

## INFO BITS

### What's Up on the Web?

In the previous issue, this column highlighted “best of” sites compiled by *PC Magazine* for their PCMAG.COM web site. Since we're only one month or so into the new year, this is still a good time to look back at what we may have missed or forgotten about. To obtain a librarian's perspective on worthy web sites, peruse the *Best Free Reference Web Sites* series compiled annually by the Machine-Assisted Reference Section (MARS) of the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) of the American Library Association. The 2006 picks <<http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaourassoc/rusasections/mars/marspubs/marsbestref2006.htm>> include the following content-rich and fun web sites that present information in a variety of interesting ways:

● **Encyclopedia of Chicago** <<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/>>: This collaborative effort involving the Chicago History Museum/Chicago Historical Society, The Newberry Library, and Northwestern University has resulted in a pleasurable site that will intrigue anyone regardless of their level of interest in Chicago and the Midwest. The amount of content is impressive, it's presented in multiple ways (text, maps, photographs, etc.) and it's organized effectively for easy navigation. An online user guide is included to make sure that visitors get the most out of what the site has to offer.

● **nationalatlas.gov** <<http://www.nationalatlas.gov/>>: From the U.S. Department of the Interior, this site describes the United States via maps covering a variety of subjects including history, government, people, environment, geology, and transportation. Printable maps (in PDF) are included: A particularly interesting printable map collection is “Presidential Elections 1789-2000” <<http://www.nationalatlas.gov/printable.html#elections>>. A fun Map Maker feature <<http://nationalatlas.gov/natlas/Natlasstart.asp>> allows you to create your own maps by selecting various criteria to display.

● **Eternal Egypt** <<http://www.eternalegypt.org/>>: The Egyptian government's Center for Documentation of Cultural and Natural Heritage and The Supreme Council of Antiquities, along with IBM, offer a web site that not only presents voluminous content in a variety of interesting ways, but also provides extensive linking between related topics. For example, the “Connections” display graphically presents pathways for related topics so that you can easily assess a subject area's content and decide which particular topic you want to pursue next.

In addition to these and other 2006 selections, you can also view the picks from previous years dating back to 1999. Interestingly, in that first year of the annual series, Amazon.com and MapQuest were highlighted! A combined index for the series for 1999-2006 is available at <<http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaourassoc/rusasections/mars/marspubs/MARSBESTIndex.htm>>.

