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GIANT SPACE HAMSTERS OFFER A PLETHORA OF WONDERS!

BREAKING SURF

Amazon Experimenting with Pricing Schemes

Computerworld notes that Amazon is apparently experimenting with charging different prices on items depending on who's buying when with what. Several consecutive searches with different browsers turned up different prices on DVDs. An Amazon spokesperson could put forth no clear statement on what's happening that we could understand, but we assume from all this that Amazon is really evaluating - or already using - a live variable pricing database which offers different deals to different sorts of customers. Savvy - and patient - buyers will now no doubt perform multiple searches to get the best price. The uninformed masses may end up paying more than before. Amazon's marketing team has apparently not read the Cluetrain Manifesto. Consumers can freely communicate and compare services and prices these days.

Computerworld: http://www.computerworld.com/cwi/story/0,1199,NAV47_STO49569,00.html

Cluetrain: <http://www.cluetrain.com/>

A WITTY SAYING PROVES NOTHING

Universities Decline to Review FBI's Carnivore

Several universities have refused to review the FBI's Carnivore Net surveillance software, citing the restrictions placed on the review by the agency. The Justice Department wants somebody to do an independent review of Carnivore to gauge its potential for abuse. The offensive restrictions state that reviewers must examine only what the government wants them to examine, that reviewers can't publish anything the government deems secret, and that the government must pre-approve all reviewers. USA Today quotes a computer network expert from MIT who said, "This is not a request for an independent report, they want a rubber stamp."

<http://www.usatoday.com/life/cyber/tech/cti490.htm>

IOC Bans Athletes from Net Storytelling

Olympic athletes can be interviewed. They can write for the hometown paper. On penalty of ejection from the Games, what they can't do is post a diary on the Web during Olympic competition. So rules the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in the latest version of its Code of Conduct, although just exactly what the ban means and how zealously the IOC plans to enforce it aren't clear. Athletes aren't too happy about the ban but have little choice. If they want to compete in Sydney, they must abide by the rule. If they break the rule, they don't get to compete and then they have nothing to write about anyhow. Is this Net posting ban overzealous intellectual property protection or a stale business model? Perhaps, but the IOC's main concern appears to be protecting the interests of official sponsors and broadcasters who pay big bucks and want exclusive access to your eyeballs when it comes to things Olympic. The Standard has all the sweaty details.

<http://www.thestandard.com/article/display/0,1151,18187,00.html>

Need Weed?

Yes, the headline above is trademarked, and it belongs to iToke, which is either an ambitious plan to create upscale marijuana cafes that make deliveries or an elaborate Web hoax. Either way, it has generated a lot of attention with its plans to have delivery people on bikes who service signed customers in under 30 minutes (or your next toke is free?). The guaranteed quality smoke service, located in Amsterdam (what, you expected Palo Alto?), was set to go but intense media attention and a flood of e-mail from all over the world requesting deliveries has the Internet start-up waiting for things to calm down. The company's continued delay in sparking one up has some suspicious that it is a well conceived hoax: so far, the site sells only T-shirts.

Itoke: <http://www.itoke.co.uk/>

Story: <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2000/08/31/BU93707.DTL>

Delay: <http://news.cnet.com/news/0-1007-200-2672155.html>

Heinrich Potter and the Web of Piracy

Some German fans of Harry Potter were unwilling to wait for the paper version to be released in their native tongue, so they bought an English copy and began to translate it for themselves. Not a bad idea, unlike their next move - they started posting their translated text online for anyone to download. Once the Harry Potter franchise's German publisher found out, it came down hard. This is not the first time that Harry has been liberated on the Web only to be shut down shortly after. The BBC has the details.

BBC: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/sci/tech/newsid_906000/906048.stm

Harry in German: <http://www.harry-auf-deutsch.de/>

The True Survivor

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Mike has a Web site. It's Survivor.com. Mike makes accounting software for the Macintosh. Mike is a client of Conrad's. Conrad runs Walton Communications. Conrad noticed that Mike's site was getting insane hits. Conrad investigated. Conrad got sucked into the drama of the CBS Survivor series and also started a small drama of his own with CBS. Conrad has some fun with the survivor.com site. Fans of the show are incensed. CBS calls. Other media people call. Conrad documents his own survival at, well, Survivor.com.

Mike: <http://www.survivor.com/>

Conrad: <http://www.survivor.com/thestory.html>

CBS: <http://www.cbs.com/network/tvshows/mini/survivor/>

Eliza, Meet Biz

"Tell me more about that." Way back in the '60s, Joseph Weizenbaum, then an MIT professor, cooked up Eliza, a simple computer program that relentlessly carried on a typed conversation using a library of responses and the knack of identifying key words to use in its replies. Now, Kevin Fox has unleashed a version of this program on AOL's instant messaging service (AIM) and posted some of the amusing results. Read the transcripts, read how it was done, and then just shake your head. "Please go on." Another bot waiting to fool the unsuspecting using AIM is Biz, a program that remembers everything you say and regurgitates it sometimes seemingly intelligently, often incoherently. That we will carry on conversations with these things and reveal highly personal information is a poignant comment on the human need for someone who understands us. Is there a real therapy opportunity here? Logically, what we should do now is get these things talking to each other. Eliza, meet Biz. "Does it make you feel strong to use that kind of language?"

Eliza: <http://www.wired.com/news/culture/0,1284,38517,00.html>

Kevin: <http://fury.com/aoliza/index2.php>

Biz: <http://www.wired.com/news/technology/0,1282,38565,00.html>

Voteauction.com Moves Offshore, Back in Business

An Austrian investor has purchased the Voteauction.com Web site. The site gained brief notoriety a few weeks ago when it offered to auction absentee ballots for the US presidential election to the highest bidder (See NSD 6.29). US election laws put a quick end to those plans, but the law may not be able to reach the site now. Hans Bernhard, the new owner, has placed Voteauction.com servers in Bulgaria where they are accepting votes and bids. Bernhard says he has pulled in 376 votes and over \$10,000 in bids so far. At press time, Kansas led the pack with a bid of \$100 per vote (for only two votes so far), followed by Illinois at \$65 per vote. By the way, if you get caught selling your vote in the US you face criminal persecution. One good thing about this whole story is that it focuses attention on a pervasive problem of money in politics, but don't hold your breath waiting for reform. Wired has more.

Wired: <http://www.wired.com/news/politics/0,1283,38559,00.html>

Voteauction: <http://www.voteauction.com/>

Planning for Old Age

Those who must care for aged parents know that complex decisions and situations arise as we age. Many folks aim to figure it out as they go along. Often, this poses huge problems for caregivers and subjects those without a plan to medical intervention they may not want. Now, a site aims at helping individuals and families to have those difficult discussions about options, and to prepare appropriate legal documents ahead of time. Jasperon is a sober, helpful place started by medical and Web experts who seem well aware of the importance of privacy and Web security. The service provides information and wise counsel about end-of-life health care and other issues as well as guidelines and questionnaires to encourage discussions among family members and caregivers. It also has tools for preparing living wills and Powers of Attorney with versions legal in all 50 US states. For much of the site's content, registration is required but it's innocuous, requiring only your name and e-mail address. And although the legal documents aren't valid outside the US, much of this site's content will still be helpful elsewhere.

<http://jasperon.com/>

New Denial of Service Attack Software

Those of you keeping up with developments in computer insecurity will be interested in this advisory from Internet Security Systems. A new Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) program called "Trinity v3" has been spotted on over 400 systems. The clever software can be controlled through IRC. It infects Linux systems and connects to Undernet network IRC servers where it awaits commands to flood targeted hosts with traffic, rendering them unusable. The alert has technical details.

Alert: <http://xforce.iss.net/alerts/advise59.php>

Undernet: <http://www.undernet.org/>

RSA Encryption Algorithm Released to Public Domain

The patent on the RSA public key encryption algorithm is set to expire on Sept. 20. In advance of that date, RSA Security has released the algorithm to the public domain. Because of this patent, encryption programs written over the last couple of decades had to jump through hoops not to violate patent laws. The press release explains the algorithm and how it works.

<http://www.rsasecurity.com/news/pr/000906-1.html>

ONLINE CULTURE

An Interview with Brian Kernighan

Brian Kernighan blames Dennis Ritchie for the C programming language. "I am but a popularizer," he says in this insightful interview, but there's plenty of glory by association with which to paint Kernighan. It was in no small measure due to Kernighan and Ritchie's classic slim volume "The C Programming Language" that C grew to rule the programming world (see our book recommendations below). Several generations of programmers grew up learning their craft through that elegant little book, raising Kernighan to deity status in programming circles. In this interview, he comes across as a

down-to-earth and witty man somewhat bemused by his fame. If you've ever been curious about the man behind the legendary book, you'll enjoy this interview skillfully conducted by one of his students, Mihai Budiu.

<http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~mihaib/kernighan-interview/index.html>

**FURIOUS ACTIVITY IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR
UNDERSTANDING**

Making the Macintosh

The development of the Macintosh definitely did not follow a strict by-the-rules process. Some of project's components made new use of or advanced the technology of the times. The unique result pioneered on many fronts, and both it and the process remain worth studying. Although this site bills itself as a cultural and technological history, the cultural aspects are primary, with just enough technology thrown in to keep the mix together. Some of the material in this collection of primary materials related to the Macintosh's development and early reception can be found in libraries or elsewhere, but much - generally interviews - was generated specifically for this project. The accessible material nearly perfectly uses hyperlinks throughout. Aside from being totally fascinating reading, the site is a model of how to do a history of cultural technology.

<http://library.stanford.edu/mac/index.html>

How the Internet Rips off Writers and How to Fight Back

If you're a freelance writer and have ever had anything published on paper, the odds are good it's also been published on the Internet. You got paid in the first instance (we hope) and possibly ripped off in the second, if the efforts of your labor made their way online for the financial profit of others, and not for you. This Rights for Writers site explores the issues, reports on those writers fighting back, and describes how they're doing it and the few successes they've had. The site is loaded with examples of how writers are being taken to the cleaners. There's no rhetoric here, just facts - and the facts will make your blood boil.

<http://www.woram.com/rights/index.htm>

AntiPatents

How do we deal with what is widely perceived as a broken patent system? The US Patent Office has stirred up quite a bit of bad press in recent years for granting patents for inventions which are either too obvious or clearly pre-empted by prior art. This essay at Media.org takes the Patent Office to task for running an essentially closed system that outsiders find difficult to penetrate and within which patent examiners hunker down, secure from outside review. The authors put forth two radical suggestions: an AntiPatent database that systematically documents non-patented inventions with the aim of preventing some corporation from later claiming the idea; and a Clueless Patent database with pointers between obvious or unoriginal patents and the prior art that documents the invalidity of those patents. The essay, full of hyperlinks to other articles and discussions on the subject, makes for thoughtful and provocative reading.

<http://voice.media.org/essays/patent.html>

An Interval Lost in Internet Time

Interval was a high-concept technology think tank started in 1992 by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen. Allen's deep pockets brought in some bright people, who received a mandate to pretty much go off and just do some serious thinking about computers, technology, and eventually the Internet. Interval's concepts and conclusions would be used as the foundations of new computer-centric businesses. Ten years and about \$250 million later, Interval has been shut down. What went wrong? This feature from SiliconValley.com may not have all the answers but it does have a compelling tale of how secrecy and an inability to monetize the high concepts contributed to the fall of a research institution packed to the rafters with very smart people. A very good Silicon Valley failure story.

<http://www.mercurycenter.com/svtech/news/special/interval/>

IsThisARealURLNoWay.com

What started out as a simple site to trace the wanderings of a common bogus URL (NoWeDontHaveAWebSite.com) through our culture has evolved into a site that also collects the surprising number of similar URLs. As no one had registered the original domain name, this site was able to snag it and thus render it no longer bogus, but legit and endearingly hypocritical. Bogus (often registered like the one here, but otherwise unused) URLs have been used in advertising, as media and personal humor (our reviewer owns a few that even our limited good taste prohibits mentioning), and for reasons probably best not researched. Bogus URLs are a very particular sort of humor and this site is clearly its temple.

<http://nowedonthaveawebsite.com/noweb/noweb.html>

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

1-405-the-Film

Is "405" - a low-budget, independent, short, digital, online feature - the future of film? Could be. Visual-effects artists Bruce Branit and Jeremy Hunt created and stitched "405" together in 3 1/2 months of spare time with off-the-shelf graphic and video software. The plot is simple: a DC-10 makes an emergency landing on a freeway in LA, endangering a young man and an elderly woman. The companion Web site illustrates step-by-step how the dynamic duo produced their illusions with improvisation, cleverness, and skill. This neat little film has attracted praise from critics and fans alike. Branit and Hunt were featured in Rolling Stone Magazine and on Access Hollywood. As of Aug. 24, according to the Web site, the film had been viewed 1.5 million times. With so much buzz created for so little cash, you can bet a lot of movie moguls are evaluating the situation.

<http://www.405themovie.com/>

**MOST OF LIFE IS CHOICES, AND THE REST PURE DUMB
LUCK**

The Spot for Cinema

It's easy to sniff at portals. They tend to imitate one another, including "vortals" that focus on industry or consumer sectors. Still, the portal remains useful, a great invention for people with defined interests. A wonderful example of such a Web natural is CinemaSpot.com, which should attract even non-film-buffs. Linked buzzwords such as Release Calendar, Previews/Clips, and Top 100 Movie Quotes exert an immediate tug on memory and curiosity. Consider this collection of resources a triumph of categorization - proof, in a way, that selection by editors and organization by designers beat search engines for relevance, efficiency, and responsiveness. Don't worry, Google, we still love you. It's just that CinemaSpot.com anticipates better, as if CinemaSpot.com were a clickable map of a portion of your mind in charge of movies. And let's face it: a few hours surfing are cheaper than a matinee. Thumbs up? Darn straight! Bookmark it, especially if you work or hope to work in the biz.

<http://www.cinemaspot.com/>

The Art of the Internet

Shirin Mali, a digital artist, likes to play with technology. Mali's Web site, Photomontage, likes to play with art. Take "Beauty Queen", a black and white image with green eyes that follow your cursor, or the Shockwave "Puzzle Head" jigsaw. Mali manipulates images like religious icons, illustrations from band-aid packages, and toast - in fact, quite a bit of food, in odd combinations like "soup of legs with green steamed beans". "Pose in front of the cabin", a nice little bit of Flash-montage, moves a step beyond the sample-and-paste school of much digital design these days. Ignoring the occasionally frustrating navigation (tiny unlabelled squares or little white dots), there's a very large collection of work, including e-postcards, that shows that Web technology can be more than cookies and Big Business splash ads.

<http://www.photomontage.com/>

Call for Digital Artists.

Bit by Bit, an exhibition of digital art, wants to recognize, promote, and reward the best creative and expressive digital works - but it needs to find out about them first. The show will accept entries online until Sept. 15. Computer artists of all skill levels can visit the Web site and enter work in three categories: still, dynamic, and interactive. A juried gallery exhibition of submitted art will be installed on large format monitors in the Main Gallery of the Business of Art Center in Manitou Springs, Colo. from Oct. 14 through Nov. 18. Artists will win hardware, software, services, and cash based on quality, skill, and originality.

<http://www.bitbybitdigital.org/>

Clicks and Klangs and Musical Thangs

Clicks and Klangs (CK) calls itself the "monthly digest of everything that crackles, beats, swings, samples or soothes." It is decidedly not a corporate music mag like Rolling Stone (when was the last time Spin covered Nina Simone or ran a list of musicians who "died too early"?). It promises to look at underground music, from electronica to Zappa. CK number one takes up the torch of the avant-garde with articles about the lack of women in experimental music and a review of four albums by Nico. In a nice touch, CK plays the music covered in the monthly magazine on its own Net radio show. The second issue will appear in early September, and judging by the quality of the first installment, we have a winner.

<http://www.clicks-and-klangs.com/>

Post-Rembrandt Engravings

Dutch engraver Jan Luyken is best known for his clean copper engraving style and for his 1694 book of plates depicting scores of late 17th century craftsmen at work. Remarkably, each plate manages to evoke in one single frame the bygone world of a broom maker, peat cutter, or book maker. As a craftsman himself, Luyken's precision is worth studying, as is his art in creating lively scenes which still engage us today, in a world where such craftsmen are extinct.

<http://www.janluyken.com/>

BOOKS & E-ZINES

Netsurfer Recommendations

Items our staff likes and you might too. Click on the image or title to order at a hefty discount from our affiliate Amazon.com, and send a few pennies our way as well.



[Telecosm: How Infinite Bandwidth Will Revolutionize Our World](#)

George Gilder
Free Press; ISBN: 0684809303

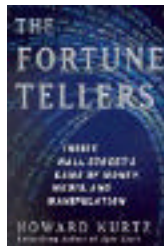
George Gilder is best known as a futurist and deep thinker, a man who famously predicted back in the early '90s that the Internet would spell the death of television as it existed at the time. In this new book, he's still predicting the demise of TV, and adds that the content of your PC will inevitably migrate to the Net and that advertising will become less obnoxious and stop wasting your time. The book is full of nifty thinking about the implications of a massive increase in bandwidth which is just around the corner. Diverting futurism.



[The C Programming Language](#)

Brian W. Kernighan, Dennis M. Ritchie
Prentice Hall; ISBN: 0131103628

Possibly the most influential programming book ever written. This slim volume is the definitive book on the C programming language, widely admired for its elegance of style and clarity of exposition. It has been often imitated but seldom equaled as a manual/advanced tutorial on programming. No serious programmer should be without a copy.



[The Fortune Tellers: Inside Wall Street's Game of Money, Media, and Manipulation](#)

Howard Kurtz
Free Press; ISBN: 0684868792

Who moves the markets? Certainly, the captains of industry, but these days media figures, pundits, and analysts are equally capable of sending stocks skyrocketing or plunging. This book delves into the world of these fortune tellers and what drives what they do. A good read for anybody interested in how financial news comes to be and in the cult of the financial gurus.



[The Little Prince](#)

Antoine De Saint-Exupery, Katherine Woods (Translator)
Harcourt Brace; ISBN: 0152465030

This gentle tale of a boy and his tiny planet has been on favorite reading lists for several generations. We don't really have to recommend it to you, but what the heck, every once in a while you just have to revisit the classics. If you read it as a child you might be surprised to read it with adult eyes and enjoy the subtle nature of the story. The linguistically versatile may also enjoy it in the original French as "[Le Petit Prince](#)".



The Open Source News Forge

As more sites - and individuals - take advantage of open-source software, and as others challenge the same, news about the open-source movement blooms. Hence NewsForge, a growing news site that covers what the New York Times calls "the war... being fought in conference rooms, law offices, hacker redoubts and university dormitory rooms and in the hearts of millions of people surfing the Web." Your local media may run an occasional item about this phenomenon, but software developers and others with a continual need to know need an aggregator like NewsForge. The site grabs your attention with current headlines. You'll also find links to announcements and press releases. NewsForge's alphabetized Stories by Topic list on the home page guides you to through hot categories in this multifaceted field. That editor-in-chief Robin Miller is better known as Slashdot's Roblimo should clue you in to the flavor of the site.

<http://newsforge.com/>

GIANT SPACE HAMSTERS OFFER A PLETHORA OF WONDERS!

Off the Beaten Path Newsbites

Some argue that the Internet has made receiving news easier than ever. Others counter that the array of choices makes it difficult to find the true stories, facts, and true news amid the noise. The meta-site paradigm breaks middle ground: digging up the breaking news from different places and collating it into a single set of links. Frontpage Daily News uses such a style, providing readers with short headlines that link to the full stories from news agents around the world, and does it well. A group of resources of similar interest including live newstalk radio, the works of particular columnists, and links to other news sites complement their core offering. Your browser at work can now have a single choice that jumps you to Frontpage to skim, quickly of course, the headlines of the day. Stay informed without losing time searching for the news you want.

<http://www.frontpagedailynews.com/>

SURFING SCIENCE

The GOLEM Project: Machines Evolving Machines

You probably noticed a recent article in your local rag that covered computers designing, testing, and selectively evolving robots at Brandeis University. On the other hand, you probably didn't see the URL in any articles. The Web site matches the news for fascination. You can read about the technical aspect of the project, immerse yourself in the philosophical debate, or - neatest of all - watch MPEGs of the robots in action. It's amazing how much some of these machines resemble benthic sea life. You can also take a look at VRML models if you so desire. Windows users can even participate in a distributed computing project. Stuff like this impresses even the

A WITTY SAYING PROVES NOTHING

Mars on Earth

An earthbound experiment in space exploration, Mars on Earth seeks preliminary answers to the question: what will Mars be like when humans get there? Cold, of course. Dry. Rocky. Dangerous, in any case. Somewhat like Devon Island, a Canadian nowhere in the Arctic Circle that scientists consider the closest thing to Mars on Earth. With backing from NASA, the Mars Society, and the Discovery Channel, science teams on Devon Island describe their geological and biological research through RealPlayer videos from base camp. The Model Mars section has panoramic comparisons of the island and Mars (you'll need an IPIX plug-in). On the Agenda has interesting snippets of text that are hard to read. Red planet, red Web site. If the Discovery Channel would lighten up a little, we'd get more of the message from this "operational testbed". Clearly, however dark your text or bright your monitor, Mars on Earth is a must-visit for space enthusiasts.

<http://www.discovery.com/news/features/marsonearth/video.html>

Translating Archaic Medical Terminology

The dedicated amateur genealogist who tracks down authentic death and birth documents can be stumped by confusing or incomprehensible archaic medical terminology. Abortus fever, for example, has nothing to do with abortion; it's an old term for brucellosis. And what is the 21st century sleuth to make of death by chills? Most often, chills meant malaria, or possibly pneumonia. For definitions of accubation, choke-damp, corals in their hands, and other fatal afflictions, see Paul Smith's wonderfully comprehensive Archaic Medical Terms page.

<http://www.gpiag-asthma.org/drpsmith/amt1.htm>

Who Wants to Be (a Really Smart) Millionaire?

If you have some spare time and would like to flex your mental muscle, physicists attending the superstring conference at the University of Michigan have come up with a list of the ten most confounding problems in their field. Here's number five: Why does the universe appear to have one time and three space dimensions? We've often wondered that ourselves. Once you've wrapped those questions up, you can drop by the Clay Mathematics Institute and really give your brain a workout. The Millennium Prize Problems consist of seven questions, each with a \$1 million bounty. For the physics questions, you'll need to sign up free with the New York Times.

Physics: <http://www.nytimes.com/library/national/science/081500sci-physics-questions.html>

Math: http://www.claymath.org/prize_problems/

SOFTWARE

Microsoft Cookie Control Software

Microsoft has released beta software for Internet Explorer 5.5 (Windows 95+) that grants users better control over cookies. The software will allow you to differentiate between cookies that originate from a Web server you're intentionally visiting and cookies that originate from other Web sites. You get to choose which ones to accept. This is still beta software, so use at your own risk.

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/download/preview/privacy.htm>



Python 1.6 Released, 2.0 Beta Also Out

Fans of the Python language should note that version 1.6 has a few small incompatible changes which may trip up existing scripts. Read the documentation for details. Other than that, the major change in 1.6 is added Unicode support along with the usual bug fixes and a bunch of new modules. As for version 2.0b1, read the "What's New in Python 2.0" document for a good explanation of how this major revision differs.

Python: <http://www.python.org/>

2.0: <http://starship.python.net/crew/amk/python/writing/new-python/>

CORRECTIONS

A Pregnent Pause

Some of you - we sincerely hope most of you - may have noticed just a few wee spelling and grammer errors in our last issue. So did we. Normaly, our almost fearless editor sends our absolutly peerless publisher just one NSD to put out. For one reason or another - and because our copy editor was away on vacashion - Arthur got three issues, the first two of which incomplete. Basicly, we apologizes. We know we spewed fourth some pretty serious garbage, and we'll do better. Still worth the price, though, eh?

Show Me Demoney

Even if you don't believe us, we do check each URL before NSD leaves the shop. When we reviewed Demoney's Windows Web site last week ("They Do Windows"), you could freely view it. Now, you need a password. Maybe NSD directed too much traffic their way? Welcome to the big time. (Uh, did that come off as self-deprecating as it should have?)

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