Internet Reference Sources

In what county is Silsbee, Texas, located? What is the elevation of Colorado Springs? What is the zip code for Bend, Oregon, or the area code for Las Vegas, Nevada? Until recently the process of answering these types of questions at the Reference Desk involved consulting one or more printed reference sources. Now a reference source on the Internet makes finding this information much easier.

The US Geographic Name Server, maintained at the University of Michigan, is a database which provides basic geographic information on any given location in the United States. You need only type in the location of interest, and the name server delivers the basic data on that particular location. A typical entry includes city, state, province, county seat, area code, latitude, longitude, 1980 population, elevation, zip codes, and counties. This resource can be accessed through RiceInfo following the path “Information by Subject Area,” “Geography,” and “US Geographic Names Server.”

Foreign Countries

Information about other countries is in great demand in the library. When political science students were looking for human rights reports on various countries and business students needed details about exporting goods to other countries, librarians were able to show them that many of the standard printed sources are now available electronically through the Internet.

One example is the World Factbook, published by the CIA, which has long been a source for political, social, and geographical data on countries throughout the world. Country Reports on Human Rights, Background Notes, Market Research Reports, and a wealth of import and export information are also accessible on the Internet.

Historical Sources

A collection of historical documents and speeches on the Internet recently provided materials for three researchers with very different needs. An undergraduate attempting to complete a term paper for a comparative politics class needed to see a copy of the French declaration of rights; a history professor preparing a presentation for a professional meeting was looking for a quotation from Martin Luther King’s “I Have A Dream” speech; a political science doctoral student studying international relations wanted to read the World War II Japanese surrender documents. They all found the materials they needed by looking in RiceInfo under “Information by Subject Area,” selecting “History,” and then selecting “Historical Documents.”

Current Events

The Internet is a great place to find items on current events being discussed in the news media. Often within days and sometimes within hours of the time when an issue is beginning to heat up, documents related to the issue will be made available through RiceInfo. Items of this nature that

(Cont’d p.2)
(Internet Reference cont’d.)

were in demand last fall include the Republican Party’s “Contract with America,” the crime bill, and California’s Proposition 187.

Job Searches

Librarians at the Reference Desk receive numerous questions on career-related subjects: how to put together a resume, what makes a good cover letter, where to find the best job leads. In addition to directing people to a collection of current books on this subject, librarians can now tell them about a number of sources in RiceInfo, such as the section “Jobs and Employment” under “Information by Subject Area.”

Job seekers have access to online sources such as Academe This Week (the electronic version of the Chronicle of Higher Education), which gives academic job listings. The Online Career Center lists technical jobs in business, government, and academia and also provides a place for posting resumes. Many universities post their own lists of professional and nonprofessional job openings in this section, and there are newsgroups which list jobs in particular geographic areas, such as Houston and Washington, D.C.

Veronica

In many cases, librarians are not immediately aware of the exact location of an Internet source. When reference librarian Sara Lowman got a call from a State Department employee searching for an electronic newsletter published in Sarajevo, she did a search for the newsletter title using Veronica. This is a tool which allows keyword searches of menu titles in gopher servers on the Internet. When Sara’s search located the newsletter on the Yale University gopher, she downloaded the text and sent it to the patron via E-mail.

Newsgroups

Newsgroups can be especially useful sources for answering very specialized questions. Librarian Kathleen Dillon found this to be true when a library user requested information on hydroponic gardening in Mexico. Kathleen suggested that the patron consult the newsgroup “Gardens-L.” This newsgroup, like many others, maintains a searchable archive of previous discussions; if a search does not retrieve useful information on a topic, an E-mail message can be sent to the list with a specific question.

When all else fails, librarians can consult the newsgroup “Stumpers-L,” which is both an archive and an interactive discussion where librarians post and answer especially challenging reference questions. Recent questions have concerned the name of Kermit the Frog’s nephew (Robin) and the origin of a quotation by James Madison on press censorship.

Use with Care

While the Internet has great potential as a place for researchers to search for a variety of information, it is important to remember that information is not necessarily true just because it’s on the Internet. A seventy-element periodical table is certainly one of the more blatant examples of flawed postings. As with any source, it is important to consider the author, date, and reliability of the material.

Beginning a Search

The sources described here are just the tip of the iceberg. There is something out there for almost everyone. To look for a particular title or something with a popular name, try doing a Veronica or Jughead search. (Jughead is another type of keyword search.) RiceInfo makes these searches easy. From the main menu of RiceInfo, select “Search all of RiceInfo Gopher by Title.” If you can’t find what you are looking for as a title in RiceInfo, try searching all of gopherspace. To do this, select “Information by Subject Area” and select from the “Search all of Gopherspace” options. If you prefer to browse a topic, burrow through your subject areas on the “Information by Subject Area” menu.

(cont’d. p.5)
World Wide Web

World Wide Web (WWW), the most significant development of the Internet this decade, is based on a couple of innovations: hypertext and hypermedia. Hypertext provides a remarkably easy means of navigating the Internet by point-and-click use of a computer mouse to travel back and forth between different parts of a given site or between linked sites. Hypermedia refer to linked multimedia resources, i.e., photographs, images, maps, sound recordings, even video.

Hypertext is especially appreciated by those who were Internet users in the pre-WWW days (before 1993). Navigating the Internet then had been limited to single-site access and involved time-consuming and inconsistent protocols. The underlying difficulty was that the architectural scheme of the Internet remained that of ARPANET, the first computer network designed in the 1960s as a “doomsday” device—a communications and command medium that could survive a nuclear war by virtue of its having no central control on either a policy or a technical level.

The main integrative scheme of the WWW is the home page, a menu of hypertext links covering a particular subject, academic discipline, organization, geographical area, etc. Here are a few examples (from more than 3,000 WWW sites) of what has developed in just two years.

The Valley of the Shadow: Living the Civil War in Pennsylvania and Virginia interweaves the histories of two communities—Staunton, VA, and Chambersburg, PA—during the War between the States with color images, diaries, census reports, and economic tables (http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/vshadow/vshadow.html).

The Scholarly Societies Project links the home pages of 79 scholarly societies on the WWW, 109 non-hypertext (gopher) society bulletin boards, and 43 full-text serials (http://www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/society/overview.html).

[Editor’s note: An error message, even when a correct “http” (hypertext transfer protocol) is used, is a fairly common occurrence; either the site has all its ports in use, or it is under temporary reconstruction.]

Lists of particularly useful WWW sites, as well as the fairly brief hands-on help you may need to learn how to navigate the WWW, are available at the Reference Desk.

Academic departments, interdisciplinary programs, and other organizations in the Rice community may wish to consider having their own home pages on the WWW. The one created by the Space Physics and Astronomy Department here at Rice shows how electronic text, together with graphics and photographs, is far more informative and aesthetic than a print brochure (http://spacsun.rice.edu/).

Creating a home page is not “rocket science”; the technical skills are becoming a stock-in-trade of library and computing center staff, as well as interested graduate students. Our university’s home page already has scores of home pages created by individual members of the Rice community, and we expect that departments and programs will be widely represented on the WWW in another year or so. If you would like more information or assistance in creating a personal or departmental home page, contact your department’s library liaison.

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The Library of Congress has hypermedia exhibits on subjects such as the link between the Russian Church and native Alaskan cultures, African-American culture, the Dead Sea scrolls, materials from the Russian Archives, and the Vatican Library (http://lcweb.loc.gov/homepage/exhibits.html).

Russian & East European Studies Home Pages is one of several that provides links to electronic resources on a country-by-country basis (http://www.pit.edu/~cjp/rees.html).
Library Fellow Aids in Estonian Automation Efforts

Introduction

During the 1994 fall semester, Fondren Library staff members kept in touch via electronic mail with two of their co-workers who had gone to work at the Tartu University Library in Tartu, Estonia, as part of the Library Fellows Program sponsored by the United States Information Agency and administered by the American Library Association (ALA).

ALA selected Martin Halbert, Head of Networked Systems, to serve as a Library Fellow for 1994 in Tartu, Estonia. Martin’s wife, Barbara, an Archives Associate in the Woodson Research Center, joined him and worked on a special research project for her graduate studies with the University of North Texas.

Historical Background

Estonia, a small country located on the Baltic Sea just below Finland and Russia, regained its independence with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Although often conquered by larger nations surrounding them, the Estonian people have kept their own unique language and customs through the years. The city of Tartu has long been the center of Estonian education and culture because of its historic university.

Tartu University was founded in 1632 by the Swedish king, Gustavus Adolphus, and is considered the national university of Estonia. The Tartu University Library is the oldest and largest research library in Estonia and contains over five million volumes. It serves as a leading source of materials for scholars interested in Baltic history and culture.

Library Fellow Automation Project

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Estonian academic and library officials have been working diligently to bring their institutions up to Western standards. Martin’s assignment at the Tartu University Library was to assist the automation department in developing a plan for the library’s automation needs for the next three years.

The library staff at Tartu had begun work on developing their own integrated library system to enable the staff and the users to access information about the library’s collections electronically, but the automation department felt the advice of someone with more automation experience was needed when setting up plans for the future. The Tartu University Library Director applied to the Library Fellows Program for someone to provide the advice needed, and the American Library Association selected Martin for the task.

Meetings with Other Librarians

Soon after arriving in September 1994, it became clear that Tartu University Library personnel were not the only ones interested in library automation projects; staff members of libraries all over Estonia shared these interests. Invitations to speak at an Estonian Librarians Association meeting and at a conference on scientific communication were quickly issued. In addition, the Tartu University staff arranged meetings with the library administrators in charge of automation at major Estonian research libraries.

Interspersed with the meetings with Estonian librarians were visits to Finnish and Swedish libraries and foundations, in order to solicit support for the Tartu University Library. As a result of these visits, the Nordic Council of Ministers will provide funding for training initiatives in Estonian libraries.

(cont’d)
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In December Martin completed a proposal for a three-year automation plan and discussed the plan with the Vice-Rector of the University, who expressed interest in using the plan for future fundraising efforts.

While the focus of our stay was on assisting the Tartu University Library staff with their projects, we also derived many benefits from the experience. We found the experience of meeting and working with librarians from another country to be both stimulating and rewarding. The opportunity to work in an international setting has provided us with many new insights into American librarianship.

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Faculty Survey Update

In November, Fondren Library and Information Systems conducted a survey on customer service. We would like to thank the 191 faculty who took the time to respond. Your input will help us shape our service baseline for the next year and help us identify areas for improvement.

At this time, we are contacting faculty who placed comments on the forms and are tabulating the results. We will publish the details in our next issue.

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(Internet Reference cont’d)

World Wide Web

More and more sources are also available through the World Wide Web (WWW). (Cf. the article on page 3 for more information.) An engineering professor recently used the resources in our Patent and Trademark Depository Library. He was pleased to learn that many of the patent search tools he used are available on WWW from his office (Source Translation + Optimization’s [STO] Internet Patent Search System at http://sunsite.unc.edu/patents/intropat.html).

If you would like a demonstration of these searches or need further information about any of the sources discussed in this article, please contact us. Happy surfing!

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Library Crest of Tartu University, Estonia
Did You Know...

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is now available on RiceInfo. *EBOnline* is a WWW resource; you must use software such as Mosaic, Netscape, or Cello to access it. Please contact the Fondren Library Reference Desk for assistance.

The *Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary* (10th edition) is available on RiceInfo. Like *EBOnline*, the dictionary is a WWW resource and must be accessed with web browser software. Contact the Fondren Library Reference Desk for assistance.

The *American Heritage Dictionary* is available on RiceInfo as part of the *Books in Print/Books out of Print* service. This dictionary may be accessed using any Rice-networked computer.

Publisher information has been added to the *Books in Print/Books out of Print* service. You may search for a publisher directly or request publisher information while reviewing the bibliographic description of a book.

*UMI Periodicals Abstracts* (sometimes described as *General Periodicals Online*) is now available from any of the LIBRIS+ terminals in the Reference area in Fondren Library.

Preservation Needs Assessment Survey

During the past year, the Preservation Librarian and the collection development librarians cooperated in a survey of the condition of printed materials in Fondren Library. A statistical software package, *Calipr*, developed by the California State Library, was utilized. A random sample of five hundred call numbers was generated from our database, of which 469 were appropriate for the survey. With a total collection size estimated at 1,750,000, each book represented approximately 3,730 volumes.

Books were pulled and placed in a special area for examination in order to answer survey questions involving value, condition, accessibility, and housing. A form was inserted in each book with value data questions from the survey tool to be answered by the collection development librarians about books in their respective fields of expertise. Questions were:

- Is this book of significant artifact value?
- Is this book part of a comprehensive collection?
- If lost or unusable would this book be repaired, reformatted, or replaced with the same edition?
- Is this the only copy in the area?

To answer the fourth value data question the Preservation Librarian checked the HARLIC (Houston Area Research Libraries Consortium) database. In addition, the Preservation Librarian answered the following questions about the condition of each book:

- Are there missing parts or pages?
- Is it broken into pieces (but all parts are present)?
- Is text/image deteriorated?
- Is text/image uncopyable?

Access data indicated when books could not be located and whether books had been used in the past five years. Housing data included information on automatic fire protection, a disaster response plan, and the condition of the stacks. The books were promptly returned to the shelves after evaluation, and the data from the work forms was entered into the *Calipr* program.

Several different reports were generated which will be of value in planning for preservation. Out of a collection of 1,750,000 volumes, survey results indicate 764,650 volumes are unique in our area, 246,180 volumes are of significant artifact value, and 805,680 volumes would be replaced if lost or unusable.

Some conclusions from the survey are that physical storage conditions and fire protection are good, but there is a need for disaster planning and for more preservation education. The existing repair procedures are generally adequate, but some special projects would be valuable.

Overall, Fondren Library’s collections are in relatively good shape, although some preservation planning needs to occur.

Rita Marsales
Preservation Librarian
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Private Support of Fondren Library

Rice alumni, faculty, and staff, as well as friends of the university, have expressed their support for the university by presenting gifts to Fondren Library. Both gifts in kind and monetary donations contribute to Fondren Library’s growth.

Gifts in Kind

Fondren Library receives offers of books and journals every week. Offered materials range from back issues of National Geographic to rare, out-of-print texts. A donor may wish to present a single volume or boxes of material. Each offering is evaluated for its potential contribution to the Fondren Library collection. The Fondren Library staff welcomes the support implicit in each proffered donation of material.

Endowment funds are of varying size, nature, and age. Some of the earliest endowments were established in the 1950s, but a number of funds have been established in the last few years.

The terms of endowments vary, with some being restricted to purchase specific subjects (e.g., Beethoven or poetry), and others specifying only that the funds be used to enhance the Fondren Library collections. Such general, non-restricted endowments are more desired, as they will continue to promote the university’s goals when research and teaching emphases change in the future.

While the university continues to be strongly supportive of the library, private

Monetary Gifts

A significant amount of the private support for Fondren Library is received through the Friends of Fondren. The Friends coordinate a Gifts and Memorials Program that contributes over $50,000 each year. Library books purchased through this program bear a bookplate recording the names of both the donor and the individual in whose honor or memory the book was purchased.

In addition, funds from Friends of Fondren membership fees support purchase of current fiction, audiovisuals, and other materials. Membership fees have also supported purchase of new listening stations and computer workstations for Fondren Library.

Endowed Funds

Endowed funds provide critical support for building Fondren Library’s collections. The library currently has access to the revenue from over forty endowed funds. These revenues enhance the moneys budgeted for library resources by the university and help to offset the rising cost of books and journals.

Fondren Library’s endowed funds will provide approximately 9.2% of the money to be spent on books and journals in 1994-1995. Other university libraries rely upon endowments to varying degrees. Published reports indicate that Georgetown’s budget was about 10% endowment (1992-1993), University of California-San Diego’s about 6% (1990-1991), University of British Columbia’s about 2% (1992-1993), and Harvard’s about 45% (1989-1990).

Kerry Keck
Coordinator, Collection Development & Electronic Information
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Remote Reference Assistance

Ask a librarian without going to the library! Many library resources and services are literally at your fingertips if you have a connection to the Internet. Whether you are at home at your personal computer, at a summer job in another city, or doing an internship overseas, Fondren Library staff is available to assist you.

In the past, the university community has contacted library staff through letters and long-distance phone calls. These modes of communication can be slow, costly, and difficult to orchestrate across international timelines. Providing services off campus is much easier with the increased use of the Internet.

Last summer Government Publications staff assisted Rice student Jody Baird when he was working in Israel. Jody (Baker College, class of 1996) was working with Israel’s only environmental law firm, helping to draft community right-to-know laws, similar to those in the United States. Jody needed information about the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s regulations and was having trouble finding the material he needed in Israel.

With the help of Jody’s stepfather, Tom Janson, the information was located on a CD-ROM index, and the results were downloaded and sent to Jody. The use of E-mail made communicating and transferring information across continents and time zones an easy task.

Over the past six months, librarians have received numerous requests for assistance via the Internet and have responded to these queries using E-mail. An answer could be the specific factual information being sought or suggested sources available at Fondren Library or through RiceInfo.

You don’t have to go to the Reference Desk for assistance in locating information. Fondren Library’s reference staff has an E-mail address where you may send electronic reference inquiries. The address is: reference@ricevm1.rice.edu. Other library services, such as remote storage retrieval and interlibrary loan requests, may also be made through E-mail. Look at the “Library Services” menu item on RiceInfo for further information.

Next time you are off campus or out of town and have a need for information, send the library an E-mail message and tell us how we can help.

Amy Spare
Head, Government Publications and Special Resources
spare@is.rice.edu

Fondren Library Locations and Frequently Called Numbers

| Reference | 285-5113 |
| LIBRIS Access Via Modern | 527-6070 |
| Brown Fine Arts Library | 527-4832 |
| Business Information Center | 527-6062 |
| Circulation | 527-4021 |
| Fondren Express | 527-8101 |
| Government Publications | 285-5483 |
| Interlibrary Loan | 527-8101 |
| Reserve Desk | 527-4021 |
| Woodson Research Center | 527-8101 |

Semester and Holiday Library Hours

For information about regular and holiday hours, call 527-4800