



# Internet applications, sites, trends and happenings

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This column aims to draw your attention to various interesting Web sites that I have come across and which might appeal to you, and to keep you up-to-date with news and views on Internet trends, developments and statistics. It offers essentially a personal selection rather than comprehensive coverage. Although some sites may not cover products or services available in South Africa, they are included because they may inspire you to either contribute missing data or become an entrepreneur and create a similar local site.

## **The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth**

Sense About Science is an independent charitable trust which responds to the misrepresentation of science and scientific evidence on issues that matter to society – from scares about plastic bottles, fluoride and the MMR vaccine to controversies about genetic modification, stem cell research and radiation. Recent and current priorities include alternative medicine, MRI, detox, nuclear power, evidence in public health advice, weather patterns and an educational resource on peer review.

Sense About Science aspires to promote good science and evidence in public debates. It does this by promoting respect for evidence and by urging scientists to engage actively with a wide range of groups, particularly when debates are controversial or difficult. The trust works with scientists to respond to inaccuracies in public claims about science, medicine, and technology and to promote the benefits of scientific research to the public. Supported by an advisory council, the trust boasts some 1500 scientists and other specialists, ranging from Nobel Laureates to postdoctoral fellows, who are signed up to their database, Evidence Base. The trust also works with younger scientists in its VoYS (Voice of Young Science) programme. Find out more at <http://www.senseaboutscience.org.uk/>.

Want more interesting science news, research titbits and science discussion? Then do the quickstep over to ScienceAGoGo. This site offers a diverse collection of scientific news snippets, covering everything and anything in the news today. The site also provides forums so you can have your say and discuss science topics with experts. The site has a section on feature articles as well as news items by topics such as physics, space, the natural world, health, climate change and technology. Archives go back to 1998 – and there is also a bookshop containing pertinent science books, and a curiosity shop. To be in the know, get up and go to <http://www.scienceagogo.com>.

But if it is answers to questions you want, then look no further than <http://www.straightdope.com/>. Cecil Adams, the world's smartest human being, can answer any question and encourages you to 'send 'em in' (first check the archive to see if your question has been answered before) to save Cecil the inconvenience of having to answer himself, then having to post the query to the general questions forum (registration required), which will probably mean that any of the numerous adherents to the site will answer the question for you.

## **Who cares?**

Well, Care2 Make a Difference does, for one. Care2's goal is to make the world a better place by connecting people who care about issues such as health, the environment, women's rights, spirituality, children's welfare, animal welfare, human rights and much more with the organizations, responsible businesses and individuals getting results. Care2 claims over seven million members and works with more than 150 non-profit organizations and hundreds of responsible business advertisers. The site lists success stories and provides opportunities for people to get involved in matters they care about (such as fighting junk e-mail). Meet others who think like you at <http://www.care2.com/>.

## **Thinking of going green?**

The number of 'green' businesses and Web sites has exploded in recent years and talk of green living, working and playing has reached a fevered pitch in the media. Despite the amount of information out there, many people still hunt for practical, personal knowledge that allows them to live a more eco-friendly lifestyle without breaking their budget or seriously sacrificing comfort and convenience. That's where Green Options comes in: they want to provide a place where you can make informed decisions that allow you to live a responsible and healthy life.

Features that the Green Options Web site (<http://www.greenoptions.com/>) offers include a Web log providing the most important green news and developments from around the globe; a wiki-based repository of information on the wide world of green living; a regularly updated source for the latest news on environmentally-conscious technology, innovations and developments; discussion forums where you can meet and share stories with other people looking to green their lives; and a place where you can ask the Ecogeek questions about your eco-living concerns. Launching shortly will be an e-course designed to provide you with day-by-day tips and actions for lowering your environmental footprint while living the good life. And soon, Green Options will provide tools that allow you to assess your home or business' potential for incorporating renewable energy systems.

We have white pages, yellow pages and now green pages. The National Green Pages is a directory listing nearly 3000 businesses that have made firm commitments to sustainable, socially just principles, including the support of sweatshop-free labour, organic farms, fair trade and cruelty-free products. For every category of conventional consumer goods and services, there are green businesses that can meet your needs. The National Green Pages lists baby care and organic products, fair trade, flavoured teas and fuel-efficient cars for rent among the thousands of products. With each purchase you make through the directory, you know you are supporting truly green businesses which operate in ways that solve, rather than cause, both environmental and social problems. Let your fingers do the walking at <http://www.coopamerica.org/pubs/greenpages/>.

## **Busy (or lazy) person's way to read books**

The sales pitch says that as a company executive or entrepreneur (include university professor, student, other) you are just too busy managing your business (or work) to sit down and read all 300 pages of a business book. If you try, you would normally finish it in a month. But four books in a month? So BusinessSummaries solves your problem by summarizing all the key concepts in the books that you need and putting them into one to two page free book summaries that are e-mailed to you every month for one year free of charge.

A book summary can serve as a memory guide in place of your own notes on a book you

may need to review or it can be a helpful overview to help you decide whether to actually buy the book or not. With BusinessSummaries you have no need to actually read the book because experts do it for you, thus enabling you to still keep on top of the latest trends in marketing, business management, investment, human resources or the latest ideas from business gurus. Of course, the book summaries are no substitute for reading the whole book yourself, but if you are pressed for time then they will certainly help to apprise you of the salient points. Check some out under the articles part of <http://www.bizsum.com>.

## **Cyberbullying**

Bullying has entered the digital age. The impulses behind it are the same, but the effect is magnified. In the past, the materials of bullying would have been whispered, shouted or passed around. Now, with a few clicks, a photo, video or a conversation can be shared with hundreds via e-mail or millions through a Web site, on-line profile or blog posting. According to a Pew Internet and American Life Project, about one third (32%) of all teenagers who use the Internet say they have been targets of a range of annoying and potentially menacing on-line activities – such as receiving threatening messages; having their private e-mails or text messages forwarded without consent; having an embarrassing picture posted without permission; or having rumours about them spread on-line. Depending on the circumstances, these harassing or 'cyberbullying' behaviours may be truly threatening, merely annoying or relatively benign. But several patterns are clear: girls are more likely than boys to be targets; and teens who share their identities and thoughts on-line are more likely to be targets than are those who lead less active on-line lives. The simplicity of being able to replicate and quickly transmit digital content makes bullying quite easy. Read more at <http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP%20Cyberbullying%20Memo.pdf>.

## **What's new? Makes you wonder ...**

Seven is a lucky number for many different cultures and peoples and, so, 7 July 2007 was considered particularly auspicious. Small wonder then that this was the date chosen to present the new Seven Wonders of the World to the general public. The idea of creating a new list of Wonders (since most of the original Seven Wonders no longer exist) was dreamed up by Swiss adventurer Bernard Weber who set up the New7Wonders Foundation in 2001. The aim was to alert people to the destruction of nature and the decay of our man-made heritage. The public was invited to send in proposals for a new list of Wonders with voting taking place along the way. At the end of 2005, a N7W panel had chosen 21 candidates from the top 77 nominees that had earned the most public votes and these were announced to the public through the media. Voting continued through the first half of 2007 and the winning seven from the list was announced in Lisbon on 7/7/07. Curious to know what the new Seven Wonders of the World are? Then take a trip to <http://www.new7wonders.com> to get the results and the history of the project – and while you are there, why not vote for the seven wonders of nature?

## **Bonus – for SF buffs**

I have covered some sites before on science fiction – but in this one you can check out the science and technology of StarTrek at <http://www.exn.ca/mini/startrek>. The site compares some of the show's underlying scientific principles to what is actually possible today or tomorrow.

## **About the author**

Dr David Raitt is senior technology transfer officer with the European Space Agency in the Netherlands. His work involves finding applications for space technologies in non-space sectors, particularly those useful for improving everyday life. An information scientist by

education and training, David is also editor of *The Electronic Library* and chairman of the Internet Librarian International conferences.

**[disclaimer.htm]**

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