

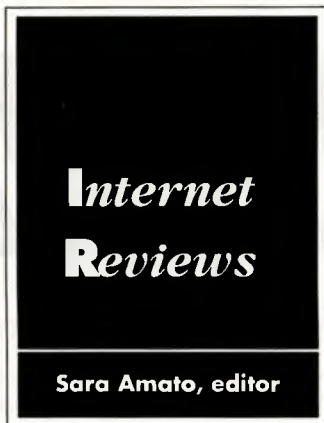
Baltics Online. Access: <http://www.viabalt.ee/>

Baltics Online is a high-quality site for Baltics-specific news and a limited amount of business information. This site is operated in Tallinn, Estonia, but appears to be highly stable, as opposed to many Eastern European Internet sites. Most of the information included in this source comes from either the Baltic News Services or the Press and Information Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia. News is posted at a variety of times throughout the day and is fairly comprehensive, but very politically oriented. This is not a location for human interest stories, and the Estonian News section may be considered to be the official government news source. Keep this fact in mind as you read such sections as Business Information. While I assume that the news included at this site is a translation of the news included in Estonian sources, there is little question that the amount of information included in the daily reports indicated some level of editorial decision-making. Since the site seems aimed at the United States, there is some lingering question in my mind about the level of coverage. The *Baltic Business Weekly* is also posted at this site, and this is a fine publication for those concerned with information on business-related topics in these states. For example, the current cover story of this publication deals with the reorganization of the Latvian government, a subject that got very little press in the U.S.

All things considered, this is a fine source for news on the Baltic region, and is recommended highly because of the lack of information available in other commonly accessed news sources.—*John Small, Central Missouri State University*

United States Department of the Treasury. Access: <http://www.ustreas.gov/>

The Department of the Treasury is the latest branch of the U.S. government to make an ap-



pearance on the Internet. The popularity of the World Wide Web (WWW) and easy access to browsers has resulted in what seems like a competition among departments to advertise their presence. Like many other government departments, Treasury comes with a large, bright graphic and some other interesting bells and whistles. The user is immediately presented with a color photograph of the

Treasury Building at night, below which are hypertext buttons in the form of four gold coins labelled: Who's Who, Treasury Bureaus, Treasury Services, and What's New.

The Who's Who area is a glossy presentation with photographs and biographies of top Treasury officials. It is a large file—more than 100K—but there is an alternative text version available. More relevant to the average user are the remaining three areas.

Treasury Bureaus is a link to the homepages of the 12 Treasury bureaus. Unfortunately, as of this writing, most of these pages contain only the bureau's mission statement along with a picture and biography of the bureau chief. Moreover, even these introductory pages have been constructed with differing degrees of attention. Mission statements vary from the verbose to the seemingly ironic (my favorite is the Bureau of Public Debt whose mission is "to borrow the money needed to operate the Federal Government and to account for the resulting public debt").

Not surprisingly, the Treasury bureau homepage containing the greatest amount of information is that of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). I have some natural hesitation at the very idea of bestowing superlatives on the IRS, but it is clear that some forethought as to what constitutes usable public information has gone into the planning of this site. The homepage is linked to four file areas: Tax Forms and Instructions; Frequently Asked Questions; Where to File; and Where to Get Help with Your Taxes. The last three are text files that provide useful, but not crucial, information. The first file, Tax Forms and Instructions, is, on the other hand, an exceedingly helpful compendium that sub-

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divides into three areas: a very long list of tax forms, a searchable index of tax forms, and finally, information on the Adobe Acrobat Reader, a freely available software package that allows a user to view and print tax forms from a WWW browser such as Mosaic or Netscape. The Adobe Acrobat Reader comes in Mac, Windows, and Unix versions. I retrieved it via ftp and within 15 minutes had downloaded, configured, and used the reader to print a tax form on my local printer. This is certainly an efficient use of technology although it must be admitted that using this service does require possession of some fairly sophisticated technology (direct Internet connection, Web browser, laser printer, etc.). On the other hand, as an indication of where the future of tax forms and electronic filing might be proceeding, this serves as an interesting experiment.

Treasury Services provides information regarding a number of Treasury Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) including the IRS.BBS, the Customs BBS, and a link to the Treasury Electronic Library files on FedWorld. It also contains informational files on the Department of Commerce's Economic Bulletin Board, the Federal Reserve BBS, the Minneapolis Federal Reserve BBS, and others. This whole area would be improved if there were more actual access links rather than blurbs on, for example, the Federal Reserve Bulletin Board; however, FedWorld is the only site that can, at the moment, be reached via telnet access.

What's New presents bulletins of Treasury Department activities. At the moment, information typically available includes reports of the latest auction of 13-week bills or the total October savings bonds sales. Unfortunately, when I last accessed this file on January 3, 1995, the files had not been updated since November 29, 1994.

In conclusion, this is an interesting and well-constructed site. It does require somewhat sophisticated technologies to use, though; people whose only Web access is through text-based browsers such as Lynx will not be able even to view the tax forms. Since taxes still appear to be inevitable, any methods that aid the process are to be commended.—*Keith Morgan, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; kamorgan@mit.edu*

LABSTAT—Bureau of Labor Statistics Data Server. Access: gopher://stats.bls.gov or hopi.bls.gov; ftp://stats.bls.gov. Owner: U.S.

Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) provides data to businesses, the general public, and government agencies through a variety of formats including print, computer tapes, telephone, electronic bulletin board, and even mailgram. Since January 1994 the BLS database, known as LABSTAT, has been available through the Internet via gopher and anonymous ftp. There are future plans for World Wide Web access.

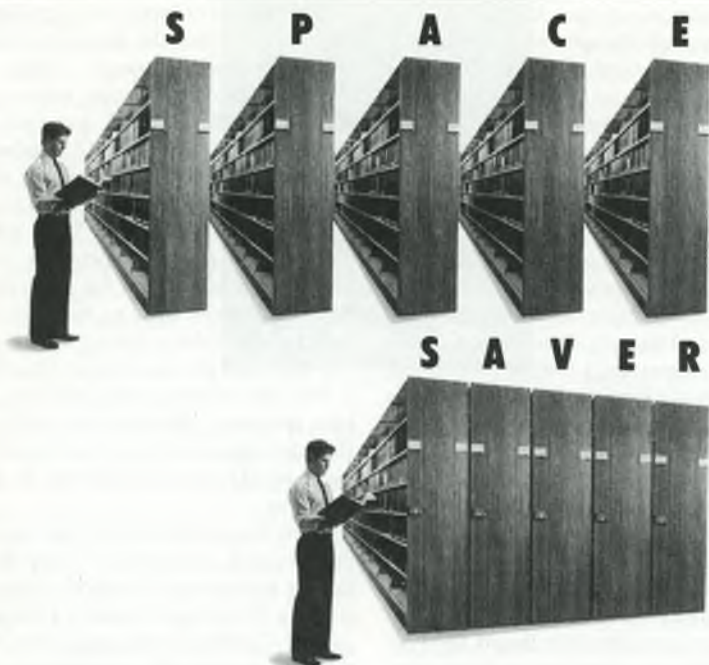
LABSTAT presently provides current and historical statistical data for 26 surveys and national indicators such as the *Consumer Price Index* and *Producer Price Index*. For each survey there are documentation files that include a brief description, table structure, and database elements. All data are in ASCII text format (tab delimited) and can be directly imported into a word processor, database, or spreadsheet program.

Also found in LABSTAT are news releases that provide current survey-specific information as well as special reports related to labor, such as "Displaced Workers During the Early 1990s." Current surveys and news releases are released individually according to set schedules. The news release database is WAIS indexed and searchable by keyword.

Historical data are presented in a coded format and is found under "time-series." The coded time-series data can be disconcerting and a bit intimidating to the uninitiated. There are, however, corresponding files containing keys that interpret the codes. If users have specific questions there are BLS contact phone numbers for each survey. A phone call to the *Consumer Price Index* contact number was promptly answered and I was given useful information in a courteous manner. There is also a help desk available online.

Some of the time-series files are quite large and unwieldy. For instance, the "Summaries" file for the *Consumer Price Index—All Urban Consumers* is over nine megabytes! You may want to use anonymous ftp to download the larger files once you have perused the files you need with gopher. Not having to deal with compressed files is an advantage as long as you are a very patient person.

Business librarians needing current and historical BLS data all in one place should visit this gopher.—*Robert L. Battenfeld, Southampton College Library, Long Island University; rbatten@sunburn.liunet.edu* ■



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