

Don Lancaster's

RESOURCE BIN

number seventy one

My secrets of web-based research.

Our usual reminder here that the *Resource Bin* is now a two-way column. You can get tech help, consultant referrals and off-the-wall networking on nearly any electronic, *tinaja questing*, personal publishing, money machine, or computer topic by calling me at (520) 428-4073 weekdays 8-5 Mountain Standard Time.

I'm now in the process of setting up my new *Guru's Lair* web site you will find at (where else?) www.tinaja.com This is the place you'll go for instant tech answers. Among the many files in our library, you will find complete reprint sets for all of the *Resource Bin* and other columns. Plus a brand new **Research InfoPack Service**.

You will get the best results if you have both *Netscape Communicator* and *Acrobat Reader 3.0* installed.

Web Research Secrets

I sure do get a lot of helpline calls asking about the basic tools you will need to locate stuff on the web. So, I thought we might once again review just where you can go to instantly get stuff electronically...

Search Engines

A *search engine* is a good starting point to find anything on the web. My favorite search engine is the *Hotbot* you'll find at www.hotbot.com. Besides the usual searches for exact phrases or "any" and "all" words, this site also lets you find people and even links to your own website.

The latter sure is a great ego trip. Finding out who knows about you is one useful way to see how well your web promotion efforts are working. Url links are also a means to find out what others think about a site.

Or to find related sites on a linked list third party collection.

Another popular search engine is *Alta Vista* at www.altavista.digital.com.

This one appears to find almost as

much as Hotbot almost as well. But Hotbot lets me view more results at once. And lets you restrict by date. The "find url" feature on Alta Vista is somewhat hidden. You have to prefix your search with *link*.

As in *link:www.tinaja.com*

A hint: To find an exact phrase or a name, put the words in quotes. This will miss a lot and give you less hits.

But can be fast and accurate.

Some seventy or so of the popular search engines are gathered together at www.wp.com/resch/search.htm. One brand new *inference* engine is offered at www.inference.com/infind. This one does not appear to be able to find all that much, but it sure arranges what it is able to find very nicely.

Ezines, Newsgroups, and Newsletters

These are all special interest online publications, each having their own strengths and weaknesses.

An *e-zine* could be any electronically published magazine. Some have print companions; others do not. Examples of my own ezines include the *Blatant Opportunist*, *Tech Musings*, *Guru's Lair*, *Resource Bin*, and *Hardware Hacker*.

All on www.tinaja.com.

The best ezine directory seems to be John Labovitz's www.meer.net/~john/e-zine-list Some other useful locators

NEXT MONTH: Don looks into new microwave and wireless developments.

are found at www.dominis.com/Zines or www.edoc.com/ejournal

My favorite printed zine and web ezine commentary is Seth Friedman's *Factsheet Five* at www.well.com/conf/f5/f5index2.html There's something here to offend everyone.

A *NewsGroup* is a Usenet forum to

which anyone can post and anyone can subscribe. There are many tens of thousands of these which target most any imaginable special interest topic. The nice thing about newsgroups is that you might visit these only when and where you want, actually reading only those threads and the authors of current interest to you.

The bad thing about newsgroups is that their quality can get really poor. Many newsgroups are not moderated, so anyone can say anything. There's a lot of naive and misinformed posting here, scads of hidden agendas, plus great heaping bunches of investive insults. So much so that all the real experts in most fields won't put up with such time wasting nonsense.

And are promptly driven away.

Newsgroups are also the home of *trolls*. A troll is an life-challenged and clue-challenged individual who posts in such a tone as to totally infuriate the other users into making irrational responses. Troll skill levels can range from immature juvenile newbies to diabolical fiends. Your surest way to spot any troll is whenever they flame *themselves* on slow days. Some even conjure carefully crafted *Sock Puppet* alter egos. Needless to say, you *never* respond to any troll in any manner. Ignore them and they'll go away.

Or else Bozo filter them.

You can access these newsgroups through the *news server* at your local ISP. Most include news access in their basic rate; others will charge a little extra. The news service will include a listing and a search service.

The usual starting point to find out all about newsgroups is *Deja News* at www.dejanews.com/home_ps.shtml This one also lets you scope out those *other* groups a given responder is posting to. Thus, you're able to quickly run a credibility and background check. But I like the *Usenet* search feature of *Alta Vista* better. It finds more stuff.

I've put a hot linked newsgroup list to www.tinaja.com/text/newslist.html

"FAQ" is short for *Frequently Asked Questions*. Better newsgroups do try to answer all of the obvious queries that newcomers ask in downloadable files. A master directory for the FAQ sites appears as www.faqlib.com

Three newsgroup rules: *Always lurk before you post*. Preferably for several weeks. Always carefully read *all* the other responses before posting. And *never* post anything to a newsgroup without *at least* a 24 hour delay for thinking out your message.

A *newsletter* (or *mailing list*) can be thought of as a "subscription only" newsgroup. The postings are usually moderated, thoroughly stomping all the garbage, the flames, and the trolls. The people here are usually far more knowledgeable, infinitely more polite, and the content quality is often much higher. Membership might be strictly limited, and charges may apply.

You've got a choice of receiving dozens (and possibly hundreds) of email newsletter messages daily. Or of receiving a few humongous and hard to search *digest* files. Either way, newsgroups could provide you with useful information and contacts. But normally do so in an annoying and obnoxiously intrusive way.

Newsgroups are tightly targeted. Email Vanagon@gerry.sdsc.edu with a message of *subscribe vanagon* or else *subscribe vanagon digest*, and you'll be placed on their fine mailing list for a newsletter on 1987 Synchro 4WD vans with diff locks.

You subscribe to other newsgroups in pretty much the same manner. By emailing them your requests. *PAML* is one newsletter directory service.

At www.NeoSoft.com/Internet/paml

Finding People

Online phone directories are your obvious place to start people finding. These do include *Lookup USA* at, of all places, www.lookupusa.com; competitor *Switchboard* at www.switchboard.com/cg/qa.dll?MG=; and the Ma Bell toll free 800 number directory attnet/dir800.

Lookup USA also can provide maps. A second useful map site is *Mapquest* at www.mapquest.com

If the individual is active online, try finding them by way of *WhoWhere* at www.whowhere.com or else use *Four11* at www.Four11.com

If the person you are looking for is active in newsgroups, *Deja News* is once again a powerful access choice.

Basic Research Tools

Here is one quick rundown of the research sites on the web that I use most for my own consulting:

Books in Print does not seem to be online just yet. But *Amazon Books* at www.amazon.com is a useful alternate that works even better. Similarly, that *Ulrich's Periodicals Dictionary* also does not seem to be available online. Their *Oxbridge Media Finder* competitor is now completely blowing them out of the water at www.mediafinder.com

Surprisingly, the complete and free *Thomas Registry of Manufacturers* is now available online at www.thomasregister.com/index.html You do have to register and remember a password. This is a great place to go to find out stuff about old line companies who are not yet web literate.

A great selection of technical books (many involving historical or "lost art") can be located through *Lindsay* at www.keynet.net/~lindsay/ A directory of online published books is available through www.cs.cmu.edu/books.html

I've got a whole page of electrical engineering links uploaded for you at www.tinaja.com/eeweb01.html Other superb electronics access can be found at techweb.cmp.com/eet/docs

Government surplus electronics are found at 131.87.1.51, while one leading surplus electronics auction house is *Bentley* at www.bentleysauction.com.

Other surplus bargains can often be gotten at www.tinaja.com/barg01.html

A USPS zip code directory can be found at www.usps.gov/ncsc A great periodical table of the elements is at www2.shef.ac.uk/~chem/web-elements

A fully searchable patent repository resides at the patent/womplex.ibm.com. But do remember that winners appear in the marketplace and losers appear in the patent directories. More on this in my *Case Against Patents* package or at www.tinaja.com/patnt01.html.

You can find the darndest stuff on the web if you dig deep enough. For instance, you can track Arizona floods real time with the live stream gauge satellite monitors at www.daztcn.wr.usg.gov/rt-cgi/gen_tbl_pg

Betcha you don't already have this one bookmarked.

Investments, Medicine, Jobs, and Movies

Let's quickly look at a few of my favorite nontechnical sites. The best investment links I've found are the superb *Wall Street Research Network* at

new from DON LANCASTER

ACTIVE FILTER COOKBOOK

The sixteenth (!) printing of Don's bible on analog op-amp lowpass, bandpass, and highpass active filters. De-mystified instant designs. **\$28.50**

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Millions of copies in print worldwide. THE two books for digital integrated circuit fundamentals. About as hands-on as you can get. **\$28.50** each.

RESEARCH INFOPACKS

Don's instant cash-and-carry flat rate consulting service. Ask any reasonable technical question for a detailed analysis and complete report. See www.tinaja.com/info01 for specifics. **\$75.00**

INCREDIBLE SECRET MONEY MACHINE II

Updated 2nd edition of Don's classic on setting up your own technical or craft venture. **\$18.50**

LANCASTER CLASSICS LIBRARY

Don's best early stuff at a bargain price. Includes the CMOS Cookbook, The TTL Cookbook, Active Filter Cookbook, PostScript video, Case Against Patents, Incredible Secret Money Machine II, and Hardware Hacker II reprints. **\$119.50**

LOTS OF OTHER GOODIES

Tech Musings V or VI	\$24.50
Ask the Guru I or II or III	\$24.50
Hardware Hacker II, III or IV	\$24.50
Micro Cookbook I	\$19.50
PostScript Beginner Stuff	\$29.50
PostScript Show and Tell	\$29.50
Intro to PostScript Video	\$29.50
PostScript Reference II	\$34.50
PostScript Tutorial/Cookbook	\$22.50
PostScript by Example	\$32.50
Understanding PS Programming	\$29.50
PostScript: A Visual Approach	\$22.50
PostScript Program Design	\$24.50
Thinking in PostScript	\$22.50
LaserWriter Reference	\$19.50
Type 1 Font Format	\$16.50
Acrobat Reference	\$24.50
Whole works (all PostScript)	\$380.00
Technical Insider Secrets	FREE

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Ongoing details on Book-on-demand publishing, a new method of producing books only when and as ordered. Reprints, sources, samples. **\$39.50**

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The reprints from all Don's Midnight Engineering columns. Includes a broad range of real world, proven coverage on small scale technical startup ventures. Stuff you can use right now. **\$24.50**

RESOURCE BIN I

A complete collection of all Don's Nuts & Volts columns to date, including a new index and his master names and numbers list. **\$24.50**

FREE SAMPLES

Check Don's Guru's Lair at <http://www.tinaja.com> for interactive catalogs and online samples of Don's unique products. Searchable reprints and reference resources, too. Tech help, hot links to cool sites, consultants. email: don@tinaja.com

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Box 809-NV
Thatcher, AZ 85552
(520) 428-4073

FREE Catalog: <http://www.tinaja.com>

A FEW USEFUL WEB RESEARCH SITES

Acrobat newsgroup	comp.text.pdf
Adobe Acrobat Reader	www.adobe.com/prodindex/acrobat/readstep.html
Alta Vista search engine	www.altavista.digital.com
Alternate ezine directory	www.dominis.com/Zines
Alternate ezine directory	www.edoc.com/ejournal
Basic Stamp support	www.parallaxinc.com
Bed and breakfast directory	www.homearts.com/affil/ahi/main/ahihome.htm
Best book info	www.amazon.com
Best ezine directory	www.meer.net/~johnl/e-zine-list
Bizarre Pseudoscience	www.tinaja.com/scweb01.html
Black Range Lodge	www.zianet.com/blackrange/lodge.html
Blond Aggie redneck lawyers	www.winn.com/pwinn/humor/index/html
Car trader	www.traderonline.com
Cattle Moo Tillations	www.qtm.net/~geibdan/framest.html
Church of the SubGenius	sunsite/unc.edu/subgenius
Classified shopper	www.classifieds2000.com
Dilbert and Dogbert	www.unitedmedia.com/comics/dilbert
Don Lancaster's Guru's Lair	www.tinaja.com
Emory University MedWeb	www.gen.emory.edu/medweb
Factsheet Five on zines	www.well.com/conf/f5/f5index2.html
FM radio station finder	wmbr.mit.edu/stations/locate.html
Four11 position finder	www.Four11.com
Free catalogs	catalog.savvy.com
Free energy forum	www.eskimo.com/~bilb/freenrg/frng
Free Medline medical info	www.healthy.net
Electronic auctions	www.bentleysauction.com
Electronic engineer links	www.tinaja.com/eeweb01.html
Hotbot search engine	www.hotbot.com
Inference search engine	www.inference.com/infind
InfoPack research services	www.tinaja.com/info01.html
Interesting site links	www.persiankitty.com
Internet country codes	www.Four11.com/cgi-bin/Four11Main?Country
Internet Service Providers	thelist.iworld.com
Jerry Decker's Keelynet	www.keelynet.com
Job listing links	www.datamation.com/Plugin/jobs/jobs.html
Kelly Blue Book	www.kbb.com
Lindsay Publications	www.keynet.net/~lindsay
Lookup USA phone directory	www.lookupusa.com
Ma Bell 800 numbers	attnet/dir800
Mapquest map drawing site	www.mapquest.com
Master FAQ directory	www.faqlib.com
Master PIC directory	www.tinaja.com/pic500
Meta search engine site	www.wp.com/resch/search.htm
Microchip Technology	www.microchip.com
Mo Hotta Mo Betta	www.mohotta.com
More Acrobat support	www.tinaja.com/acrobo1.html
Movie reviews & info	us.imdb.com
Online published books	www.cs.cmu.edu/books.html
Oxbridge Media Finder	www.mediafinder.com
PAML newsletter directory	www.NeoSoft.com/Internet/paml
Patent repository	patent/womplex.ibm.com
Periodical elements table	www2.shef.ac.uk/~chem?web-elements
PIC reprints & support	www.tinaja.com/picup01.html
Random cyberspace jump	www.yahoo.com/bin/top2?122.25
Real time Arizona floods	www.daztcn.wr.usgs.gov/rt-cgi/gen_tbl_pg
Saucer Smear magazine	www.mcs.com/~kvg/smear.htm
Scott Edwards	www.seetron.com
Science Hobbyist	www.eskimo.com/~billb
Shepard Engineering	home.att.net/~dennis.shepard
Surplus bargains	www.tinaja.com/barg01.html
Switchboard phone directory	www.switchboard.com/cgiqa.dll?MG=
Technical electronics	techweb.cmp.com/eet/docs
US Government surplus	131.87.1.51
USPS zip code directory	www.usps.gov/ncsc
Volkswagen Van newsletter	Vanagon@gerry.sdsc.edu
Wall Street investment net	wsrn.com
Web site free promotion	www2com.com/~upfront/launch
Web site free promotion	www.ep.com/faq/webannounce.html
Web site name finder	www.internic.net/cgi-bin/whois
Web site registration	www.internic.net
Webmastering secrets	www.tiaja.com/weblib01.html
WhoWhere people finder	www.whowhere.com

[wsrn.com](#).

The place doctors go to get info is the fee based *Medline* service. One free medline link is [www.healthy.net](#)

Another very useful medical link is [www.gen.emory.edu/medweb](#)

One extensive job listing source is [www.datamation.com/plugin/jobs](#)

A leading movie review site is the *Internet Movie Database* at [us.imdb.com](#)

Places to buy and sell stuff include [www.classifieds2000.com](#) and the *Trader Online* people at [www.traderonline.com](#)
Car appraisal is best done through the *Kelly Blue Book* at [www.kbb.com](#)

Thousands of free catalogs are now offered by [catalog.savvy.com](#)

Essential hacker nutrients are at *Mo Hotta Mo Betta* ([www.mohotta.com](#))
One good bed and breakfast directory is [www.homearts.com/affil/ahi/main/ahihome.htm](#) while our favorite B&B is the *Black Range Lodge* at [www.zianet.com/blackrange/lodge.html](#)

A really great FM station finder is at [wmbr.mit.edu/stations/locate.html](#)

Check this one out.

Adobe Acrobat

Typical web technical information (especially electronic data sheets) is now presented in *Adobe Acrobat* or .PDF format. In *one* fast-loading single file, Acrobat can give you a "perfect" camera ready image, having exactly and only what your provider wishes you to see in precisely the way they want you to see it. With all fonts and artwork and images and text fully and perfectly preserved. Magnifiable, and with text smoothing, even.

If you know the secret insider trick, Acrobat gives you instant online and hot linked *full screen* displays. Just click on your PDF selection and let it autoloading into Netscape. Then enter ctrl-shift-L followed by ctrl-K. Presto. Your full screen "just like the printed page" display. Easily navigated with the usual keys or mouse moves. And printable on any newer printer.

A hint: Set your Acrobat full screen preferences to activate escape, apply vertical wipe, set cursor hidden after delay, and use loop wraparound. But unclick your auto advance.

You can get the latest free Acrobat 3.01 reader from [www.adobe.com/prodindex/acrobat/readstep.html](#) Always do install Netscape first and Acrobat 3.01 second, so your plug ins get properly placed into your browser.

There's an acrobat newsgroup at [comp.text.pdf](#) and more Acrobat info at [www.tinaja.com/acrobo1.html](#)

Web Related

Your usual place to go to register your personal website is Internic at www.internic.net. They also have their whois at www.internic.net/cgi-bin/whois that lets you find if a domain name is in use and who owns it.

Useful locations to promote your website at no charge now do include www2com.com/~upfront/launch plus www.ep.com/faq/webannounce.html. A handy listing for the internet country codes appears at www.Four11.com/cgi-bin/Four11Main?Country, while the master directory of ISP *Internet Service Providers* is at thelist.iworld.com

A few more webmastering access tools: www.tinaja.com/webwb01.html

PIC Related

The horse's whatever on PIC info is *Microchip* at www.microchip.com. Other great PIC sites include the *Basic Stamp* people at www.parallaxinc.com, *Shepard Engineering* at home.att.net/~dennis.shepard, or the Scott Edwards Electronics at www.seetron.com

A master directory of PIC websites is at www.tinaja.com/pic500, while PIC reprints and other useful content are found both at my picup01.html and at picwb01.html on the same site.

Pseudoscience

One of my very favorite activities is pseudoscience bashing. Besides being mesmerizingly awful fiction, this can give me unique directions to present fundamental electronic, chemical and physical principles.

I also have this goal of piling up all of pseudoscience in the middle of a big stage somewhere, shining a bright light on it, and getting all of you to conclude "Yup - That sure is a really big pile alright".

Only tiny problem is that a lot of it keeps leaking out of the bottom.

My favorite source for this sort of thing is www.keelynet.com

Bill Beatty runs his superb *Science Hobbyist* site at www.eskimo.com/~billb

which combines both real science and pseudoscience file downloads. He also hosts a bizarre free energy forum at www.eskimo.com/~bilb/freenrg/frng. But watch out for all the "not even wrong" labwork here.

And, of course, Mosley's old *Saucer Smear* at www.mcs.com/~kvg/smear.htm uses "in your face" journalism to slam UFO friend and foe alike.

Now in their 43rd year!

Cattle *Moo Tillations* are covered by www.qtm.net/~geibdan/framest.html Lots more pseudoscience site links are at www.tinaja.com/scweb01.html

Just For Fun

Those Guru's and Swami's Union local #204 rules do demand that all technical internet sites have a Dilbert and Dogbert link. You'll find them at www.unitedmedia.com/comics/dilbert. To pick up all of the latest blond Aggie redneck lower jokes, try www.winn.com/pwinn/humor/index/html. I really do like the one here where Wiley Coyote is filing a product liability suit against *Acme* manufacturing.

An interesting variety of site links is offered by www.persiankitty.com

If you want to go completely off the planet in your web explorations, do check out the *Church of the SubGenius* at sunsite/unc.edu/subgenius

One ultimate for-fun venture is to make a random jump somewhere in cyberspace and see where you land. One good way to do this is by using www.yahoo.com/bin/top2?122.25 Since this link is now "hidden" by its host, it might not stay around forever.

For More Help

The best way to find things on the web is to jump in with both feet and start doing it. If you do not yet have a web account with the local ISP, try borrowing a friend's internet access. Or go to your local library to begin picking up experience. Or sign up for a community college course.

Hands on is everything!

Hot links to all of these mentioned

research tools appear on my *Guru's Lair* website at www.tinaja.com. Start with all of those *Web Related Links* at www.tinaja.com/webwb01.html Then try those seven other link buttons.

Additional insider web tricks and techniques in the *Webmaster Library* at www.tinaja.com/weblib01.html The hot linked version of this column is up at <http://www.tinaja.com/glib/resbn71.pdf> Just click on any blue text to instantly go anywhere mentioned. By using Acrobat's online full screen feature.

Finally, if you don't want to do your own web research, I'd be most happy to do most of it for you. Full details all about my unique *InfoPack* consulting service can now be found at www.tinaja.com/info01.html

This Month's Contest

For our contest this month, just tell me about any useful and unusual web site I don't already know about. Tell me what it does. And why you like it.

There should be a largish pile of my new *Incredible Secret Money Machine II* books going to the dozen or so better entries, plus an all-expense-paid (FOB Thatcher, AZ) *tinaja quest* for two that will go to the very best of all.

Send all your *written* entries to me here at *Synergetics*, rather than to *Nuts & Volts* editorial. ♦

Microcomputer pioneer and guru Don Lancaster is the author of 33 books and countless tech articles. Don maintains his no-charge US tech helpline found at (520) 428-4073, besides offering all of his own books, reprints, and consulting services. Don also offers a free catalog full of his unique products and resource secrets. The best calling times are 8-5 on weekdays, Mountain Standard Time.

Don is in the process of setting up his Guru's Lair at <http://www.tinaja.com>

Full reprints and preprints of all Don's columns and ongoing tech support appear here. You can reach Don at Synergetics, Box 809, Thatcher, AZ 85552. Or send any messages to his US Internet address of don@tinaja.com