

Reference This

By Donna J. Abernathy

Searching for information online can be tedious and oh-so-time-consuming when you roam from one site to another chasing bad leads and getting sidetracked at data dumpsters along the way. Most of us don't have time to cruise the Net in "just browsin'" mode, preferring to power surf: Get what I came for, then peel out of the parking lot. Still, many people use traditional engines to search for information, which can be like wandering through a card shop in search of a power saw.

A better approach might be to visit a few basic reference sites.

Check out these online digs—from dictionaries to loan calculators to government forms.

Reference Shelf

Here's a sampling of sites that a reference librarian would be proud of.

● **Refdesk.com**  www.refdesk.com is a

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Photo by Eyewire

Contact!

Reach out and touch someone.



● **Teldir.com** www.teldir.com features more than 400 links to sites that offer business and home phone numbers, email addresses, and fax numbers in 170-plus countries.

● **WorldPages** www.worldpages.com lets you search for businesses by name, category, and location. It also has a reverse lookup that enables you to search by phone number—handy for checking phone-bill entries.

UpData

London taxi drivers are required to pass a training test, but it's a good thing the meter's not running during training. It takes two to four years to prepare for the test.

 Source/absolutetrivia.com

TIPS @WORK

@Work reader

Griffin Davis shares

this email tip with

Outlook users: When

you set the Out-of-

Office Assistant to

respond to email

messages while

you're away, don't

forget to provide an

alternate point of

information (Web-

site) or contact (co-

worker's phone

number or email).

Answers à la Carte

Here are some sites that offer interactive Q&A.

● **Q&A Café** www.qandacafe.com is a live, online reference service of San Francisco Bay Area libraries that's designed to provide fast answers to short questions. It's available Monday through Friday, 3 to 9 p.m. Pacific Standard Time. To synchronize with your time, go to CNN's World Time Converter at www.cnn.com/weather/worldtime.

● At **AllExperts** www.allexperts.com choose a category—there are 36—click on an expert's name, and inquire away.

Do the Math

Do you want to know how many meters are in a mile? These conversion and calculator sites can help you do the math.

● For basic calculations, check out **ConvertIt.com** www.convertit.com to quickly convert or calculate measurements, currency, time, sales tax, and loan payments.

● **OnlineConversion.com** www.onlineconversion.com offers basic and advanced scientific calculations and conversions. Click on the Fun Stuff links.

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one-stop guide to useful, fact-based sites with topics ranging from acronyms to zip codes and everything in between.

- The award-winning **Internet Public Library** <|)|) www.ipl.org has comprehensive links to reference collections, periodicals, books, online exhibits, and more. Ask-a-Question helps you jumpstart your next quest.

- **LibrarySpot** <|)|) www.libraryspot.com offers links to various online libraries, including those for law, medicine, academia, K-12, and film—and an extensive reference desk.

- **ReferenceDesk.org** <|)|) www.referencedesk.org serves up links in 28 categories, including jobs, scholarships, weather, encyclopedias, and biographies. It also has a quick-search option that lets you search for keywords in various dictionaries, thesauri, language translators, and maps.

Dot.Gov

For government data, here's your bookmark list.

- **FirstGov** <|)|) www.firstgov.gov is the official U.S. government portal to 47 million pages of government information and services. The site features a topical index, online transactions, links to state and local governments, and options to contact government offices, among other tools.

- **The Bureau of Labor Statistics** <|)|) www.bls.gov publishes information

on employee earnings and benefits, workplace injuries, international labor statistics, and more.

- **FedStats** <|)|) www.fedstats.gov features searchable links to statistics from more than 100 federal entities and such ref-

erences as the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* and *Projections of Education Statistics to 2010*.

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On the Light Side

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