SIX DEGREES SKewed!
by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

Reviewing Stanley Milgram’s 1967 experiment which yielded the famous “six degrees of separation” theory, Judith Kleinfeldt asserts that Milgram skewed the results by not accounting for letters that did not reach their destinations. However Cornell mathematician Steven Strogatz, while acknowledging the concerns, asserts mathematical models show such ties exist even if people aren’t aware of them.


STRIP FOR PRIVACY
by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

The Privacy Rule, crafted by the Dept. of Health and Human Services under the Clinton Administration and scheduled to go into effect in April 2003, sets out requirements that certain information be stripped from patient records before researchers can use them. Now the Bush Administration is reviewing portions of the rule after a deluge of concerns from health care organizations and researchers who want data such as zip codes and birth dates retained.


NAPSTER GOES HOLLYWOOD
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Hollywood moguls are seething. The Napster army has shifted to copying movies 350,000/day on the internet. And the rate is growing. And Sony, Microsoft and TiVo are pouring out products that can receive TV and films and swap with pals over lock-key-split connections.

The file-swapping programs lack central servers that lawyers can ravage with litigation. The only real speed bump is the big lag time for downloading, but that broadband limitation won’t last for long. The movie studios are bouncing between a greed-soaked hope that they can control a future pay-per-view market and the terror that piracy will spiral out of control. With movie production costs averaging $25 million, theft could bankrupt you in an L.A. minute.


MONETARY MOTIVATION FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION
by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

The conventional wisdom that the U.S. is not producing enough scientists is not in question. According to Stanford University economist Paul Romer, science and engineering graduates are deliberately screened, weeded, and underproduced because of the expense. However, data show the numbers of students interested in science have just shifted rather than declined, and most academics acknowledge money is part of the problem but disagree that it’s the only solution.


MEDIA VANITIES CRASH AND BURN
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

For the 1990s, spin and buzz were the key words of the “crazed cult of contemporaneity.” The hyperactive Tina Brown was a master of appearance over substance. At Vanity Fair, The New Yorker and then Talk she served as high priestess of the temple of “fashion, hipness, irony, design and gossip.”

With vast resources at her disposal she bought up the talented writers, and then often kept them idle. She squandered tens of millions, but the money always seemed to be there to keep her buzz going.

And now Talk has folded. Not just 9-11, but a general exhaustion with all that began to generate a “new, more substantive mood.” And Tina didn’t know how to rebrand herself. Perhaps, Sullivan argues, because she and her formula were “an empty center that the pyrotechnics of hype and spin and parties and public relations could only partly obscure.”


SPECIAL COLLECTION SNIT
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Gore Vidal is taking his papers from Wisconsin to Harvard to have them archived by subject rather than chronologically. Which makes sense as they contain letters by Tennessee Williams, William Faulkner and Upton Sinclair.

But how did he come to give Wisconsin a conditional gift? The wire services never seem to ask the right questions.


SPAM RELIEF
by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

A public deluged in telemarketing and email spam has had enough and isn’t going to take it anymore. The FTC is considering a “do not call” database with fines for violating it.

Needless to say, telemarketers are in an uproar and jabbering about free speech and how good a job they do of policing themselves. But it’s really a right to privacy issue. And to get on the industry no-call list, you have to do it in writing or pay $5 online.

Policing the Internet is a stickier wicket with legions of rogue spammers vomiting pornography, fat diets and quick-buck investment schemes. But a program called TRUSTe has devised a filter that claims to have a forge-proof seal.


DEVELOPED FOR DEVELOPING
by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

SciDev.Net, conceived by journalists, scientists, and development agencies, was officially launched in London with the aim of providing reliable scientific news and information to scientists in developing nations in an effort to bridge the information gap.