

WebWatch

Start Making Sense

Paul McCartney's ex, Heather Mills, says that meat putrefies in your stomach for 40 years. Roger Moore (James Bond actor) claims that foie gras causes Alzheimer's disease. Celebrities get a disproportionately large amount of media coverage and therefore such statements can be anything from annoying to dangerous. Battling outrageous claims in the media is the Sense About Science page, which gives scientists a platform to rebut nonsense while educating the public. Created as an independent charitable trust in the U.K., Sense About Science's focus is broader than simply dealing with celebrities. With facts on its side, it isn't afraid to wade into deep waters like criticizing the Prince of Wales for selling a dubious detoxification product. The next time someone you know tells you that they like organic food because it doesn't have chemicals, point them to Sense About Science.

[www.senseaboutscience.org.uk]

Gene Genie

Can the experiences of cells in one generation pass on characteristics to the next one? If you asked that question just a few years ago, the consensus answer would likely have been 'no,' but advances in the study of epigenetics are rapidly revealing instances where environment affects phenotype long after the fact. Rooted in complex modifications resulting in activation/inactivation of genes, epigenetics is one of the fastest advancing research areas in biology. Tracking happenings in the field is EpiGenie, a team that, in its own description, scours PubMed, peers over press releases, interviews researchers, and uses the technology they describe. EpiGenie is attractively laid out and abounds with useful techniques and the latest news. For researchers and the curious alike, EpiGenie is a must-see link.

[www.epigenie.com/index.html]

Virtually Yours

Virtual libraries date back to the earliest days of the Web, and flourish because they provide links that allow users to easily access a wide range of information from a single point. The key to their success lies in tight, hierarchical design. BioChemWeb, which covers biochemistry, molecular biology, and cell biology, is a virtual library serving life scientists and, like its cousins in the genre, packs an impressive array of information

Insect Amour

Extension services at land-grant universities invariably have entomologists who do everything from advising on insect infestations to identifying specimens submitted to them. "What's That Bug?" is to the Web what extension entomologists are to universities, offering a full range of services, essentially for free (donations are requested). Features include identification of creepy crawlers in visitor-submitted photos, Bug of the Month, and one of the largest collections of excellent insect photos to be found on the Web. If those don't suit your fancy, there is a section to get questions answered, stories galore, and even a segment dealing with bugs that have gotten squashed.

[www.whatsthatbug.com]



A female jumping spider, *Phidippus mystaceus*, stares at the camera in Oklahoma. © 2009 Josh Kouri, www.whatsthatbug.com.

into a scant few pages. It doesn't matter whether you're looking for info on the cell cycle or cellular organelles, microscopy or structural biology, angiogenesis or glycosylation, or almost any other molecular/cellular phenomenon; you can learn about it in seconds on BioChemWeb. In addition, there are very useful links covering career development, funding opportunities, meeting information, and even software.

[www.biochemweb.org]

Fruit of the Mine

Chemicals are prime targets for data mining. There is a systematic nomenclature for them and a very large body of data for most as well. ChemMine is an integrated database that provides access to over 6.2 million chemicals from public and private sources. Structures and functional annotations can be searched by several criteria for retrieval. The site's Cheminformatics Workbench offers structure-based clustering of compounds, viewing options, and choices for sharing. An added bonus of ChemMine is its open access design and the exclusive use of open source technology. A great site with a philosophy to match, ChemMine delivers valuable info to researchers at no cost.

[<http://bioweb.ucr.edu/ChemMineV2>]

Logical and Pedagogical

Putting pedagogy into a digital format he dubs "Chemical Logic," Dr. Henry Jakubowski at St. John's University puts a novel spin on teaching biochemistry on the Web for everyone to see, use, and enjoy. His premise is that standard textbook organization is poor for teaching and too encyclopedic in nature. He proceeds then to organize his materials into nine general topics on the Biochemistry Online site. Biochemists will find the layout scheme, at a minimum, to be creative. The first topic is lipid structure, followed by protein structure and then carbohydrates. The strength of the hyperlinked topics is in their conciseness, allowing students to easily get their heads around the information without drowning in data. The site is an interesting educational experiment definitely worth a look.

[<http://employees.csbsju.edu/hjakubowski/classes/ch331/bcintro/default.html>]

Written by Kevin Ahern, Ph.D. Please send web site recommendations to ahern@orst.edu

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