WEB TEXT

Before the Double Helix

Science historians and others interested in James Watson’s work prior to the discovery of DNA’s structure will find a nugget here: Watson’s 1950 Ph.D. dissertation from Indiana University, Bloomington. Visitors can leaf through all 92 pages of The Biological Properties of X-ray Inactivated Bacteriophage at the university’s digital library.

webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/metsnav/general/navigate.do?oid=VAA2040

FUN

Spinning Spiders

Like snakes and other scary critters, spiders have inspired more than their share of superstitions and tall tales. At The Spider Myths Site, curator Rod Crawford of the Burke Museum in Seattle, Washington, squashes more than 50 common errors about the misunderstood arachnids. Take those well-meaning folks who “liberate” house spiders outside. The animals often die after release because many species that lurk indoors are as dependent on our homes as we are. Then there’s the urban legend that we each swallow four live spiders per year during our sleep. In fact, there are no confirmed instances of spiders climbing into someone’s mouth, Crawford says, and it’s virtually impossible to swallow them unwittingly.

www.washington.edu/burkemuseum/spidermyth

TOOLS

Scourge of a Continent

HIV is hammering Africa, with infection rates of more than 30% in countries such as Botswana. Researchers will find tools for analyzing HIV molecular data and information on the main African strain at BioAfrica, created by virologists at Oxford University and the University of Pretoria in South Africa. BioAfrica complements other HIV sites, such as the sequence bank at Los Alamos National Lab in New Mexico (NetWatch, 23 August 2002, p. 1243), by spotlighting HIV’s subtype C, the viral variant that predominates in the southern part of the continent. Users can download free software for determining a virus’s subtype or visit a new proteomics section that probes the sequences and structures of HIV’s 19 proteins. The site also includes plenty of background on subtype C, including charts that follow its spread starting in the early 1980s. Above, an AIDS patient in Zambia.

www.bioafrica.net
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Science 310 (5756), 1877.
DOI: 10.1126/science.310.5756.1877e

http://science.sciencemag.org/content/310/5756/1877.5

file:/content/sci/310/5756/netwatch.full

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