

## Cruising the Information Superhighway

By ALEX KOZINSKI

Say you're into bungee jumping or the music of Phish. Or maybe you have an abiding interest in the element cesium.

In your heart you know you're not alone; millions must share your passion. Wouldn't it be swell to exchange views, maybe swap some insights, tell a few jokes? (Have you heard the one about the two cesium isotopes that went bang in the night?) All you have to do is boot up your computer, rev up that high-speed modem and start cruising down the information superhighway, looking for fellow travelers.

Well, it's not so easy. I remember the day I got my Internet account. I logged on and waited to be overwhelmed by the dizzying array of choices. Instead, I found myself staring at a blank screen, the cursor blinking back scornfully. I called a friend who knows about such things and asked him what to do. "Well," he said, "if you're looking to shoot the breeze on some arcane subject, you want a discussion group, also known as a newsgroup. There are thousands of them, and scores more are created daily. Just figure out which ones you're interested in and join the fun. If you're looking for resources—libraries, databases—you can usually get them through Gopher, using Veronica or Archie."

Oh, I see. Embarrassed to ask more questions, I went back to staring at my cursor. With some work, I figured out you get into newsgroups by typing `rn`, followed by a key word (e.g., `rn bungee`, `rn phish`, `rn cesium`), and you can access a zillion databases world-wide through a utility called Gopher. But how on earth do you know what there is to explore except by word of mouth (Hey, check out `alt.fan.oingo-boingo`!) and painfully tedious trial and error?

Well, I'm happy to report there is now a

clear road map to the datasphere: The Internet Yellow Pages (Osborne McGraw-Hill, 447 pages, \$27.95). This is a must-have book for anyone who wants to explore the vast reaches of the Internet without investing an inordinate amount of time and patience.

Written by the same folks who brought us the incredibly thorough Internet Complete Reference, the current book looks like a small-town yellow pages, divided into scores of subject headings (Archaeology, Literature, Humor, Politics, Bizarre, etc.), each containing a variety of listings. Under Bizarre, for example, you will dis-

### Bookshelf

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*The Internet Yellow Pages*  
by Harley Hahn and Rick Stout

cover how to become a minister of the Church of the SubGenius, where the deity is called Bob and looks a lot like Fred MacMurray. Under the same heading, you'll also find instructions for obtaining the "encheferizer program," which turns any text into a speech by the Swedish chef of "Muppet Show" fame: "Und noo, buys und gurls, ve-aveel leern hoo tu cuuk cheekees. Bork, bork, bork!"

Have you always wondered what pi looks like taken out to 1.25 million significant digits? Do you want the latest Clinton jokes, information distributed by the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a worldwide list of aikido dojos or the rules for Australian football? Are you interested in camels, the meaning of Hindu names, available federal jobs or the programming language C++? Do you absolutely need complete texts of Beavis and Butt-head witticisms (who doesn't?), William James's "Essays in Radical Empiricism,"

The Terrorist's Handbook or 'The New Republic? Do you want to join a lesbian, gay and bisexual mailing list or a Bible discussion group? All these and hundreds of other diverse and bizarre items are now at your fingertips.

Governments put a lot of data online, but figuring out what's available and where to get it can be a chore. A number of very useful pages are devoted to making sense of such items as U.S. Geological Survey seismology reports, congressional committee assignments, resumes and contact information for members of the president's cabinet and the texts of United Nations resolutions.

But this is not a prosaic catalog of everything on the Internet. The authors have selected items that readers are likely to find useful or fun, and have arranged them in an offbeat and engaging way. The pages are sprinkled with mock ads: "Need information about chimpanzees? Don't monkey around . . . use the primate gopher." "Stop whatever you're doing—right now—and send Rush Limbaugh (70277.2502compuserve.com) a message. Tell him to make sure that all his listeners buy a copy of The Internet Yellow Pages." "CIA INFO FOR YOU. . . The CIA World Factbook resource is invaluable for those planning to create their own military alliance." The book is often drollier than what you find online.

Committed wireheads will probably see this as a cheap shortcut. But for weekend coprocessor cowboys, The Internet Yellow Pages keeps the information superhighway from turning into electronic quicksand. Don't venture into the ether without it.

*Mr. Kozinski, a federal judge in California, can be reached at internet address [kozinski@mizar.usc.edu](mailto:kozinski@mizar.usc.edu). He thanks David Tiffany and Alexander Volokh for their assistance.*