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Bet You Missed It-domestic journals in China, digital certificates, perfume, and bulls and bears

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Bet You Missed It

Press Clippings — In the News — Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

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Birth Control for Chinese Journals by **Pamela M. Rose** (SUNY at Buffalo)

The status of domestic journals in China has not kept pace with the tremendous scientific advances made by Chinese scientists. **The Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) Impact Factor**, or IF, for Chinese journals has steadily declined over the past 15 years, not because of the quality or validity of articles. Chinese

scientists and editors have suggested birth control for China's 4000+ journals, and financial support is being provided for 100 of the highest academic standard journals. See — **Shengli Ren, Pin Liang, and Guang'an Zu**, "The Challenge for Chinese Scientific Journals" in *Science*, p.1683, Nov. 26, 1999.

Not Far Afield From Garfield? by **Pamela M. Rose** (SUNY at Buffalo)

Academic Press and **Wiley** have teamed up with 10 other organizations to mount a private alternative to **PubMed Central**. Designed to cross-link journal articles through their reference lists [sounds like **Science Citation** to me! — your ed.], researchers will be able to locate and retrieve referenced article text through the Internet while publishers retain access control. The key to this new digital information service is a "tag" or universal identifier for each article, which will require adherence to a standard data for-

mat. PubMed's chief, David Lipman, applauds the effort. See — **Eliot Marshall**, "Journals Launch Private Reference Network," in *Science*, p.1459, Nov. 19, 1999.

100 (or so) Books That Shaped a Century of Science by **Rick Heldrich** (College of Charleston)

What do "Surely Your Joking, Mr. Feynman!", "A Field Guide to Birds", "One, Two, Three...Infinity", "Nature of the Chemical Bond", "The Right Stuff", "The Hot Zone", "The Beak of the Finch", and "Cat's Cradle" all have in common? They are, of course, all book titles that are included in this intriguing list of the centuries best science books. Does anyone have a library that can list all of these titles? Does anyone know of a library that doesn't? The listing is grouped by category (biography, field guide, exploration, evolution, novels, etc.) and is, at the least, an interesting compilation. See — **Philip and Phyllis Morrison**, *American Scientist*, Vol. 87, No. 6, page 542, 1999.

Perfumes: A Wiff of Chemistry by **Rick Heldrich** (College of Charleston)

You might expect perfumes to be formulated from flower fragrances or even plant extracts, but whale vomit? Well, not exactly but perhaps the idea does get your attention, and yes, material disgorged from whale inards that washes up on the shoreline, called ambergis, is used in scent manufacturing. And how about the power of scents? Pleasant enough to bring you to tears? Vile enough to make you eat human flesh? Mystery writers have not caught up to science in this arena. Scientology has no less art or nuance than vinology. It might take a decade to train your nose to nature's palette. Where will new

scents come from? Rain forests, computer screens, outer space, flowers yet examined. What makes perfumes so expensive? The natural extracts that people like the most require lots of raw material. A killogram of the oil of jasmine is made from 7,000,000 handpicked in the pre-dawn hours blossoms, is a bargain at \$3,000 per kg. Oil of Iris root costs \$38,000 per kg. So if you buy or get a bottle of perfume, know that you are getting your money's worth. See — **A. Maureen Rouhi**, *Chemical & Engineering News*, October 25th, 1999, pages 38-46.

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Tiny Coded Files by Phil Dankert (Cornell)

The answer to the question posed by the title of this brief article, "Do 'Digital Certificates' Hold the Key to Colleges' On-Line Activities?," is probably "yes." A digital certificate is a tiny, coded file with identifying information about an individual or institution. They are nearly impossible for hackers to tamper with. These "portable electronic identifiers are highly efficient at proving to other computers that people are who their computers say they are." For this reason, they have many potential uses. It is noted that research librarians may have the most pressing need for certificates--to help their users gain access to databases, etc., outside of their campus collections. Several other issues raised are: (1) most research institutions are not yet issuing these certificates because publishers of electronic data bases don't have their servers set up to accept certificates, (2) "to realize the full po-

tential of digital certificates, institutions will need standards for managing different levels of access to digital information," and (3) cost, at least initially, could limit use of the certificates to a small number of well-heeled re-

search institutions. See — **Florence Olsen**, "Do 'Digital Certificates' Hold the Key to Colleges' On-Line Activities?" in *Chronicle Of Higher Education*, Dec. 10, 1999, p. A47-A48.

Bull & Bear Tussle by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Digital Lightwave makes testing equipment for fiber optic cable that makes the internet flow. It's a very hot stock going up 2,600% last year with no significant profits. It would have to turn in a super performance to justify the price and a lot of bears are short selling in anticipation of a bloodbath.

The bulls say new products and markets are coming so fast that normal valuation is out of the question. They note some famous names that were once small stocks — Microsoft, Cisco Systems, Dell Computer, MCI WorldCom. If a decade ago you

had evaluated Dell based on the belief that just maybe one day everyone would own one computer, you would have way underestimated the market.

The bears retort for every Microsoft, dozens fell by the wayside. Technology companies don't need the massive long-term capital infusions of the 19th century industries like railroads and steel.

See — **E.S. Browning**, "How High Is Too High For Stocks That Lead A Business Revolution?" *The Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 10, 2000, p.A1.

Which Leads to the AOL Time Warner Merger by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

STANDARD WISDOM had it the next big techno transition. Telegraph was replaced by telephone; radio by t.v.; t.v. by cable. Time Warner's old wine was being put in AOL's new bottles.

AOL swallows Netscape and now Time Warner. It will "oper-

ate a platform on the Web at least as commanding as Microsoft's platform on the desktop."

See — **Peter Huber**, "The Death of Old Media", *The Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 11, 2000, p.A26.

Others were more skeptical: Bundling Has Its Limits by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

In the late 1980s, Time and Warner merged to ignite a frenzied series of deals that left four entertainment behemoths: Time Warner, Viacom, News Corp and Disney. They now had vertical integration of movies, t.v., cable, magazines, books, theme parks and retailers. But they were groaning under piles of debt.

And forcing bad content down a distribution pipeline didn't work out. Disney bought ABC but the network did so poorly Disney had

to "make-good" with advertisers for not delivering the promised audience.

Where content is good, the net is often not the delivery system. It's too slow to deliver movies or t.v. shows. And Time Warner failed to convince consumers to read magazines on the net.

See — **Christian Hill and Laura Landro**, "Does Everybody Have to Own Everything?" *The Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 12, 2000, p.B1.

Mirage by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

"Jeff Bezos of Amazon.com has built a business model on this [misplaced confidence]: borrow and borrow, invest and invest, and skip the profits indefinitely."

AOL was selling for a dollar a share a week ago; now it's at \$70. "AOL has benefitted from the public's willingness to believe the Internet will cure cancer, walk

your dog and everything else ..."

Federal regulators may delay the deal by as much as a year. If the investors start thinking real hard on the topic, the deal has a high chance of blowing apart.

See — **Holman Jenkins**, "The Last Crazy Internet Valuation?" *The Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 12, 2000, p.A23.

Irritating by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Bill Buckley bemoaned the "torpor" of AOL in putting data on the screen and "the problem of the neighbors" tuning in and making it even more sluggish.

"If you frequent a library, you know that the time required to reach into a shelf and pull out a

book will never reduce."

And he liked that world of certainty. As opposed to the high tech promises that just result in a smaller airline seats.

See — **Wm.F. Buckley**, "Who Benefits?" *Post & Courier*, Jan. 15, 2000, p.15-A.

Folly & Boondoggle by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Liars' Poker author Michael Lewis sees AOL squandering billions buying "thousands of journalists and movie executives whose talent is getting attention rather than making money."

This will change a fast-growing company the market loves into an investor disdained slug.

"The best a big company can do is set itself up as an artful thief, and hope no one sues it." He says Microsoft is a master of letting the dust of technology wars settle and then buying or taking what it wants.

And he got in some fabulous quips. "...the brains of the [internet

boom] tend to be out on the fringes, creepy little critters whom no one except perhaps a few venture capitalists takes seriously."

This kind of talent is highly mobile and will change jobs in an instant, particularly when stock options are available.

He predicts a decade hence, investment bankers will make a fortune breaking up and selling off AOL Time Warner.

"Meanwhile you can almost hear the brains drain."

See — **Michael Lewis**, "AOL: Almost Obscenely Large", *The Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 13, 2000, p.A22.