CREDIT: (TOP) FRANCIS DZIKOWSKI/THEBAN MAPPING PROJECT

NETWATCH

edited by JOCELYN KAISER

HOT PICKS

Billions and billions served. If you've ever wondered how the world's health and environment are bearing up under the weight of 6 billion people—a milestone expected to be passed this week—check out this site. It features links to United Nations reports, news articles, and other Web resources, such as a snazzy interactive site in France called Popexpo. www.cnie.org/billion

Red light. The hunt for planets outside our solar system is no longer the sole province of the pros. Amateur astronomers who've mounted CCD (charge-coupled device) cameras on their telescopes have begun to collect radial velocity measurements (redshifts), in the hope of finding extrasolar planets. Follow the progress of a team led by a paintball gun manufacturer, or find links to others. www.spectrashift.com

Brain food. It's called Neuroscience for Kids, but this sprawling site has fun and useful stuff for any age. You'll find loads of factoids (like brain weights of different species), a Q&A file (what's the most sensitive body part? the face), and links to online articles on topics from musical aptitude to narcolepsy. faculty.washington.edu/chudler/neurok.html

COOL IMAGES

Walk Like an Egyptian

This painting of the Egyptian gods Osiris, Anubis, and Horus decorates a wall in KV 57, a tomb of the pharaoh Horemheb, who lived around 1300 B.C. It comes from the Valley of the Kings in Thebes, the famous necropolis on the Nile River near Luxor, Egypt. With support from commercial sponsors, archaeologist Kent Weeks's team at The American University in Cairo has created a graphics-rich educational Web site* describing the necropolis—including KV 5, a huge mausoleum for Rameses II's sons discovered by Weeks in 1995. Float over Thebes's monuments by (virtual) balloon, fly through computer reconstructions of tombs, or follow the archaeologists' excavations as they uncover the millennia-old treasures buried in the desert.

* www.kv5.com

NET NEWS

Microsoft, MIT Power Up Online Education

Software giant Microsoft Corp. and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) last week announced a $25 million agreement to develop ways to use computers in university teaching, for projects ranging from academic publishing to Web museums. The deal has kindled fears that Microsoft may try to conquer the educational software market. But MIT insists that is not the case.

Under the I-Campus plan, as it's called, Microsoft will allot $25 million over 5 years for research on teaching technologies approved by a panel of MIT faculty and Microsoft scientists. The first three projects are: expanding the university's Shakespeare Electronic Archive; teaching graduate classes simultaneously at MIT and in Singapore over the Internet2 research network, starting this fall; and helping aeronautics students and professors collaborate in cyberspace on design projects.

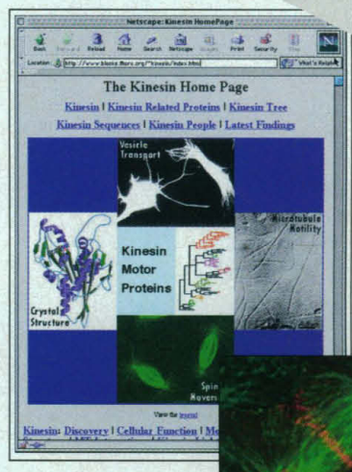
Some observers expressed concerns to *The New York Times* that Microsoft may be setting out to dominate online teaching the way it does office software. MIT engineering dean Thomas L. Magnanti, however, suggests those fears are unfounded. For one thing, he says, MIT will work with Microsoft Research, rather than the company's product development arm, on all computer types—not just PCs, Microsoft's main platform. And MIT can license the products it develops to other companies and universities. "We intend to share this widely," Magnanti says. "There is no intent to become a Microsoft shop." Microsoft, meanwhile, stands to profit from using the university as a "test bed" for ideas, a spokesperson says.

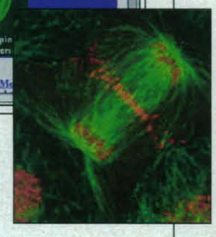
SITE VISIT

Catching Up With Kinesin

The molecular motor protein called kinesin is a cellular mover and shaker, stirring to action everything from cilia to dividing chromosomes. Hoping to unravel how kinesin uses the energy molecule ATP (adenosine triphosphate) to crawl along microtubules, researchers are scrutinizing the protein from many angles—they've even tacked a single kinesin molecule to a tiny glass rod to measure its strength (about 5 piconewtons, or the force a laser pointer makes on a screen). For the latest dispatches from this hot field, visit the Kinesin Home Page.

www.proweb.org/kinesin





Part tutorial, part database, the site began in 1996 with a review paper by Duke molecular geneticist Sharyn Endow. Colleagues contributed more articles, and bioinformatics experts at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle added outside links, creating an info cache that's frequently updated. The site lists the family tree for the dozens of known versions of kinesin; you can jump to sequences in protein databanks, or peruse crystallographic structures. Other links point you toward kinesin lab Web pages and the latest PubMed articles. You need not be an expert to enjoy the site's many images: Check out fluorescently labeled kinesin proteins in dividing cells, for example, and weird movies of fruit fly larvae, with defective kinesin genes, thrashing about.

Send Internet news and great Web site suggestions to netwatch@aaas.org