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Bet You Missed It-Napster and Tax Holidays

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Inside Pandora's Box
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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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THERE'S NO FREE LUNCH, OR IS THERE?

by **Pamela M. Rose** (University at Buffalo)

Even though genome sequencing data can be accessed without charge through **GenBank**, a public database run by the **National Institutes of Health (NIH)**, NIH scientists are negotiating terms to set up access to a **Celera Genomics** genome database to the tune of up to \$15,000/user/year. **National Cancer Institute (NCI)** director **Richard Klausner**, whose staffers ran an informal evaluation, sees no legal or ethical problem in using public funds to acquire data freely available elsewhere if it is cost-effective and valuable.

See — **Eliot Marshall**, "NIH Considers Paying to Use Private Database" in *Science*, p. 223, Jan. 12, 2001.

THE REFRESH THAT DOESN'T PAUSE

by **Pamela M. Rose** (University at Buffalo)

Four months and 3000 pages later, two **Stanford** computer scientists concluded in their analysis of 270 popular sites that dot-com sites were refreshed significantly more often than those run by government and university sites.

See — "Fresh and Stale on the Web" in NetWatch section edited by **Jocelyn Kaiser**, *Science*, p.215, Jan. 12, 2001.

SMASH GLASS FOR WOMEN

by **Pamela M. Rose** (University at Buffalo)

Male representatives from nine top U.S. Research Universities met at MIT in early February and pledged to smash the glass ceiling that hinders women from advancing at their institutions. A major focus of the discussion was to quantify the problem, and all agreed to gather data, to work to improve the situation at their institutions, and to further discussions tentatively slated for 2002.

See — **Andrew Lawler**, "College Heads Pledge to Remove Barriers," in *Science* p.806, Feb. 2, 2001.

TAKE IT TO THE BANK

by **Pamela M. Rose** (University at Buffalo)

Pharmacogenomics, the tailoring of drugs to a person's genetic profile, must overcome scientific and ethical obstacles before it becomes a reality. **First Genetic Trust Inc.** of Deerfield Park, IL, hopes to alleviate the obstacle of confidentiality of an individual's genetic data by acting as an intermediary between patients and researchers. The company would store a person's genetic data in its confidential database and use the Internet to ensure informed consent before allowing dissemination of that data to clinical researchers. The **Trust** is teaming up with the **Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center** to test the scheme in a protocol involving genetic counseling for 50 women with genetic mutations putting them at high risk for breast cancer. Critics cite worries that the third-party scheme could turn out to be more complex than the present system of controlling access to medical data.

See — **Eliot Marshall**, "Company Plans to Bank Human DNA Profiles" in *Science* p.575, Jan. 26, 2001.

IMPOSSIBLE PHYSICS

by **Pamela M. Rose** (University at Buffalo)

Physicist **John Hubisz** concludes that today's physics textbooks are deplorable, plagued with errors, irrelevant photographs, experiments that could not work, and diagrams representing impossible situations. One egregious text confuses "force" and "acceleration" in describing gravity's effect on an object. The problem is that in-house teams write the texts with no individual accountable for the final product. The complete report can be found at www.psr-online.org/curriculum/book.html.

See — "Physics Texts Found Wanting" in Random Samples section edited by **Constance Holden**, in *Science* p.587, Jan. 26, 2001.



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TAX HOLIDAY OR TAX SUBSIDY?

by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

To use tax holidays as a recruiting lure or wait for increased operating grants from the Canadian government — that is the question. Quebec is opting for the tax holiday to scholars who relocate to universities in the province, while Ontario is seeking \$350 million for a recruiting drive, in anticipation of retirements and a projected 40% increase in enrollment.

See — “Headhunting” in ScienceScope section, contributors: Gretchen Vogel, Wayne Kondro, Andrew Lawler, John Pickrell in *Science*, p.569, Jan. 26, 2001.

KOZA KEEPS THEM DOWN

by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

Japanese women in academia have an even rougher time breaking that glass ceiling than their U.S. counterparts. All junior faculty work in a climate of “akahara” or academic harassment due to the hierarchical structure or “koza” system of research groups in Japanese universities in which professors hold near-absolute power. Kumiko Ogoshi won a court victory and \$5000 over her supervising professor who was found guilty of harassing her to get her to quit, but the verdict did not affect any fundamental change in the system. Japanese men face similar problems, but the toll on women is particularly high. Details of Ogoshi's and other women's plights and support can be found at <http://www.kcn.ne.jp/~jji/akahara/akahara.htm>.

See — Dennis Normile, “Women Faculty Battle Japan's Koza System,” in *Science*, p.817-18, Feb. 2, 2001.

SO SHUT UP, ALREADY

by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

A Washington writer discovers the zoo-like atmosphere of today's libraries and longs for the old custodians with glasses on a chain (remember real librarians?) who used to say “shush.” Every place today is a performance venue and libraries have joined restaurants, movie theaters and museums where no voice is stifled and no technology must be used quietly.

See — Pam Janis, “Oh, Hush, Our Noisy Libraries Speak Volumes About Us,” *The Washington Post*, p. B5, March 18, 2001.

HIDE IT IN THE LIBRARY FEES

by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Troy Williams, Harvard Law grad gave up the big firm world to create a web library called *Questia Media*. He's raised mega bucks from venture capitalists and started digitizing books with a target of 250,000 by 2003. Two hundred academic presses have gone for his offer of free digitization in exchange for revenue sharing. Now his problem is getting college kids past their idea that anything on the web ought to be free and convincing them to buy his service. Well, we know the answer to that, even if *Forbes* didn't. Sell the service to the college and get them to bury the cost in the library fees.

See — Lynn Cook, “Academic Overture,” *Forbes*, p. 124, April 2, 2001.

ARE RIPPED CDS REALLY FREE?

by Bruce Strauch (the Citadel)

Letter to the Editor in the *Street Journal* asks an interesting question. Are those college kids using *Napster* really getting a free CD? Burning equipment, blank CD and time spent downloading might actually exceed the cost of a CD in a store. He also points out that *Napster* — a single, in-place company — was providing music giants marketing and promotion for free — something which they otherwise paid huge for.

See — Michael Harrington, “Shooting *Napster* Was Suicidal,” *The Wall Street Journal*, p. A21, March 19, 2001.