Bet You Missed It -- Press Clippings -- In the News -- Carefully Selected by Your Crack Team of News Sleuths

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Flora
by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

The fifth largest country in the world by area, Brazil contains some 20 percent of all plant species, concentrated in some areas to 3000 species per square mile. Preserving the genetic code of endangered plants is the first priority of 5 full-time researchers at the DNA Bank, a laboratory and greenhouse in Rio de Janeiro’s Lush Botanical Gardens. The facility, inaugurated by Environment Minister Marina Silva, hopes to collect, freeze and preserve 1000 DNA samples per year, eventually providing a repository for all plants in the country.


...and Fauna
by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

In Britain, a “Frozen Ark” has been established as “the world’s first DNA and tissue bank dedicated to all the world’s endangered animals.” A project of London’s Natural History Museum, the Zoological Society of London, and the Institute of Genetics at the U. of Nottingham, the ark will be both a real and a virtual resource aiming to fill in the gaps. There are currently no plans to clone the specimens which will be kept in zoo and museum freezers.


Dropped Dollars
by Sandra Beeler (Lewis & Clark College)

Once again, the dollar’s value is dropping on the international market, a trend that may continue. This is largely attributable to America’s current-account deficit — a combination of high U.S. trade deficits, and dependence on income from foreign investments in the U.S. Currently, America’s current-account deficit amounts to 3.2% of the GDP, and some economists believe it could rise as high as 7% of GDP. Foreign investment in the U.S. dropped in the past 12 months and Asian banks slowed their purchase of dollars — both actions are bad news for the American economy and the dollar.

KaZaA's SKYPE
by Sandra Beehler (Lewis & Clark College)

Niklas Zennstrom & Janus Friis, founders of Napster's file-swapping successor KaZaA, have turned their talents to the field of telecoms. Last August they launched Skype: an application that enables transmission of sound in real time between PCs — for free. The software has already been downloaded by over 14 million people, and is easy to set up, has good sound quality, and runs on Windows and Linux. The newest version of Skype expands access to ordinary phones for a cost of about 1 cent/minute. In future, Mr. Zennstrom believes it possible to make all phone connections run through the Internet — doing away with reliance on infrastructure currently owned by telecoms. The catch may be that Skype's file-sharing standard will be eclipsed by the SIP standard used by other Internet-telephone companies — as KaZaA's proprietary standard was largely replaced by open standard file-sharing.


HANDSHAKE PANKY
by Sandra Beehler (Lewis & Clark College)

Throw away your PDAs — and get ready to type on your forearm. Microsoft recently patented a method and apparatus for transmitting power and data using the skin's conductive properties. Though details are scanty, Microsoft theorizes that the body could generate enough kinetic power to run small devices and that human skin could generate signals as a keypad does. The idea of using the human body as a network was originally developed by MIT's Media Lab & IBM around ten years ago; they demonstrated a prototype PAN (personal area network) that transmitted business data through a handshake at a trade show in 1996. It will be up to Microsoft to convince consumers that such a device's capabilities offset the inconvenience of attaching electrodes to their skin.


Mary Kate Olsen's Anorexia At A Low, Low Price
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Celebrity gossip magazine prices are in free-fall. Time, Inc.'s People is cheap at the newsstands at $3.29, but In Touch Weekly has dropped its price from $1.99 to an incredible 25 cents!

In Touch is owned by Bauer Verlagsguppe with an established reputation for undercutting the opposition. Time is fighting back with the launch of All You, a women's monthly that will be sold exclusively at Wal-Mart. And the price is expected to be low.

Free-distribution that saves newspapers is coming soon to glossies. National Enquirer is down to $2.99 and the Globe goes for $2.35.


Another Full Enforcement for Lawyers Bill
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

When Napster was shut down, for-profit copyright piracy facilitators moved out of the U.S., making it hard to get judgments against them. Despite Senator Orrin Hatch has introduced the Induce Act to make it possible to sue those who "induce" piracy i.e., makers of the technology.

The WSJ sees it provoking a wave of frivolous lawsuits against a plethora of technology makers. This in turn could deter new investment in technology. Rather than criminalizing the tools of the trade, why not just use copyright law with its statutory penalties and whack the thieves?

This of course is counter to frequent WSJ editorials in favor of forcing the music/film industry to package their product in such a way that it's not worthwhile to pirate. But the Journal is perturbed by new causes of action for trial lawyers.


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