

**GEM the Gateway to Educational Materials.** Access: <http://www.geminfo.org>.

Educators of all levels and students studying education will be interested in using GEM,



the Gateway to Educational Materials. Librarians interested in the developments of cataloging the Web should also look at this resource.

Begun in 1996 and sponsored by the National Library of Education and U.S. Department of Education, GEM is a joint project led by Michael Eisenberg, director of the ERIC Clearinghouse, along with Stuart Sutton and Ruth Small of Syracuse University's School of Information Studies.

Eisenberg says "The project's goal is to provide a new set of tools to get information into the hands of educators quickly and easily so children can learn." GEM accomplishes this easily and is gaining strength with each additional resource.

GEM is a consortium effort to collect, catalog, and upload educational materials from government, non-profit, and commercial sites into a one-stop searchable GEM Gateway for educators. As of August 1999, the GEM Consortium included 113 organizations and 13 individuals.

GEM included over 6,000 Internet educational resources divided into 18 resource types from 40 collections. GEM is searchable using the PLWeb, a product developed by Personal Library Software (Ask ERIC also uses this software). It is browsable by both keyword and subject lists, with help available on each search page.

Comments and feedback can be sent via a "Tell us what you think" button located on many of the GEM Web pages. Materials are accepted from individuals by the GEM Administrative Group based on GEM criteria of authoritativeness, significance and availabil-

ity, and then cataloged by the resource creator using GEMCat tools located under the Workbench section of the Web site.

Cataloging and searching is enhanced by the use of the GEM profile, which is a Dublin Core based, metadata element set with an added 15 elements designed by GEM. GEM designers have also added six sets of controlled vocabularies to work with these elements. The end result is a virtual catalog of educational resources that teachers can search by traditional access points as well as student grade level, special needs, and other criteria.

Consortium members include the GEM Users Group; organizations that use and promote GEM and the GEM Collection Holders; and organizations that have collections that are or will be added to the GEM Gateway. To participate in the GEM Consortium, interested organizations can contact GEM using the application form located under GEM's participation page at [www.geminfo.org/Participation/index.html](http://www.geminfo.org/Participation/index.html).—*Mary MacDonald, University of Rhode Island, marymac@uri.edu*

## US Patent and Trademark Office

**USPTO Web Patent Databases.** Access: <http://uspto.gov/patft/index.html>.

Thomas Edison, America's Father of Invention, could have used the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) Web Patent Databases in formulating the ideas for one his 1,093 patents. The USPTO now offers free Web access to full-text and bibliographic patent databases for all searchers and inventors.

In 1997 alone, there were 237,045 Edison wannabes who applied for patents. This included many professors and academics who wanted to patent their "new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof." The U.S. Patent Databases are

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useful in determining whether something has already

been invented and if one's idea is worth pursuing. It is also useful in exploring information contained in patents relating to one's field of endeavor.

There are two sections of the U.S. Patent Database, although they cover the same patent information with comparable search options. The Bibliographic Database at <http://128.109.179.23/access/search-bool.html> offers a rapid search of patent front pages including all bibliographic data as well as an abstract and brief description of the patent's contents.

The Full-Text Database section at <http://164.195.100.11/netahtml/search-adv.htm> offers a more thorough search of the full text of U.S. patents with all of the text words in the patent being searchable. It includes all bibliographic data as well, such as the inventor's name, the patent's title, the assignee's name, abstract, the full description of the invention, and the claims. This database also offers some full-text images, although I did not find any patents with images available.

The databases are easy to use with plenty of background information and FAQs for people who are new to the patenting process. It is the perfect place for preliminary searches for inventors. However, the site does link to patent lawyers and patent depository libraries for more in-depth assistance and legal information.—*Gentry Holbert, University of South Alabama Biomedical Library, gholbert@jaguar1.usouthal.edu*

### **Publishers' Catalogues Home Page.**

Access: <http://www.lights.com/publisher/>.

This site provides access points, organized by country, to publishers' homepages. For example, clicking on the hyperlink labeled "Russia" will take the user to a list of publishers based in Russia.

Developed and maintained by Peter Scott of Northern Lights Internet Solutions, represented publishers in each country are those that choose to participate in the directory and have registered. Thus in the example of Russian publishers, the list (as of August 1999) held the names of 12 publishing companies, a list that did not include the important presses

operating out of Russian scholarly academies.

The publishers of the United States, Britain, and the Western European countries are well represented. Because the links are maintained by the active cooperation of the publishers, not all of the links are accurate.

The site's index of countries is overwhelmed by the addition of advertisements, which include three search engines sponsored by commercial vendors. The graphical layout is visually noisy and a first-time user may overlook the real value of the site. A link to this site is provided by the invaluable Acqweb site (<http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/law/acqs/acqs.html>), which is a site with a broader compass established for librarians with collection development responsibilities.

The strength of the Publishers' Catalogues Home Page is the organization of publishers by country, giving access to catalogs on an international level. The most significant limitation of the site is in the weak representation of academic presses in countries outside of the Western industrialized community.

—*Sara Rutter, University of Michigan, sara@umich.edu* ■

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*("Libraries as gateways . . ." continued from page 733)*

main library, with four levels underground and three levels above ground. It was interesting to note that the Thai government plans to free all universities of state control within the next five years. It was also interesting to note that the library was very heavily used, that it had very few computers (although it has a new automated library system and several Internet connections), and that the electronic resources are still scarce.

Bangkok is an exciting and interesting city with more than 10 million inhabitants. The traffic is a nightmare, but the people seem to have adapted to it. The food is wonderfully delicious and there are many restaurants. Shopping is plentiful and bargaining is the acceptable way of doing business. The city is alive for 24 hours every day.

It is a city of contrasts—beautiful flowers and palaces and enormous traffic jams and tremendous poverty. The most memorable impression I have is that the people are very gracious, polite, patient, and highly likeable. ■

# A Growing Community.



João Felipe

Your community of users is growing in size and expectation.  
In 1998, the IEEE had 334,811 members worldwide, the most in our history.  
Libraries and IEEE, serving a growing community.

