

## Web alert

### Science news

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Most scientists are well aware of the importance of communicating their work to the taxpayers or benefactors who fund it. This is where science journalism comes in, which, contrary to popular belief, doesn't have to be either sensationalist or facile; at its best, science for the nonscientist can be a really good read. Hence the proliferation of online science magazines, many of which are aimed at the nonspecialist but provide a good way of keeping up with the latest research news whoever you are.

The award-winning *New Scientist* website (<http://www.newscientist.com/home.html>), *Planet Science*, is designed to complement the print version of the magazine. Some of the articles and news stories featured in print are re-published online. The Research news is updated frequently and there are commentaries on topical stories. The web-only Insight columns have featured subjects as diverse as the marijuana debate, bioterrorism and 'mad cow' disease (bovine spongiform encephalopathy), providing supplementary material and useful links for further reading.

*Scientific American* (<http://www.sciam.com/>) went online in 1996, 150 years after its first edition. The online version contains only two full articles from each issue, but includes news and analysis columns, book reviews and interviews with top researchers. All of the articles have links to relevant current and historical sources on the web, and all web material is fully archived.

The US-based *The Scientist* (<http://www.the-scientist.library.upenn.edu/>), available free of charge

in its online form, is aimed at researchers in the life sciences. It is published biweekly and covers research and funding news, along with opinions and analysis about policy developments. In addition, each issue contains commentaries on highly significant papers — as judged by citations over the preceding two years.

*Chemical & Engineering News* (<http://pubs.acs.org/cen/index.html>), a publication of the American Chemical Society, is now published in its entirety on the web. The magazine covers scientific and technological aspects of chemistry for its readership of chemists, but its accessible coverage of educational, business and governmental issues relating to chemistry will be of interest to anyone associated with the field. Access is free of charge until the end of 1998, from when a small fee will be charged.

Magazines available only in online format ('webzines') have also been developed in recent years. BioMedNet's *HMS Beagle* (<http://biomednet.com/hmsbeagle/>) was launched in early 1997 and is an entertaining way of keeping up with recent research developments. The webzine is published biweekly, but research news headlines are updated daily and, where possible, these headlines are linked to online versions of the relevant articles. As well as news, it includes book and software reviews, profiles of institutes and companies, opinion pieces and Cutting Edge debates. *HMS Beagle* is available free of charge to BioMedNet members.

*The Alchemist* ([http://chemweb.com/alchem/alchem98/homepage/hp\\_current\\_set.html](http://chemweb.com/alchem/alchem98/homepage/hp_current_set.html)) is the webzine associated with ChemWeb, an internet club for chemists. *The Alchemist* features a frequently updated research news round-up, web picks, the Warr Zone (a column that reviews biotechnology developments and companies), book and software reviews, as well as a web technology column. If you want

to know more about the personalities behind the papers, the Getting Personal column provides profiles of top chemistry researchers.

For a quick digest of the latest discoveries from all areas of scientific research, try *ScienceDaily* (<http://www.sciencedaily.com/>), a free-of-charge webzine that publishes press releases sent in by research organizations and universities around the world. Stories are updated daily, and archived chronologically. *ScienceDaily* also has a good set of science links and made *Popular Science*'s top 50 web picks of 1998.

There are two webzines associated with the online version of the journal *Science* — *Next Wave* (<http://www.nextwave.org/>) and *Science Now* (<http://sciencenow.sciencemag.org/>), which reports on current research news for the nonspecialist. *Next Wave* has been designed to serve as a resource for the next generation of scientists — those who wish to remain in the lab and those looking for alternative careers. Both webzines require a small subscription fee, although access to *Next Wave* is free of charge if you belong to an institution that funds *Next Wave*.

The full text of the *Nature* (<http://www.nature.com>) family of journals has recently become available online. In addition to papers published in the print version (available to subscribers only), the *Nature* site features occasional 'web specials' (available free of charge), which provide analysis of topical issues, such as mammalian cloning.

Online magazines are not yet likely to make the printed word obsolete — most of us are not in a position to browse through a webzine while waiting for our bus or train — but they do have the advantage that, as more journals are published on the web, the research news reported can be linked to the paper of interest, making it easy to delve deeper into the science behind the news.