

**The Chemical Scorecard.** Access: <http://www.scorecard.org/>.

The Environmental Defense Fund provides free access to the type of value-added service that libraries usually pay for: collating, organizing, and interpreting data collected by the federal government. The Chemical Scorecard, created for the purpose of making pollution statistics more accessible, uses data from the EPA's Toxic Release Inventory plus other governmental and scientific agencies. The information is logically arranged, extensively cross-linked, and searchable. The site's impressive documentation of data and sources is better than many reference books. The overall design is professional and there are viewing options, such as a text-only mode or a personalized homepage focused on an individual area.

The amount of data available on this site is huge—covering more than 17,000 facilities and more than 5,000 chemicals. The entire site is searchable, but using the six major sections, some of which are individually searchable, is more effective.

The first and most-publicized section is the "Polluter Locator," which displays a report on the top polluting facilities in a state, county, or zip code. Only metropolitan areas have reports on a zip code area; most default to the county level. The report includes location and contact information for polluting facilities, the amount of pollution released, the health risks caused by the pollution, the ranking of the facilities as compared to the rest of the United States, and the specific chemicals involved.

The second section, "Pollution Rankings," ranks the worst zip codes, counties, states, and facilities. "About the Chemicals" provides detailed information on more than 5,000 chemicals. It is searchable by name or CAS number and includes links to many other Web sites with relevant information.

The fourth section is "Health Effects," which lists chemicals known or suspected to cause health problems, such as cancer or birth defects. The fifth section, "Regulatory Controls," describes the federal and state regulations governing chemicals. The "Take Action" section provides information on contacting the

EPA, environmental activist groups, and the polluting facilities.

Although any information presented by an activist group must be taken with a grain of salt, The Chemical Scorecard mostly sticks to well-documented facts. The only problem with the site is the overwhelming quantity of information. Students or faculty working in environmental or chemical fields will get the most out of this site. Casual users can easily discover polluting facilities in their areas, but understanding the implications of the data will take some study.—*DeAnne Luck, Austin Peay State University; LuckDL@apsu.edu*

**Ethics Updates.** Access: <http://ethics.acusd.edu>.

Ethics Updates was created and maintained by Professor Lawrence M. Hinman of the Department of Philosophy at the University of San Diego, California. The database is designed primarily for ethics instructors and their students to provide current literature on professional and popular issues related to ethics.

The project originated as a simple attempt to keep the bibliographies of Hinman's books up-to-date. As more of the works in his bibliographies became available online, this simple project developed to a comprehensive database on ethics. In order to enhance the database, multimedia components were added, such as audio and video clips as well as discussion groups. During the past year, the journal *Ethics* has been contributing to Ethics Updates by submitting its abstracts of published articles.

The database is organized in three major sections: "Search Engine," "Principal Resources," and "Additional Resources." Users may search the database by keyword using the Yahoo! or AltaVista search engines. The results are clearly presented in relevancy ranking order. Users may also choose to engage themselves in discussion groups, such as the USD TALK (University of San Diego) discussion list and the DejaNews (discussion network) to obtain more information regarding their research.

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Sara Amato is automated systems librarian at Central Washington University; [samato@tahoma.cwu.edu](mailto:samato@tahoma.cwu.edu)

"Principal Resources" is divided into two major categories: ethical theory and applied ethics. Topics such as moral theory, ethical egoism, Kant and deontology, Aristotle and virtue ethics, and race are explored in great depth. On the other hand, applied ethics deals with topics such as abortion, euthanasia, punishment and death penalty, gender and sexism, sexual orientation, and animal rights.

The different searches result in organized segmentation and categories providing the users with Internet resources in legislation, court decisions, statistical information, and Web sites dedicated to topics of interest. Bibliographical guides offer full-text articles and review articles, anthologies, book titles, and newspaper articles.

The final section, "Additional Resources," contains supplementary resources relevant to the research subjects listed in the principal resources section. Among other resources are case studies for discussion, sample syllabi in ethics from other institutions, listings of forthcoming conferences, and reference links to full-text works by philosophers such as Aristotle, Epictetus, Thomas Aquinas, Kant, and Hume.

Ethics Updates is a highly recommended site for scholars of ethics, instructors, students, and librarians. The organization of information is uniform and coherent, making the retrieval of information easy to assimilate.

The graphics are simple, self-explanatory, and consistent, facilitating the user to navigate throughout the database with fluency. Most importantly, the selection of online sources related to controversial topics is presented in a situational and unbiased manner.—*Constantia Constantinou, Iona College Libraries, cconstantinou@ionacol.edu*

**Infoplease.com.** Access: <http://www.infoplease.com>.

A recent addition to the Information Please LLC line of products, the Infoplease Web site is a powerful combination of several ready-reference tools, including the familiar Information Please Almanac, the Information Please/ESPN Sports Almanac, the Information Please/A&E Entertainment Almanac, the Columbia Encyclopedia, and the Information Please Dictionary (currently described as the Random House Webster's College Dictionary on the site). Unlike other commercial sites offering abridged versions of their products, the

Infoplease site offers the full text of its 1998 products, which is supplemented by information to be published in the 1999 almanac. Like other commercial sites, there is advertising (a relatively small amount).

Site contents are organized into general subjects, which are further subdivided to reflect the categories currently in the namesake almanac. These topics may be browsed or searched using an engine that first displays pages containing the search phrase, then pages containing the search terms. Users may search "all sources" or qualify by almanac, entertainment, sports, dictionary, or encyclopedia.

The promised search refinements and a detailed explanation of indexing methods will be welcome additions. Also useful would be an explanation describing the tools that make up the site (which is not clear), their scope and coverage, and where they overlap (for example, is it possible to browse the contents of the encyclopedia or dictionary only?).

Interesting features of this site include: the "Daily Almanac" (information on birthdays, a word quiz, and link of the day), "Ask the Editors" (for those "Stumpers"), "Spotlight," and "Features" (hot-linked articles that tie recent events or topics of interest to information currently available through the site).

Clearly minor technical and organizational glitches need to be addressed at the site (in the "Family Trends" category, there are two sub-headings for "Marital Status" with different text and no clear reason why, and in the feature "Cosmic Dust and Snotties: Recent Discoveries," "Slimy Cave Critters," and the "Ancient Innards" link both displayed the Cave Critters).

However, one of the outstanding features of this Web site is accessibility to the editors through several different points, which request information and suggestions as to how to improve the fledgling site.

The site is suitable for a general audience for answering questions that require fast facts, definitions, and general information on topics. It is well-organized, easy to navigate, and the ability to locate this information through a search engine is extremely useful. Improvements might include those suggested above and a clear indication of how often the site is updated. Overall, a very useful reference product.—*Angela Elkordy, The Sage Colleges; elkora@sage.edu.* ■

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