NETWATCH

edited by MITCH LESLIE

REFERENCE

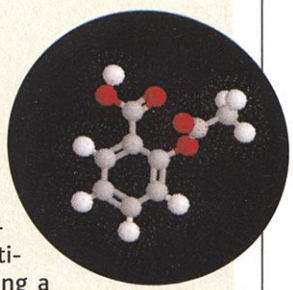
Dinosaur Roundup

The spiky headgear of *Styracosaurus* (above) may have proclaimed, "Back off, *T. rex*!" or "Hey, aren't I irresistible?" according to paleontologists still debating the spines' function. The drawing of this Cretaceous herbivore is one of the many stylish dinosaur images you'll find at Dino Directory, a quick-reference site from the Natural History Museum in London. Dig through more than 100 listings alphabetically or by geological period, body shape, or geographical distribution. Like a baseball card, the entry for each dinosaur genus presents just the vital facts, such as size, diet, and range, along with pictures from the museum's huge gallery. Ninety additional accounts are evolving.

flood.nhm.ac.uk/cgi-bin/dino

TOOLS

Medicine Cabinet



At this handy site from the Tokyo University of Pharmacy and Life Science, you can call up, study, and manipulate 3D structures of several hundred drugs, from over-the-counter staples such as aspirin (right) to the antipsychotic zotepine. After downloading a free plug-in, you can display each compound as a wire frame, stick, ball-and-stick, or space-filling model. A click of the mouse rotates the image, changes the color scheme to highlight atoms or functional groups, or adds refinements such as shadows and labels.

triton.ps.toyaku.ac.jp/~dobashi/database/indexe.html

RESOURCES

Watch Your Asteroid

If you happened to catch either of the Hollywood blockbusters *Armageddon* or *Deep Impact*, you're aware that an asteroid or comet could smash into Earth and blast us all into oblivion. For the true odds that a killer space rock will pummel the planet, check out the Asteroid and Comet Impact Hazards Web site. The site from NASA's Ames Research Center focuses on efforts to spot threatening "near-Earth objects" before it's too late. It features news stories, government reports, and congressional testimony, a bibliography of relevant scientific papers, and—for those who like to worry—links to lists of objects that will soon whiz through our celestial neighborhood. NASA is spending $3.5 million annually to spot the estimated 1000 near-Earth objects bigger than a kilometer across. Researchers hope to catalog 90% of these potential killers by 2008.

impact.arc.nasa.gov

LINKS

Tracking Global Change

Looking for updated measurements of atmospheric carbon dioxide since 1958 or the latest on the relation between global warming and disease outbreaks? Try this huge collection of timely links from the U.S. Global Change Research Program. Each month, the site lists new material posted here and on other sites, including press releases, news articles, government reports, and congressional testimony. Just added is a roster of more than 20 sources of global change images, such as this satellite photo of clear-cutting scars in Oregon (light green in image).

www.usgcrp.gov/usgcrp/new.htm

NET NEWS

Pass It On

So your manicurist's cousin's dentist went to kindergarten with the person who trained Michael Jackson's chimp? That's not as ridiculous as it sounds. According to the small world hypothesis, any two humans on the planet are connected by a chain of acquaintances that averages six links. The idea was born in 1967, when Harvard sociologist Stanley Milgram asked 300 randomly chosen Midwesterners to deliver a letter to a person in Boston by sending it through personal contacts. Sixty letters arrived, having passed through an average of six intermediaries.

The finding soon entered pop culture as "six degrees of separation." But experts wouldn't consider it definitive, as Milgram's sample size was limited, says Columbia University sociologist Duncan Watts. Now Watts and colleagues' Small World Research Project is using the Internet to test the hypothesis on a global scale.

The researchers have begun gathering a diverse group of "targets": So far, recruits include a flight attendant and an employee of a pizza parlor, from as far afield as Siberia. They're also seeking "senders," each of whom gets only basic data about the target: name, location, occupation. The sender e-mails an acquaintance, who forwards it to another, until, ideally, the message reaches its destination. So far, some missives have gotten through—one traveled from Australia to its Siberian target in only four jumps—while others have stalled. To get a robust sample, Watts needs 100,000 senders and about 20 targets. Find out how to join either end of a chain at smallworld.sociology.columbia.edu

Send great Web site suggestions to netwatch@aaas.org

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