragic Loss or Good Riddance? The Impending Demise of Traditional Scholarly Journals" [mentioned in *Infobits*, December 1994], which is now located at <http://www.research.att.com/~amo/doc/tragic.loss.txt>

For more information contact Andrew M. Odlyzko, AT&T Labs - Research, Room C225, 180 Park Ave., Bldg. 103, P.O. Box 971, Florham Park, NJ 07932-0971 USA; tel: 973 360 8410; fax: 973 360 8178; email: amo@research.att.com; Web: <http://www.research.att.com/~amo/>

FULL-TEXT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION LIBRARY ONLINE

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation (ERIC/AE) announced the opening of its Full Text Internet Library containing links to more than 250 of the best online books, reports, journal articles, newsletter articles, and papers that address educational measurement, evaluation, and learning theory. The collection currently includes titles from nine online journals and 29 organizations. The library is at <http://ericcae.net/ftlib.htm>

ERIC/AE is part of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), a national information system designed to provide users with ready access to an extensive body of education-related literature. ERIC is supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, and the National Library of Education. ERIC/AE seeks to provide balanced information concerning educational assessment and resources to encourage responsible test use. For more information about ERIC/AE, contact ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation, 1129 Shriver Laboratory,

NEW GOVERNMENT INFORMATION RESOURCE

In July StartSpot Mediaworks, Inc., headquartered in the Northwestern University/Evanston Research Park in Evanston, IL, offered a new addition in its collection of free information Websites. GovSpot links to a variety of government Websites and documents, facts and figures, news, and political information from federal, state, local, and world government and non-governmental sources. GovSpot is located at <http://www.govspot.com/>

For more information, contact Stephanie Meisner, StartSpot Mediaworks, Inc., 1840 Oak Avenue, Evanston, IL 60201 USA; tel: 303-455-5223; email: stephanie@startspot.com; Web: <http://www.startspot.com/>

Other StartSpot Mediaworks Websites of interest to educators include LibrarySpot and BookSpot. See *Infobits* May 1998 [<http://its.unc.edu/tl/infobits/iainfobits/bitmay98.html#6>] for details on these resources.

CIT INFORMATION RESOURCE GUIDES UPDATED

The following document in the CIT Information Resource Guides collection have recently been updated:

"Technology and Higher Education Statistics, Surveys, and Reports"
<http://www.unc.edu/cit/guides/irg-39.html>

For a complete list of all the resource guides, see:

Title Listing
<http://www.unc.edu/cit/guides/guides.html>

or

Subject Listing
<http://www.unc.edu/cit/guides/>