

MAD Scientist Network.

Access: <http://pharmdec.wustl.edu/YSP/MAD.SCI/MAD.SCI.html>. For more information contact Joe Simpson, simpson@npg.wustl.edu or Lynn Bry, lynn@pharmdec.wustl.edu.

"Science is good for you" begins the Web page for the MAD Scientist Network (MSN), an interactive Web site dedicated to answering questions in all areas of science. MSN is a project conducted under the auspices of the Saint Louis Science Education Network, which in turn is a branch of the Young Scientist Program which was founded in 1991 with funds from the Washington University Medical School Alumni Association.

Online since September 1995, MSN is staffed by "scientists actively engaged in science education and research at institutions around the world." When I visited the site in April there were more than 200 members listed ready to answer your questions. All levels of expertise are represented. More than half of the partici-



pants are either Ph.D.s, M.D.s, or scientists on staff at research or educational institutions. About a quarter of the participants are graduate students and the remaining quarter a mix of high school teachers and others of indeterminate qualifications, my favorite being "Collective Enigma Elucidator." While most of the participants are from the United States, there are also members from the United Kingdom, Australia, Chile, Spain, Israel, Japan, and France.

The average turnaround time for a question to be answered is seven to ten days, but I saw some answers posted within hours. Questions are submitted by filling out a short form which is transmitted to the site's administrators. The question is then forwarded to one of the members for an answer.

Most answers are pretty good attempts to present factual data. One person wanted to

Internet Reviews

Sara Amato, editor

know how much cat urine it would take to kill a six-foot-tall evergreen tree. Apparently he/she was being taken to court by the neighbors for their kitty's lethal discharges. The answer, by a grad student in horticulture, was honest about being uncertain of the amount needed. However, he went on to give a pretty good explanation of how urine, being high in soluble salts, could be collecting in the

soil around the evergreen's roots and could, in fact, be killing the tree. He ended his answer with a recommendation for the questioner to control his cat (a typical response from a non-cat-owner).

Overall, MSN is a well-intentioned system for answering science questions that meet certain criteria. Members won't answer questions involving the diagnosis or treatment of an individual or animal. They also won't entertain questions marginally related to science or of a social/political nature, like "should evolution be taught in schools?" or "should drugs be legal?" While using MSN can be fun and often accurate, you will always have to be a little suspect of the answers. There are similar interactive Web sites on the Net, such as Ask an Immunologist at <http://glamdring.ucsd.edu/others/aa/askaAI.html>; Ask Dr. Neutrino (physics) at <http://137.222.30.23/dr/ask.html>; and Ask Dr. Math at <http://forum.swathmore.edu/dr.math/dr-math.html>.—*Jim Rible, Southern Oregon State College; rible@upo.sosc.ossbe.edu*

Women's WebWorld: The Feminist Majority Online. Access: <http://www.feminist.org>.

The Feminist Majority is a nonprofit organization that is committed to political, economic, and social equality for women; its name signifies that a majority of women and men identify themselves as feminists in major opinion polls. The goal of the Feminist Majority is to conduct research and share information about women's issues and to mobilize grassroots political ac-

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tion in support of equality. Women's WebWorld serves this purpose admirably, with many benefits for those who seek a feminist perspective on current events.

It can be difficult to keep informed about issues affecting women. This site monitors publications and highlights several stories daily in "Feminist News." An archive of news items can be searched using the Excite search engine and, in many cases, links are provided to related stories, reports, or Web sites.

A "Publications and Research" page provides bibliographies of feminist publications as well as full-text reports of the Feminist Majority Foundation's research on topics such as clinic violence and equity in medicine, sports, and business. The "Feminist Internet Gateway" includes well-annotated lists of Web resources on topics such as women and politics, women and work, and women's health.

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of Women's WebWorld is its emphasis on activism, since a primary goal of the Feminist Majority is to exercise feminists' political power as a majority. The Web site makes activism practically effortless. The "Take Action!" feature spotlights legislative and media issues of concern to feminists, provides a lookup utility for representatives' e-mail addresses, and supplies text of suggested messages. This is an excellent example of a nonprofit organization using the power of the Web to advance its mission.

Faculty and students can join the "Feminist University Network" or simply search its database to locate experts, speakers, or others sharing their interests. A "911 for Women" page includes resources ranging from hotlines for victims of sexual harassment and domestic violence to opportunities for employment and internships.

The Web site is well organized, with clear links to specific categories of information as well as useful highlights of new or timely information on the homepage. There is a search engine for the entire site—a helpful addition, since the various sections are quite extensive. Women's WebWorld will provide a feminist perspective on topics in many disciplines and should be of interest far beyond women's studies programs.—*Lori Robare, University of Oregon; lrobare@oregon.uoregon.edu.*

Ontario Centre for Religious Tolerance.

Access: <http://www.kosone.com/people/oct/>.

The Web site for the Ontario Centre for Religious Tolerance has three goals: to disseminate accurate information; to expose religious fraud, hatred, and misinformation; and to disseminate information on "hot" religious topics. The site fulfills these three goals admirably and



with a certain amount of style. It has nine main access points, including "35 Religious and Ethical Systems," "Spiritual Topics," "Religiously Hot Topics," and a very large file of media addresses.

The Web site, produced by the Ontario Centre for Religious Tolerance, was established in 1995. Among its future plans is to write a series of essays on what the Bible really says about sex. Contributors chose a Christian text because the majority of North Americans identify themselves as Christians.

The information is very well done, balanced, and thorough. In addition, the individual entries are well done whether the religion is controversial or not. For example, the information on Satanism is very balanced and informative; it cuts through the scare tactics, misinformation, and hype and presents a balanced picture. The other entries are equally well balanced and thorough. In most cases, the online articles have references and further Web sites to explore.

There are a number of well-written essays on spiritual and, as they call it, "not so spiritual" topics. These include tolerance, intolerance, cults, ritual abuse, bisexuality, homosexuality, and spanking of children. There is a test on religious tolerance for readers/viewers to take. There is also a remedial recommendation so that the reader may become even more tolerant.

This Web site is also well organized. The organization and layout show attention to detail and a good artistic sense.

This is an excellent resource for anyone seeking well-researched, balanced information on religious and spiritual groups. The writing is lively and intelligent, clearly aimed at providing a neutral picture to researchers and information seekers.—*Gail Wood, State University of New York College of Technology; woodg@alfredtech.edu* ■

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