# Internet applications, sites, trends and happenings

**David Raitt**
david.raitt@esa.int

This column aims to draw your attention to various interesting Web sites which I have come across and which might appeal to you, and to keep you up to date with news and views on Internet trends, developments and statistics. It offers essentially a personal selection rather than comprehensive coverage. Although some sites may not cover products or services available in South Africa, they are included because they may inspire you to either contribute missing data or become an entrepreneur and create a similar local site.

### Just what the doctor ordered
PPOnline's aims is to be the world's most useful and vibrant community and source of information and education for athletes and coaches. PPOnline was originally launched in 1998 as an archive of articles from the sports science newsletter, *Peak Performance*. Over the years, traffic has grown to almost half a million unique visitors every month, drawn by the huge library of free information and tips for athletes, coaches and sports science students. In late 2007, PPOnline was re-launched, transforming itself from a static site to a dynamic community site, adding new types of content such as video, blogs, member pages, networking groups, a shop and a Q&A section that enables athletes and their coaches to share knowledge with others. The site offers articles, for instance, on improving distance running performance, attaining maximum distance with football throw-ins, recovery after cycling long distances and much more. All the major sports are included from badminton to volleyball and you can subscribe to a free e-mail newsletter that gives ground-breaking training tips for each activity. Keep in peak performance yourself by running over to http://www.pponline.co.uk/.

Of course, peak performance is affected by lack of sleep and there have been a number of articles in the press recently about people with problems sleeping. To help such people, a new Web site called Insomniacs has been developed that offers a unique reference point on overcoming and treating sleeping problems and sleep disorders. If you suffer from a sleep disorder, Insomniacs will show both the causes and the techniques that can help you sleep well. The site was created because of concern that there was no single UK resource for interesting features and practical advice on the subject. All the features and articles are written by professional journalists and experts who have a particular interest or background in the area. The site covers such things as lifestyle and sleep, causes of insomnia, disorders and problems, medication, overcoming problems and sleep patterns and recent articles have included topics such as why we dream, women and sleep, the importance of a good bed, effects of sleep deprivation and so on. Stay awake long enough to sleep walk over to http://www.insomniacs.co.uk/ for more information.

### Virtual cities
Founded in 2002, EveryScape is a site or service that lets people, businesses and organizations build engaging, immersive relationships with consumers through three-dimensional, photo-realistic experiences of cities and towns, streets and sidewalks, building exteriors and interiors. EveryScape's patented HyperMedia Technology Platform allows anyone with a browser to experience a first-person, eye-level walk down a scaped street,

gathering and sharing information on businesses and attractions, entering a store and shopping, checking the menu and reviews of a restaurant or the upcoming performances of a theatre – just like in the real world.

One example of the site's use is the partnership with California's Laguna Beach Visitors & Conference Bureau and *Laguna Beach Magazine*, where EveryScape will start with more than 25 participating local restaurants, hotels and businesses. This is the first interactive experience that lets anyone online explore Laguna Beach's interiors and exteriors by walking down streets and going inside local businesses and vacation destinations. Visitors to Laguna Beach can virtually experience the famous Crescent Bay Beach and Park's 180-degree views, view area tide pools and stroll through hotels while making vacation plans all from their personal computers. Escape to EveryScape by surfing to http://www.everyscape.com/.

And it's not only the shops, restaurants and beaches of cities that are virtual – but also racing tracks through their streets! A Google Maps Racing Game makes great use of the immensely detailed satellite photography of Google maps to create a city overlay where you can control a virtual car that drives round race tracks through the streets against opponents – complete with all the motor noises associated with F1. There are several courses in Europe, one in Australia and one in the USA – nothing yet in South Africa – but there could be some exciting courses. Put your foot down and race over to http://www.thomasscott.net/realworldracer/ to get a good start.

And if you want to see more than just satellite imagery of the Earth then Art For the Sky is for you. Art for the Sky is a unique, large group, team building activity for schools, special events, festivals and corporations that awakens our ability to see that elusive Big Picture. These group creations, which only make sense when viewed from high above, are a whole-body way of stimulating our imagination and helping us understand our interconnection with one another and all life. The thinking is that with our 'skysight' turned on, we can access our highest creative potential and better solve the problems we face as individuals and as a society. The gallery provides images of a large number of creations that can be viewed from above (the project should be called Art from the Sky instead, perhaps). To learn about the latest events, happenings, images and theories regarding Art For the Sky then hover over http://artforthesky.com.

**Meaning of food**
With all the concern in the last few months about the price of food rocketing, this site is rather apposite. The Meaning of Food is a three-part limited documentary series from PBS that explores our relationships to food and reveals the connection food has to our identity: personal, cultural and familial. Everything about eating − including what we consume, how we acquire it, who prepares it, who's at the table and who eats first − is a form of communication that is rich with meaning. Our attitudes, practices and rituals surrounding food are a window into our most basic beliefs about our world and ourselves. The three episodes cover: food and life; food and culture; and food and family. Much of the information is homilies, but there are facts, history, quizzes, projects, resources and recipes. Feeling peckish? Then get some food for thought at http://www.pbs.org/opb/meaningoffood/.

**Sound advice**
The Sound Archive of the British Library holds over a million discs, 185000 tapes, and many other sound and video recordings. The collections come from all over the world and cover the entire range of recorded sound from music, drama and literature, to oral history and wildlife sounds. They range from cylinders made in the late 19th century to the latest CD, DVD and minidisc recordings. The BL keeps copies of commercial recordings issued

in the United Kingdom, together with selected commercial recordings from overseas, radio broadcasts and many privately-made recordings. There are six main subject areas within the Archive: classical music, drama and literature, oral history, popular music, wildlife sound, and world and traditional music. The catalogue includes entries for almost three-and-a-half million recordings held in the Sound Archive and is updated daily. It is one of the largest catalogues of its kind anywhere in the world, covering both published and unpublished recordings.

The Sound Archive also offers public access to a wide range of specialist publications, books, magazines and journals covering every aspect of recorded sound. The Sound Archive Information Service enables users to consult the Archive's extensive collection of printed material and also operates a free information service by post, phone, fax and e-mail. The Listening and Viewing Service provides public access to the Archive's collection of recorded sound and video. A range of charged services, including a transcription service which can provide copies from the collections, is available to academic institutions, commercial users and private individuals. More information at: http://www.bl.uk/collections/sound-archive/publications.html.

**The 101 most useful Web sites**
There are tens of millions of Web sites to visit. Here is a list of those you actually need compiled by David Baker in a recent issue of the UK's *Daily Telegraph*. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/connected/main.jhtml?xml=/connected/2008/03/30/sv_101websites.xml&CMP=ILC-mostviewedbox.

**About the author**
Dr David Raitt is senior technology transfer officer with the European Space Agency in the Netherlands. His work involves finding applications for space technologies in non-space sectors, particularly those useful for improving everyday life. An information scientist by education and training, David is also editor of *The Electronic Library* and chairman of the Internet Librarian International conferences.