EDUCATION

Whale Watching

Herman Melville could have made *Moby Dick* even longer if he'd had access to WhaleNet, a sprawling educational site aimed at secondary school students, teachers, and the general public. Marine scientist Michael Williamson of Wheelock College in Boston founded the site 9 years ago to spark interest in science and the environment as well as in whales such as this acrobatic humpback (above).

The site's activities let students work with real data and try out some of the tasks cetacean biologists have to master, such as identifying individual humpback whales from pigmentation and notches on the tail fin. They can also follow the travels of more than 50 satellite-tagged marine mammals and analyze 25 years' worth of sighting records for humpbacks in the Gulf of Maine. A pod of links explore whales' biology, including their sonar system for navigating and communicating. There are also a few more research-oriented links, such as a study of PCB levels in blue whales living in the St. Lawrence Seaway, as well as population estimates from the National Marine Fisheries Service.

whale.wheelock.edu/Welcome.html

TOOLS

Visual Sorting

Tired of plowing through the pages and pages of results most search engines disgorge? KartOO, a Web-scanning site that debuted in April, takes a more intuitive approach to the task. The site first hands off your query to Web search engines such as Google to get a list of sites with capsule descriptions. But KartOO then makes it easier to visually compare and contrast hits by sketching a "concept map" (above) that links sites with common content. Entering "Louis Pasteur," for instance, calls up a cross-linked diagram in which the idea "fermentation" ties a biographical page in Canada with the Pasteur entry in a library of inventors. You can use any of these linking key words to focus your search.

www.kartoo.com

DATABASE

Birth of Biogeography

Darwin found the Galápagos Islands fluttering with finches and crawling with tortoises but not hopping with frogs. He concluded that frogs are missing from remote islands because they can't tolerate the journey across salt water. Biogeography—the study of what creatures live where and why—provides a heap of compelling evidence for evolution and natural selection. Scientists and historians curious about the genesis of this field might want to burrow into this bibliography of works dating from the 1700s to 1950. Charles H. Smith, a science librarian at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, has corralled several hundred books, articles, and lectures that also include contributions on ecology and species diversity. About one-third of the entries link either to free online copies of the works or to the archive service JSTOR, which many universities subscribe to. Users can also zip to biographies of many of the authors.

www.wku.edu/~smithch/biogeog

RESOURCES

Atomic Physics Cache

PlasmaGate, a server at the Plasma Laboratory at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel, lists scores of links for atomic and plasma physicists, from journals to free software programs. Gathered by Yuri Ralchenko, the site's sections include worldwide lists of plasma and atomic physics departments and centers, a directory of over 1200 researchers, a jobs board, and a rundown of databases in the field. The more than 20 software programs range from raw code to polished educational packages. According to Ralchenko, favorites include a program from Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico for calculating atomic structure and spectra, and Cloudy, which simulates radiation emissions from the clouds of gas that pervade the universe.

plasma-gate.weizmann.ac.il/PlasmaI.html

Send site suggestions to netwatch@aaas.org. Archive: www.sciencemag.org/netwatch

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