



COOL IMAGES

Stellar Gallery

Want to see some really beautiful stars? Forget the gossip column of *Vanity Fair* and check out the Anglo-Australian Observatory's Web site (www.aao.gov.au). You'll find nearly 200 images by astronomer and photographer David Malin, including this stunner of the Cone nebula, an opaque cloud of hydrogen gas lying in the equatorial constellation of Monoceros. The nebula is part of the loose open cluster NGC 2226, a swarm of stars coursing through the Milky Way.

In 25 years of photographing the heavens, primarily with the observatory's 3.9-meter telescope, Malin has developed techniques to blot out the glare of the brightest features and reveal the dimmer details of galaxies, nebulae, stars, and supernovae. His photos have toured the globe, adorned Australian postage stamps, and injected a little cosmic reality into the movie *Contact*. His stunning snapshot of the Horsehead nebula currently adorns the home of *Science*, the AAAS building in Washington, D.C.

NET NEWS

Eugenics Archive: Lessons From the Past

Scientists debate the existence of a genetic predisposition for crime, while brainy women peddle their eggs: It's not hard to find recent examples of tricky ethical areas raised by modern genetics. Some bioethicists, however, hear eerie echoes of the American eugenics movement in today's debates. To "stimulate independent critical thinking about the parallels," the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory's DNA Learning Center in New York last week unveiled an archive of over 1200 photos, charts, and documents from the early 20th century's eugenics era, when many U.S. scientists believed they could breed a fitter human population.

Essays by leading eugenics scholars lay out the history of the movement and the social policies it supported, such as sterilization laws and curbs on immigration from southern Europe. The archive's images are often shocking and sometimes amusing: There are copies of state laws barring interracial marriages, pedigrees supposedly showing the inheritance of "feeble-mindedness," and photos of families who won "fitness" contests at state fairs. The site also explores scientists' blunders, such as assuming complex traits could be traced to single genes and ignoring the role of environment. Many of the documents came from the Eugenics Record Office, run from 1910 to 1940 at Cold Spring Harbor. Project editor David Micklos says that adds an extra punch to the site's story of science gone awry: "The message is even stronger because it comes from us."

* vector.cshl.org



NETWATCH

edited by JOCELYN KAISER

SITE VISIT

Biotech Bonanza

The Internet offers a growing treasure trove for molecular biologists, from databases of mouse genes and enzymatic pathways to virus images and bioinformatics tutorials. Ever wonder if anyone's tried to collect all this bio lore in one place? Look no further than the National Biotechnology Information Facility.

This 3-year-old site, housed at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, is a storehouse of some 7000 biotechnology links. Each is neatly annotated with a brief description, listed alphabetically, and sorted by category. Researchers will find all the bread-and-butter gene and protein sequence databases as well as more focused sites. You can link to an atlas of protein side-chain interactions, for instance, or a database of telomere papers, or guides to *Xenopus* molecular markers or soybean

metabolic pathways. The software page lists all sorts of free tools for drawing chemical and protein structures, and even one for estimating how many eons ago two protein sequences diverged.

If you need to download a stunning image of bread mold spores or a murky gray photo of a hantavirus, scan the images page. Other offerings include biotech news, patent databases, lab safety guidelines, and career sites. There are also educational resources and the site's own Outbreak game, in which students try to save a city from a mysterious disease outbreak by doing virtual lab tests to ID the dangerous bug.

HOT PICKS

Mother Earth. Plate tectonics, food webs, remote sensing, La Niña, acid rain, Mercator maps: They're all covered in this introductory Web book on physical geography, a field that ranges from geology to ecology. The site also has a handy glossary and loads of related links. www.geog.ouc.bc.ca/physgeog

Galileo stash. Galileo Galilei's 436th birthday was this week, making it an apt time to visit The Galileo Project, a monstrous stack of documents on this and other early astronomers. You can pore over the first drawings of sunspots, bone up on the history of the telescope, or read letters from Galileo's daughter. A database offers biographies of over 600 16th and 17th century scientists. es.rice.edu/ES/humsoc/Galileo

Universal index. Claiming to be the "world's most complete education index," this site links to over 5300 universities and colleges worldwide, from Indiana University to the Indian Institute of Technology in Bombay. www.braintrack.com

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