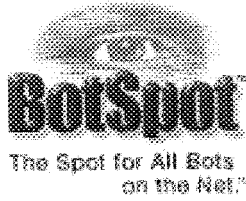


**BotSpot.** Access: <http://www.botspot.com>.

In the near future, librarians may need to become masters of delegation more than ever,

especially in light of the information explosion. But instead of assigning research-intensive projects to humans, they will divvy up projects to software.



It behooves the savvy information professionals to bookmark BotSpot and visit the site periodically.

First, what are bots? As the creators of BotSpot explain, bots (also known as intelligent agents) are "software with a mission." Bots have been developed to make our lives easier, saving us time and labor. They can help us cope with or alleviate information overload. Specifically, bots are used for information retrieval or resource discovery, and they have applications in "data mining," which involves searching for patterns in unwieldy masses of information. They also busily work in the background, hunting and gathering specific types of information, such as news or stock prices.

BotSpot's objective is to classify and organize bots by subject, and it lives up to its purpose. Surfers can display a list of all bots or view bots by category. Each product includes an annotation and many are even reviewed. Just as subject-specific search engines have proliferated on the Web, there are innumerable bots, as well. There are bots for news, bots for shopping, bots for data mining, bots for stocks, bots for surveillance, and bots for Web searching. Most tools are free to download.

Other essential areas of BotSpot include "Best of the Bots," an annotated listing of handpicked tools; "Bots by Category," which spells out the myriad applications that bots can have in daily life; and "FAQs on Bots," which links to associations, technical papers, magazines, newsletters, etc. (some of this content is a bit technical).

One hallmark of a solid Web site is its interaction with the user or visitor, and

BotSpot meets this standard. BotSpot solicits feedback and participation. Visitors can also participate in Usenet-like discussions, and lurk and post in the "BotSpot Forum."

The site's initial page has a basic search box (in addition to a site map), which should be more prominently displayed. It's unclear how to use the search engine until viewing a page of results, which links to more search options and help files.

No one can foretell the future of information retrieval, but here's a suggestion: librarians may need to add bots to their search toolbox along with Web subject directories and portals, bonafide search engines, metasearchers, and Invisible Web gateways.

We'll want to visit BotSpot to check the pulse of artificial intelligence on the Web. And as we polish our crystal balls, let's remind ourselves that human beings create bots . . . not the other way around. Therefore, some of us will still be employed!—*C. Brian Smith, Judson College, bsmith@judson-il.edu*

#### **Statistical Assessment Service (STATS).** Access: [www.stats.org](http://www.stats.org).

As students develop information literacy skills, they learn the importance of critically evaluating reported statistics. Without a strong statistical background or research training, however, they may find it difficult to question the results of a study. The Statistical Assessment Service (STATS) Web site can help.

The mission of STATS, a self-described "nonprofit nonpartisan organization," is to assist journalists to "more accurately and effectively" understand and report "scientific, quantitative, and social research." Its advisory board includes several academics. Reporters can call on STATS analysts for help in understanding statistics; the STATS staff also regularly publish opinion pieces analyzing media

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coverage of research. Articles written by STATS staff are republished on the site.

Because STATS articles are aimed at reporters and their audiences who are not steeped in research methods and statistical analysis, the writing is clear and the explanations are easy to follow. Therefore, the site is quite useful for students writing papers on current affairs involving scientific or social science research. STATS articles cover a range of topics that are popular in undergraduate papers, including drug use, gun control, smoking, global warming, and media violence.

The site itself is easy to navigate, with links to the most current stories found in the body of the homepage. Casual visitors may be willing to browse through sections containing older articles ("Newsletters," "Asides," "STATS Spotlight," etc.), but it's not obvious what each section contains. Users looking for analysis of particular issues should browse through the subject links or use the search engine.

Titles of STATS articles are also not necessarily indicative of content. For example, a search on "day care" yielded an article listed as "STATS at Work: Unconventional Wisdom, *Washington Post*." After selecting this article, one can see from the subtitle that it is about day care and asthma in children.

STATS is kept up-to-date; articles published since the September 11 terrorist attacks discuss racial profiling and the statistical dangers of flying versus driving. STATS offers a monthly newsletter with e-mail alerts—a nice feature for anyone trying to improve his or her statistical literacy.—*Julie Linden, Yale University, julie.linden@yale.edu*

### **U.S. Army Center for Military History.**

Access: <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/>.

The Center for Military History (CMH) is responsible for "the appropriate use of history throughout the U.S. Army." While mainly focused toward the education of military personnel, the center provides much material of interest to a wider audience.

The site contains an extensive range of material. Changing exhibits are prominently featured and include "Native Americans in the U.S. Army," "Remembering Desert Shield/

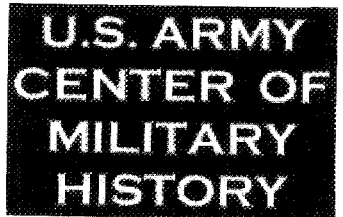
Desert Storm 10 Years Later," and "Remembering the Korean War."

Particularly noteworthy at the time of this review is a strong bibliography on Afghanistan. Primary and secondary resources include online publications, other Web sites, and print materials covering general history, the Taliban, Islam, and the Soviet-Afghan War, as well as current analysis. The page is being updated frequently, and, while displaying a somewhat conservative bent, should prove valuable to people seeking a better understanding of the current situation.

Other resources of interest include a chronologically arranged list of Medal of Honor recipients from all services, with additional information on the history of the medal and a list of Black World War II recipients. The FAQ page may be of interest to reference librarians who are helping patrons locate service records or other Army information. The "Online Bookshelf" contains a growing number of electronic publications, including unit histories and several of the famous "green books" on World War II. An "Artwork and Images" section offers digitized combat art and photographs, and is particularly strong in World War II, Korea, and the Gulf War categories. Much of this material has not been well publicized, and is a welcome addition to available resources.

Especially noteworthy for students of history are the "CMH How to Guides," covering oral history techniques and the preparation of annual unit histories. Included in this section is an outdated guide to conducting military history research on the Internet. The remainder of the site is current and maintained by historians and CMH personnel.

The site is attractively designed, but information can be hard to locate due to the lack of a site map or search engine; however, it will be of value to anyone interested in U.S. history or American military operations.—*Mark A. Stoffan, University of North Carolina at Asheville, mstoffan@bulldog.unca.edu* ■



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