First peoples and the Internet

By Gladys Smiley Bell

A guide to Native American resources

Electronic access to research and interactive communication for and about Native Americans is available in a variety of ways, and growing dramatically in number and scope. What was once an esoteric tool used only by scientists and engineers, the Internet is now having a dramatic impact on ethnic cultures, including Native Americans. Throughout this overview of Native American resources on the Internet the terms Native North Americans, Indians, American Indians, Native Americans, Aboriginal peoples, first peoples, and others are used interchangeably.

The information superhighway trek begins by accessing a document entitled "Public Access to the Internet: American Indian and Alaskan Native Issues" by George D. Baldwin (Henderson State University). Baldwin helped launch American Telecommunications (AIT), the first nonprofit group dedicated to promoting the grassroots Native American computing movement.[1] The document provides a historical and critical overview of communication, technology, and Indian Culture. *Access: URL:* ftp://ftp.NIC.MERIT.EDU/conference. proceedings/harvard.pubaccess.symposium/ network.communities/ networking.nations.txt.

Electronic discussion lists

• **AISESnet.** American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) Network. This electronic list provides communication and information for AISES chapters, students and faculty associated with AISES, and for members of industry and government. AISES membership is open to all, including non-AISES members. The list is divided into four groups: 1) AISESnet General: topics include AISES issues, position openings, scholarship announcements, AISES chapter communications, conference information, AISES events and announcements, pow-wow information, topics of general interest, and chapter newsletters; 2) AISESnet Discussion: intended for the discussion of Native American issues, engineering and science issues, public opinion, creative writing, etc.; 3) Alcohol & Drug: deals only with drug- and alcohol-related issues, and will provide information as well as support; participation is anonymous and return address labels will not be shown in the messages sent out by AISESnet; 4) AISESnet Drums: a distribution list dedicated to drum groups, it will only deal with issues concerning drum groups, pow-wow drum groups, drum building, pow-wow singers, etc.

When you subscribe to AISESnet, you will be added automatically to the AISESnet General and AISESnet Discussions lists. You must indicate that you would like to subscribe to the AISESnet Drums and/or the Alcohol & Drug list as well. There are four AISESnet gopher databases: student resumes, AISESnet membership directory, job listings, and submissions (archives). *Access:* aisesnet@selway.umt.edu. *Based on information provided by Borries Demeler, AISESnet listowner; demeler@selway. umt.edu.*

• **INDIANnet.** Census Information and Computer Network Center. This is the first national computer listserv to provide civic information useful to American Indian and Alaskan Natives. Services include computer conferences and private electronic mail for Indian tribes,

Gladys Smiley Bell is coordinator of electronic information services at Kent State University Libraries, Ohio; e-mail: gbell@kentvm.kent.edu

nonprofit organizations, and individuals. It includes federal information such as the *Federal Register*, Employment Opportunities, Environmental Protection Agency data, U.S. Census data and Geographic Information System (TIGER) files. There is also a specialized collection of American Indian and Alaskan Native research reports extracted from the Educational Research Information Clearinghouse (ERIC). There is an amazing collection of authentic electronic Indian artwork and graphics. The most ambitious project is the Tribal Profiles Database. *Access:* listserv@spruce.hsu.edu. *Based on information provided by George Baldwin, INDIANnet director; baldwin@holly.hsu.edu.*

• **INDKNOW.** For discussion of Indigenous Knowledge Systems. *Access:* listserv@uwavm.u.washington.edu.

• **IROQUOIS.** Iroquoian Language discussion. *Access:* listserv@vm.utcc.utoronto.edu.

• **NativeNet.** An overlapping set of electronic discussion lists that also have overlapping memberships and are organized by topic. NAT-1492 is a Columbus quincentenary mailing list dealing specifically with the 500th anniversary of Columbus's voyage to the "New World," and the havoc that ensued for the native people of the Americas. *Access:* listserv@tamvm1.tamu.edu. NATCHAT provides a forum for general discussion pertaining to indigenous people of the world. *Access:* listserv@tamvm1.tamu.edu. NATIVE-L, Indigenous Peoples Information, provides a general forum for exchanging information and perspectives on matters relating to the indigenous people of the world. *Access:* listserv@tamvm1.tamu.edu. (NATIVE-L and NATCHAT are "gatewayed" with the soc.culture.native Usenet newsgroup in such a way that any message posted to soc.culture.native will be sent to a NativeNet moderator who (if s/he approves) will relay the posting to either the NATIVE-L or NATCHAT mailing list. Any message posted to mailing addresses attached to these two lists will authomatically be sent to soc.culture.native.) NAT-HLTH, Health Issues of Native Peoples. *Access:* listserv@tamvm1.tamu.edu. NAT-LANG, a discussion list for exchanging information concerning the languages of indigenous people. *Access:* listserv@tamvm1.tamu.edu. NAT-EDU deals with issues regarding the provision of culturally sensitive educational programs for native people and better and more accurate educational materials concerning native people for mainstream students.

Access: listserv@indycms.iupui.edu. *Based on information provided by Gary Trujillo, NativeNet listowner; gst@gnosys.svle.ma.us.*

• **NATIVE-LIT-L.** Native American Literature by autochthonous people of the North Americas (the U.S., Canada, and Mexico) and neighboring islands, including Hawaii. Discussions are open to any aspect of native literature as well as book reviews; articles about poetry, fiction, and criticism; information about publications, talks, and conferences; and general chit-chat about native literature. *Access:* listserv@cornell.edu. *Based on information provided by Michael Wilson, Native-Lit-L listowner; idoy@crux1.cit.cornell.edu.*

• **NativeProfs-L.** Private electronic list for the Association of American Indian & Alaskan Native Professors.

• **NIPC.** National Indian Policy Research Institute Electronic Clearinghouse. An information clearinghouse on a wide range of policy issues to the 500 U.S. Native American tribes since 1990. *Access:* listserv@gwuvm.gwu.edu.

Anonymous ftp site

• Contains documents pertaining to Native Americans. *Access: URL:* ftp://ftp.cit.cornell.edu/pub/special/NativProfs/usenet.

Gopher sites

• **Native American Net Server.** Server home for files pertaining to Native Americans. The bulletin board system is also available for posting notices about things for sale and upcoming events. *Access: URL:* gopher://alpha1.csd.uwm.edu/UW M Information/The Native American Net.

• **UC-Berkeley Library gopher.** Native American Studies Section. *Access: URL:* gopher://infolib.lib.berkeley.edu, port 70/Research Databases and Resources by Subject/Ethnic Studies/Native American Studies.

UseNet newsgroups

Local computer services staff should be consulted to find out what the availability and procedures are for access to: alt.native, soc.culture.indian.american, soc.culture.native, soc.culture.native.american.

Other significant electronic resources

• **ACTIV-L.** Activists for peace, empowerment, human rights, justice, etc. *Access:* listserv@mizzou1.missouri.edu.

- **Educational Native American Network** (ENAN). Call (505) 277-7310 for password and 800 number for dial-in access and information. (Scheduled soon for Internet access.) Established by and for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Office of Indian Education Programs (OIEP) schools serving American Indian children. The network provides teachers with access to a wide range of information on technical assistance and training resources. Through the network, teachers are able to share information on effective practices and classroom ideas; access curriculum materials and resources related to Indian education from universities, museums, etc.; and take online courses. It also supports multiple classroom site instructional projects.

- **Molis.** Minority On-line Information Service. Provides comprehensive information on Native American, black, and Hispanic minority colleges and universities. *Access: URL:* ftp:// ftp.fie.com or *URL:* gopher://gopher.fie.com or *URL:* telnet://fedix.fie.com or *URL:* http:// www.fie.com.

- **ORTRAD-L.** Discussion regarding studies in oral tradition for all those interested in the world's living oral traditions (e.g., African, Hispanic, Native American, etc.). *Access:* listserv@mizzou1.missouri.edu.

Conclusion

Taking a hike using Veronica to search gopher sites revealed all of the above information. For more information on electronic resources for Native Americans take a ride on the information superhighway using gopher, Mosaic, Cello, or Lynx, and consult the following:

- **Directory of Scholarly Electronic Conferences.** 8th Revision. listserv@kentvm. kent.edu (get acadlist file<no.>) or *URL:* ftp:// ksuvxa.kent.edu/library.

- Art McGee. NatvInfo. *Access: URL:* ftp:// ftp.netcom.com/pub/amcgee/indigenous/ my_indigenous_related_lists.

Note

1. A. J. S. Rayl, "New technologies, ancient cultures; use of computer and information technology by Native Americans," *Omni* 15 (August 1993): 46–48.

Enough of white man's ASCII

Dave Hughes, who is kind of an Internet evangelist, took to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains to work with a group of Native American teenagers at the American Indian Science and Engineering Society's summer school in physics. According to Hughes, the kids, who were from the Navajo, Zuni, Crow, Tohono, Sioux, and Picurus Pueblo tribes, "showed polite, quiet interest as I explained the technology and made a local call to the Internet (Colorado Supernet). They laughed a bit, read, and responded to e-mail sent especially to them by Dr. George Johnston, physicist at MIT, whom I asked to 'welcome' them directly to the world of mathematics and physics by telecom.

"Then I said, 'enough of white man's ASCII' and started calling up the Indian art, the Crow Dance poetry, the new pieces by Lorri Ann Two Bulls, via modem, at 2400 baud. They really got excited! Putting questions to me, walking up to look closer at the full-color VGA monitor, their dark eyes laughing, smiles, and half of them standing up for the rest of the hour-long session. When it was over, a crowd around the machine, picking up copies of the *Online Access* magazine and *Boardwatch* magazine I brought, and more questions. And from their obvious tribal knowledge, they were saying "That's Crow, that's Sioux!' from the colors and symbols in the various pieces of art.

"A heart-warming session with 40 Indian kids who seemed to get a glimpse of a future even they could participate in. And if I am right, by reaching these youth, starting with their own 'images of their inner selves' as Indians produced by such technologies, they may be better able to move on into the world of science, math, and the cold regions of technological and white man's society, while still not losing their identity. Perhaps even doing their life's works as professionals, from the reservation, thanks to these little devices."

Source: A posting by Dave Hughes to the Consortium for School Networking Discussion Forum List (COSNDISC@BITNIC) on July 10, 1992. From *The Internet Companion: A Beginner's Guide to Global Networking,* by Tracy LaQuey with Jeanne C. Ryer (Addison-Wesley, 1993), pp. 36–37. ∎