

**International Monetary Fund.** *Access:* <http://www.imf.org>.

A major news topic lately is the impending financial disasters in the Asian and Russian markets. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) Web site is a valuable source of data for those who are trying to make sense of the alarming headlines about the state of the global economy.

IMF, established in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, in 1944, strives to ensure international economic stability through cooperation and support among its 182-country membership. IMF's mission is to "maintain a stable system of buying and selling their currencies so that payments in foreign money can take place between countries smoothly and with-



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out delay." Each member nation is assigned a quota, based on its wealth and contribution to the IMF fund. These quotas are then converted into "Special Drawing Rights" (SDRs), from which member countries may borrow, in accordance with the theory that bolstering national coffers will help contribute to the international monetary balance. The IMF also works to ensure the voluntary compliance of member countries to financial practices that will not actively threaten global economic stability.

Of more importance to librarians and their users is the role IMF plays in gathering and publishing timely statistical data on the economic affairs of its member nations. Much of IMF's more recent publications are available in full-text, PDF-format, on its Web site. (The PDF-files must be downloaded into an Adobe-Acrobat Reader, which is available for free via the Internet.) IMF's homepage has links to recent news releases and "Publications," such as their seminal publication *World Economic Outlook* (WEO), a semiannual report on the present and forecasted state of the world's economy. Available from the Web site in full-text, PDF-format, WEO provides a mountain of historical data and projected sta-

tistical information on such financial indicators as: exchange rates, interest rates, price of oil, gross domestic product (GDP), labor force characteristics, exports, balance of payments, external debt and debt service, inflation, and net capital flows. Statistics are given for individual countries, geographic regions (i.e., Sub-Saharan Africa), or classifications of countries ("advanced economies," "developing countries," and "countries in transition"). Because the text is in PDF-format, the "Find" command can be used to search each section for specific words.

Other useful publications available in full-text format from the site's "Publications" page are the biweekly *IMF Survey*, the annual *International Capital Markets*, IMF's annual report, and the quarterly electronic version of the IMF periodical *Finance & Development*. Also accessible from the "Publications" page are "IMF Working Papers in Full Text," "Papers on IMF Policy Analysis and Assessment in Full Text," and "IMF Staff Country Reports in Full Text."

There is an alphabetical index and a site map, both accessible from the homepage, as well as a "Site Search" feature, which employs the standard boolean operators of "and," "or," and "not." There is also a more advanced search feature on the "Publications" page that allows the user to search IMF Publications by title, author/editor, subject, series, date, and language.

The IMF Web site has a plethora of timely and relevant international economic data, however, it could be organized better. Most of the statistical data that makes it such a noteworthy site is buried on the "Publications" page. The site could be made much more user-friendly if it highlighted its full-text publications on the homepage and pointed out what types of data are available. The site does an admirable job of maintaining historical and current information about IMF and its opera-

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tions. I recommend the IMF Web site for anyone needing timely information on the state of the world's economy.—*Geraldine Foudy, SUNY Stony Brook; geraldine.foudy@sunysb.edu*

**Quackwatch.** Access: <http://www.quackwatch.com>

Quackery is obvious when bizarre medical claims are made to cure certain illnesses and diseases, yet other forms of quackery are not so obvious. Quackwatch is a "guide to health fraud, quackery and intelligent decision making." Stephen Barrett, a renowned consumer advocate and author, operates Quackwatch. Through this Web site, he and members of Quackwatch Inc. are combating health fraud. It offers access to daily updates on quackery, questionable products, services, theories, advertisements, consumer protection, and reliable health publications.

A search for more health information can be done by clicking "Search Quackwatch." The Glimpse search engine will quickly provide a list of pages that contain the word or words you type in. The searching capability of returning only files modified within a certain number of days will be valuable to health and allied sciences students and professionals who are looking for current sources. Results will include short and lengthy articles from the more than 300 pages contained in Quackwatch. International users will enjoy the French and German translations of this Web site.

Clearly, Quackwatch is for researchers who are seeking sources that will sort out the facts and fallacies in controversial health products and services.—*Nancy Allen, University of South Florida at Sarasota/New College, Nallen@virtu.sar.usf.edu*

**PharmInfoNet.** Access: <http://www.pharminfo.com/>

The Pharmaceutical Information Network, or PharmInfoNet, is a Web site specializing in new drug information. PharmInfoNet contains information of relevance to both health care professionals seeking technical information and the lay person wanting to know more

than what his or her physician has time or is willing to tell. The site is extremely well organized, easy to navigate, and attractively designed. The major areas of content are Drug Information, Publications, Disease Centers, Glossary, Medical Meeting Highlights, Discussion Groups, PharmMall, Pharmacy Corner, PharmLinks, and even a Gallery.

One of the most useful areas in PharmInfoNet is the DrugDB (drug database). While the number of drugs listed can't compare in number to what you would find in works such as the *Physician's Desk Reference* or the *Merck Index*, you will find much more recent information on drugs such as Viagra and Propecia (a new hair loss remedy). There are even entries for common medications such as ibuprofen and acetaminophen. A typical drug entry lists trade name, generic name, manufacturer, use, and links to full-text online health and medical journals.

Two of the most frequently cited journals are the *Medical Sciences Bulletin* and *PNN Pharmacotherapy Line*. While the articles contained in these publications are written in a fairly technical style, they are still readable enough to be of use to those without a technical background. A complete list of publications can be found at [http://www.pharminfo.com/pubs/pubs\\_mnu.html](http://www.pharminfo.com/pubs/pubs_mnu.html).

All of PharmInfoNet's online publications are either produced by them or their affiliates. None of these journals are peer reviewed. However, their articles often do contain references to standard professional journals like the *New England Journal of Medicine* and *Lancet*.

PharmInfoNet is produced by VirSci Corporation ([www.virsci.com](http://www.virsci.com)), a high tech company that applies "virtual technologies to medical communications, medical and pharmaceutical marketing, and pharmaceutical



sales training." They are adamant, however, about not being affiliated with any specific pharmaceutical company. Nevertheless, the overall tone of this site is that of a vehicle for pharmaceutical companies to advertise their products.—*Jim Rible, Southern Oregon University, rible@sou.edu* ■

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