Bet You Missed It

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Where Are You?
by Rosann Bazirjian (FSU)

This article summarizes the various computerized phone directories which are available to PC users. Both CD-ROM and Internet directories are evaluated for their price, comprehensiveness and search strategies as well as privacy issues. I found this a useful article as I am anxious to track down some old college friends and hope that the sources listed will help me. See — Steve Kichen, “PC411,” Forbes, 157 (5) (March 11, 1996), p. 158-159.

I'm Still Waiting
by Rosann Bazirjian (FSU)

This is an informative article about what to do when your PC breaks down. It was surprising to learn that according to a survey by PC World magazine, 11% of all new computer systems purchased come with at least one component which is not working. The author then goes on to state that after your computer “plays dead,” fixing it can be a “truly horrific experience.” The reader is informed not to expect to reach a service representative via the telephone for at least 28 hours after starting to make calls! The rest of the article is filled with advice on how to troubleshoot your PC yourself and what to look for in a warranty when purchasing one. See — Michael J. Himovitz, “Surviving a PC Meltdown,” Fortune, 133 (7), (April 15, 1996), p. 195-196.

The New BeBox
by Rosann Bazirjian (FSU)

This article focuses on Jean-Louis Gassee, who has developed a new PC operating system which he is marketing as BeBox. This is an extremely powerful machine, and is being marketed to what Gassee defines as “geeks.” Because it is based on an entirely new operating system, it will not run Macintosh or Windows software, and is therefore not being marketed to home PC users. Gassee claims his ideal user “already owns two other computers, is familiar with UNIX, can program in C++, … and spends a lot of time manipulating large graphics files with a program like Adobe Photoshop.” The article speculates on the potential success of the BeBox. See — Michael Noer, “Calling All Geeks,” Forbes, 157 (5) (March 11, 1996), p. 156.

E-mail Filters
by Rosann Bazirjian (FSU)

This is an amusing article filled with guidelines on how to filter out unwanted email messages. The author calls these filters “bozo filters.” Per Guy Kawasaki, the following types of messages are not important and should be ignored: 1) writing in all caps (no one wants to get yelled at); 2) mail carbon copied to more than four people (someone else will take care of it); 3) email longer than five paragraphs (just read the first and last paragraphs — nothing in between is usually important); 4) mail with the following phrases: “First, a little bit of backround about myself” or “For Immediate Release” (no one wants to hear someone else’s life story or read a certain press release); 5) a signature longer than six lines (the signature is the “digital mirror of a person’s soul” — people do not pay attention to it if it is too long, and; 5) any “suspicious” or “screencilous” email addressed (here he cites “edu” as an example, saying the message is probably from a student). See — Guy Kawasaki, “Bozo Filters,” Forbes, 157 (6) (March 25, 1996), p. 120.

Internet Addiction
by Philip Dankert (Cornell University)

Are college students spending too much time in front of their computers? Apparently the number is small but it is growing. Although the phenomenon of excessive computer use is too new to know whether it should be classified as a disorder similar to a gambling addiction, many health professionals suggest that it is simply a symptom of other problems such as depression. A few campuses are attempting to do something about the problem, although imposing time limits on computer use may not be a good idea in the opinion of at least one psychiatrist. See — Thomas J. deloughry, “Snared by the Internet: College Officials Debate Whether Students Spend Too Much Time On Line,” The Chronicle of Higher Education, March 1, 1996.

IBM's Comeback
by Rosann Bazirjian (FSU)

This article focuses on the “comeback” of IBM, but questions how long this success will last. Thanks to Louis Gerstner Jr., IBM has lowered its operating costs and has managed a $6.3 billion profit. Much of their success has been due to the sales of a new mainframe product dubbed CMOS (Complementary metal-oxide semiconductor). IBM continues to sell mainframes to customers such as banks, insurance companies and motor vehicle departments. However, the author questions how long IBM will be able to maintain a captive mainframe audience now that many large businesses are turning toward networks of servers. See — David Churbeck and Gary Samuels, “Can IBM Keep It Up?” Forbes, vol. 157 (11) (June 3, 1996), p. 142-144.

Libraries on the Internet
by Sandy Beeler (Cornell University)

In two pages the author describes a number of library Web sites, along with some library news groups and virtual library sites. See — “Cyberlibrarian,” Internet World, July, 1996, p. 32.
The Gothic Influence
by Twyla Racz (Eastern Michigan University)

"Poe is back" so writes Mark Edmundson, who teaches English at the University of Virginia. Explaining Gothic characteristics, he shows how these aspects have infiltrated our daily life through TV and movies. It may have all begun with "The Silence of the Lambs." See — Mark Edmundson, "American Gothic," Civilization, vol. 3(3) (May/June 1996), p. 48-55.

Foreign Research
by Pamela Rose (SUNY at Buffalo)

Universities have always relied heavily on foreign researchers, with over half of all U.S. postdoctoral positions filled by workers on temporary visas. If portions of an amendment to the immigration bill are reintroduced in the Senate and the more extreme ones become law, the consequences for U.S. science could be disastrous. See — James Glanz, "Proposals That Would Limit Visas Strike Fear at Universities," Science, vol. 272 (April 12, 1996), p. 190-191.

Downsizing Formula
by Pamela Rose (SUNY at Buffalo)

Using a "decision tree" to determine and preserve the best and most cost-effective programs, the University of Rhode Island is cutting departments to deal with a budgetary crisis. A "yes" answer to any of four questions ("Is the program central to URI's mission?", "Do revenues significantly exceed costs?", "Is there strong continuing student demand?", and "Can resources not be switched to other programs?") led to that department's demise. See — Wade Roush, "URI Tries Downsizing by Formula," Science, vol. 272 (April 19, 1996), p. 342-344.

IQ Controversy
by Pamela Rose (SUNY at Buffalo)

Psychologist Christopher Brand (Edinburgh University) made some provocative comments to reporters on race differences in IQ, causing publisher Wiley to withdraw his book, The G Factor, on the eve of publication ("G" refers to "general intelligence," a factor derived from IQ tests). Edinburgh University has arranged an inquiry and Brand's supporters are calling for academics to boycott Wiley. Despite Brand's active efforts to fight this development, he has nevertheless pinned his hopes for publication on John Wiley & Sons. See — Constance Holden, "Wiley Drops IQ Book After Public Furor" in the News & Comment Section of Science, vol. 272 (May 3, 1996), p. 644.

Library Usage and Indirect Costs
by Pamela Rose (SUNY at Buffalo)


The Price is Right
by Rosann Bazirjian (FSU)

This article discusses the costs of hypertext links to retailers on the World Wide Web. In order for a business to sell its products, it will often seek out other related sites so that its product can be marketed to a wider audience. However, these links often come with a price tag. The cost could be ranging anywhere from $10 to $1,500 per month. Prices for links are not regulated and the fact that they vary so widely is disturbing to some businesses. See — R. Lee Sullivan, "Toll Booths on the Information Highway," Forbes, 157 (6) (March 25, 1996), p. 118.

Not Rechargeable?
by Rosann Bazirjian (FSU)

This is a brief article about laptop computer batteries! The author explores the issue of standardization of batteries, citing that some computer manufacturers are unwilling to make the switch to less expensive, rechargeable, standardized batteries. The author compares this to the camcorder business which used customized batteries when they were first developed. By last count, however, the number of different battery types has fallen from 60 to 5. The author speculates about whether or not this will happen in the laptop business. See — Suzanne Oliver, "Batteries Not Included," Forbes, 157 (5) (March 11, 1996), p. 164.

Voyager's World
by Sandy Beehler (Cornell University)

This is the inside story of Voyager, one of the first companies to "publish" books and movies digitally on laser discs and CD-ROM and, more recently, on the Web. In spite of good ideas and a creative staff, the company continues to lose money. See — "The Teachings of Bob Stein," Wired, July, 1996, p. 126.

"Little House" Lives
by Twyla Racz (Eastern Michigan University)

The "Little House" classics received little critical attention until recently. The author, a Director of Women's Studies, discusses this topic, mainly centering around the importance of the frontier West in forming American character and the importance of the family. She suggests further issues that could be studied. Meanwhile, the public pays no attention to any of the criticisms but continues to buy and read the books, and to visit the Ingalls and Wilder home sites. See — Anita Clair Fellman, "Everybody's Little House(s)," Publishing Research Quarterly, vol. 12 (1) (Spring, 1996), p. 1-19.

The Copyright Wars
by Philip Dankert (Cornell University)

How will the high stakes battle over the future of online access to scholarly material play out? The librarians vs. publishers battle may well help to determine the answers to several basic questions: (1) "which scholarly material will be available online?"; (2) who will be able to see the stuff" and (3) "what will they be able to do with it?" (download a file, store it, print it, etc.?). While legislation pending in Congress may well give strong new copyright protection to the producers of electronic works, universities must insist on licenses that maintain a favorable environment for online use. See — "Checking the Fine Print on Superhighway Licenses: Colleges Are Urged to Protect Their Right in Negotiations over Electronic Resources," by Robert L. Jacobson, Chronicle of Higher Education, July 5, 1996, pp. A15, A19-A20.