Geography resources on the Internet

By Luigina Vileno

Be a “virtual tourist” of planet Earth

Geographers study all living things and the earth features among which these creatures live. They are particularly interested in their location and distribution. Geographers look for spatial patterns and study how forces such as climate or human activity change the landscape. They use information from all disciplines, including biology, demography, economics, geology, physics, and sociology.

Because of the wide range of data of interest to geographers, practically all of the Internet could be useful in geographical studies. General geography sites as well as general directories such as Yahoo (access: http://www.yahoo.com) or the Argus Clearinghouse (access: http://www.clearinghouse.net) and search engines such as Lycos (access: http://www.lycos.com) or Alta Vista (access: http://altavista.digital.com) can be helpful.

Given the fluid nature of the discipline and of the Internet, the following is but a sampling of sites that were found to have some useful geographic information. Although this is clearly not a comprehensive guide, I hope it will serve as a starting point for those who wish to use the Internet for geographical research.

Geographical guides to the Web

Virtual Tourist. A map-based directory of all the Web servers in the world. If one is interested in what Web resources are available in a particular country, one has only to click onto that spot on the world map and a list of sites is generated. Access: http://www.vtourist.com/.

Starting points

Human and physical geography

Geography World. Created by a geography high school teacher, it is one of a few very good starting points. Its opening page has a table of contents with topics of interest to all geographers, for example: earth’s surface and erosion, ecosystems and environmental issues, human culture, and maps and globes. Access: http://members.aol.com/bowermanb/101.html.

Nice Geography Sites. An extensive list of geographic information systems (GIS) and geography sites with strong European emphasis. A major drawback is that it is divided into only three very broad categories: general geography, GIS and remote sensing and geography and, GIS newsgroups. Access: http://www.frw.ruu.nl/nicegeo.html.

University of Texas at Austin: Internet Resources for Geographers. This very “nice” site is a beautifully organized list of resources. Access: http://www.utexas.edu/depts/grg/virtdept/resources/contents.htm.


Physical geography


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Internet Resources in the Earth Sciences. A general directory site provided by the University of California at Berkeley's Library. It provides links to all areas of the earth sciences. Access: http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/EART/EarthLinks.html.


On-line Resources for Earth Scientists (ORES). Online resources available through the Internet and other networks that may be useful to those with an interest in the earth sciences. Access: http://www.gisnet.com/gis/.


Gazetteers

Geographic Nameserver. This server contains information mostly on locations in the U.S. Simply type in the name of a place and it will return with its telephone area code, latitude, longitude, population, elevation, and zip code. Access: http://www.mit.edu:8001/geo.


U.S. Gazetteer. A very useful tool, this gazetteer identifies places to view with the Tiger Map Server and obtains census data from the 1990 Census Lookup Server. One simply enters a place name. The server returns with population, location, and zip code information. It also links the user to a map of the area as well as census tables. For the tables, the user selects what variables should be displayed. Access: http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/gazetteer.

Maps

United States

Tiger Map Server (TMS). This project is sponsored by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The goal is to provide a public resource for generating high-quality, detailed maps of anywhere in the United States using public geographic data. Access: http://tiger.census.gov/.

Canada


Other


Perry-Castañeda Library (PCL) Map Collection (University of Texas at Austin). Very useful and easy to use for anyone looking for maps. Includes links to electronic cartographic reference resources, electronic maps of current interest and of general interest worldwide, historical maps, and other map-related sites. Access: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/Libs/PCL/Map_collection/Map_collection.html. Ed. note: For a more extensive review of this site see the Internet Resources column on page 502.


Xerox PARC Map Viewer. Accepts requests for a world or U.S. map and returns an html document including an image of the requested map. This is created on demand from a geographic database. One can zoom in on a selected point and generate another map. Access: http://pubweb.parc.xerox.com/mapdocs/mapviewer.html.
Satellite images and remote sensing
United States

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Includes many links to interesting information such as news items related to NASA; organization information; FAQs; and a page entitled “Mission to Planet Earth—dedicated to understanding the many ways the Earth is constantly changing and how human beings influence those changes.” Access: http://www.nasa.gov/.

National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NESDIS). Includes links to many departmental sites such as National Geophysical Data Center; Office of Satellite Data Processing and Distribution; and the Global Environmental Disaster Monitoring (GEDM) Project. Access: http://ns.noaa.gov/ NESDIS/NESDIS_Home.html.

SIR-C/X-SAR Images. A joint U.S.-German-Italian project that uses a highly sophisticated imaging radar to capture images of Earth that are useful to scientists across a great range of disciplines. The image categories are: archaeology, cities, ecology & agriculture, geology, interferometry, oceans, rivers, snow, ice, glaciers, and volcanoes. Access: http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/radar/sircxsar/.

Canada


International regional information


Statistical information
United States


Canada

Statistics Canada. A wide variety of information on economic and social conditions in Canada. The basic subject divisions are: the land, the people, the economy, and the state. Access: http://www.statcan.ca/.

Weather and climate
United States

National Weather Service. Links to the latest U.S. weather information (warnings, forecasts, maps, and observations); climate statistics and historical archives; and information on hydrometeorology, the environment, geophysical tables, weather communications, standards

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Canada


More government sites

United States


Canada


Professional associations


The Canadian Association of Geographers (CAG). This site includes links to the association, its journals, other organizations, and more. Access: http://www.uwindsor.ca/faculty/sossci/geog/cag/.

Royal Geographical Society /Institute of British Geographers. This site includes information on the society, meetings, publications, and research groups. Access: http://glacier.gg.rhbnc.ac.uk/RHED.html.

Whole publications

E-journals


Bibliographies


Newsgroups and discussion lists


Commercial sites


Other sites

International Boundaries Research Unit (IBRU). This University of Durham site includes some interesting information on problems associated with international boundaries on land and at sea. In its International Boundaries Database one can type in the name of a place that has had boundary problems and receive a number of news items on the subject. Access: http://www-ibru.dur.ac.uk/.

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