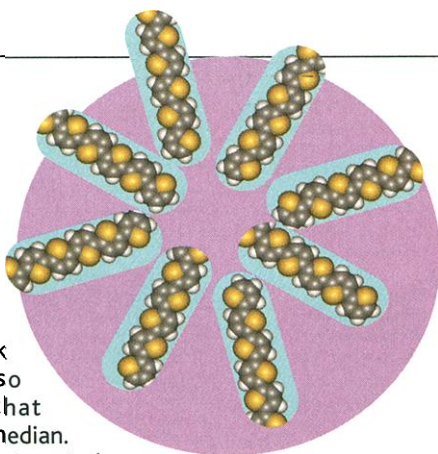


HUMOR

Comic Chemistry

So these two polymer chemists walk into a bar. ... OK, so you'll never hear that from a stand-up comedian. But even though chemistry isn't known for side-splitting humor, proof that chemists really are funny, if sometimes unintentionally, awaits at this cheeky gallery of molecules with humorous, silly, or raunchy names. Condensed mainly from reader suggestions, the mixture includes mouthfuls like furfuryl furfurate, dumb monikers like moronic acid, and plenty of suggestive or off-color tags (such as sexithiophene, above). Like nearly all great endeavors, the project was born in a pub, according to chemist Paul May of the University of Bristol, U.K., who maintains the page as part of his Molecule of the Month site.

www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/Chemistry/MOTM/silly/sillymols.htm



DATABASES

Caught Up in Anemones

Although it looks as innocuous as a flower, a sea anemone is more like a bear trap set to slam on an unsuspecting fish or other prey. Hexacoralians of the World has gathered a trove of information on the distribution and taxonomy of sea anemones, corals, and related gelatinous creatures, collectively known as hexacorals.

Hosted by the University of Kansas, the site holds entries for more than 1800 species, listing where type specimens were collected and which of more than 30 museums around the world holds them now, as well as references for original descriptions in the literature. Taxonomists can also get a listing of a species' former names or prowl the rich bibliography that includes publications from as far back as 1756. Many entries also provide drawings or photos from original papers or from unpublished collections. And for a wealth of data on hexacoral distribution, click on the interactive world map.

www.kgs.ku.edu/Hexacoral/Biodata



RESOURCES

Ready to Rumble

Right now, some of the world's more than 1500 active volcanoes are fuming, burping, trembling, spurling, shifting, bulging, oozing, or maybe even blowing their top. Get a brief rundown on volcanic stirrings from around the globe at the Weekly Volcanic Activity Report. The site charts new and continuing "unrest" at places like the notorious Soufrière Hills volcano on the Caribbean island of Montserrat, where eruptions beginning in 1995 destroyed the capital city and drove more than half of the population into exile.

Compiled from scientific reports and news articles, this joint project of the Smithsonian Institution and the United States Geological Survey also provides maps to get you oriented and a link to a photo-packed USGS glossary of volcano terminology. You can also reach the Smithsonian's monthly roundup of volcanic activity, which offers a more thorough analysis of each event.

www.volcano.si.edu/gvp/usgs/index.htm

DIRECTORIES

Machine Smarts

From those annoying robotic puppies to computer programs called "agents" that scour the Internet for information, brainy machines and other forms of artificial intelligence are everywhere. At AI Topics, a Web guide from the American Association for Artificial Intelligence (AAAI), you can immerse yourself in the booming field of AI.

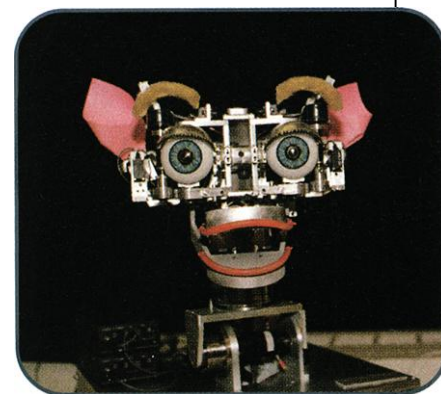
More than 20 sections brim with annotated links to Web sites, articles, essays, and books on topics ranging from the history of AI to speech recognition to games. Sit down to a few hands of poker with a computer program at the University of Alberta that uses statistics to try to intuit other players' tendencies, for instance.

Or for some weightier browsing, try the ethics section where essays by Sun Microsystems

co-founder Bill Joy and inventor Ray Kurzweil clash about whether our creations might someday pose a threat.

There's also a page on the latest Steven Spielberg flick, *A.I.*, in which people depend on intelligent robots to get by in a flooded greenhouse-warmed world. For the latest in real-life robots, visit the MIT Humanoid Robotics Group's page on Kismet (right), a "sociable" robot that responds to sights and sounds with a repertoire of facial expressions, postures, and childlike babbling.

www.aaai.org/aitopics



Send great Web site suggestions to netwatch@aaas.org