

## COOL IMAGES

### Chemical Comic Relief

"You forget that cobalt is added to iron to make cobalt steels, among the hardest alloys known!" declaims the evil character Cobalt, in a 1968 Metal Man comic book, after flattening our hero Iron. The page appears in The Comic Book Periodic Table, created by chemistry pros—and childhood comics fans—John Selegue and Jim Holler of the University of Kentucky, Lexington. (Above, superhero Metamorpho, using cobalt's strength to smite an enemy.) They've posted nearly 200 comic pages in which chemistry figures in the action, including Superman's birth on the planet Krypton (first told in June 1938); Donald Duck concocting Duck-mite, a nitrogen explosive, in a 1944 story; and the 1990s series Chromium Man. Although everybody from 6th graders to Ph.D.s to comic buffs visits the site, Selegue says it's meant to have an "educational edge"—each comic panel is linked to WebElements (*Science*, 19 June 1998, p. 1807), a more serious periodic table.

[www.uky.edu/~holler/periodic/periodic.html](http://www.uky.edu/~holler/periodic/periodic.html)

## HOT PICKS

**Mother of invention.** You can read about Ernest O. Lawrence, who came up with the cyclotron, or the lesser known inventors of Liquid Paper and compact discs at the Inventor of the Week, part of the Lemelson-MIT awards Web site. There's also an inventor's handbook and links to patent resources. [web.mit.edu/invent](http://web.mit.edu/invent)

**Cyberside chats.** Listen to live talks with science luminaries like Caltech evolutionary biologist John Morgan Allman, or download previous hourlong chats with Richard Dawkins, Alan Sokal, Harold Varmus, and others at The Green Room, a radio- and Web-cast show that airs Monday evenings. [www.wfmu.org/GreenRoom](http://www.wfmu.org/GreenRoom)

**Good for a laugh.** If those gags in your e-mail inbox aren't funny enough to brighten your day, check out this science jokes site. It covers topics like the new element Administratium, falling cats and buttered toast, and The Complex Number Song. [paul.merton.ox.ac.uk/science](http://paul.merton.ox.ac.uk/science)

### Mars to Join the Net?

Although the notion of an Internet strung out to the planets may sound like pie in the sky, it's starting to look within reach. NASA's wish list in the president's year 2000 budget request announced last week includes \$9 million for what could be the first strand of an interplanetary Net: a data transmission network around Mars.

The Mars Network would be "a very wide bandwidth communications link" to send continuous data between Earth and Mars, says NASA solar system exploration chief Carl Pilcher. The info, which might range from photos of Mars's surface to martian weather reports, would use Internet-compatible protocols so



## NETWATCH

edited by JOCELYN KAISER

that scientists and the public could easily access it. Part of the Jet Propulsion Lab's (JPL's) Mars Surveyor program, which is sending several missions to Mars over the next 6 years, the Net plan also would include "micromissions" to launch small telecomm satellites around the Red Planet.

"We're cheering them on," says Adrian Hooke, who heads another group at JPL that's contemplating a more ambitious—and futuristic—program to bring all the planets online (*Science*, 14 August 1998, p. 879). "You can consider this to be the first component of the Interplanetary Internet." Net-savvy scientists and engineers will start hashing over the nuts and bolts of a Mars Network at a 4 March meeting at JPL, including whether NASA could use current Internet technologies such as wireless computing. Says Hooke: "We'd like to take as much of the Earth's Internet along as possible."

## SITE VISIT

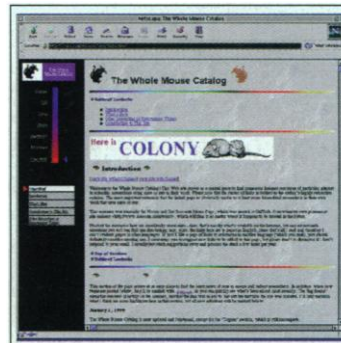
### Get Your Mouse Fix Here



With the click of a mouse, find anything you want to know about mice. The furry ones, that is. "Mice are the most widely used mammals for biomedical research," notes Eric Mercer, a biologist by training who now develops educational technologies. While at Caltech a few years ago, Mercer posted on the Internet his list of Web sites relevant to mice (and rats). This list has now grown into the Whole Mouse Catalog, hundreds of links that go beyond the critters as lab animals to their history, legends, and even their fan clubs.

The site's genome section is most popular with biomedical scientists, Mercer says, and includes links ranging from Jackson Lab's mouse genome database to chromosome maps and databases where researchers describe the inserted genes and phenotypes of their transgenic mice. Scaling up toward whole animals are sources of mouse and rat cell lines, and—in a section on organs—a site where the squeamish or the just plain curious can dissect a virtual mouse. There are research reports on mouse models for diseases, rat brain atlases, and breeding guides. Also listed are rodent dealers and federal guidelines for the treatment of lab animals.

Although ranging far afield from research, Mercer's odd assortment of "other interesting or entertaining" links is also worth a look. Check out rat and mouse clubs, a site on bubonic plague, Robert Burns's poem "Ode to a Mouse," and even instructions on rodent-proofing your house.



[www.rodentia.com/wmc/index.html](http://www.rodentia.com/wmc/index.html)

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