Online search service speeds up web crawling

By Stacey Range
Staff Reporter

Scholars rejoice—the World Wide Wait is over.

Internet research that once took hours can now be found in a matter of minutes with this summer's introduction of Study WEB, a free online encyclopedia of research information sites. Leslie Kenny, marketing coordinator of American Computer Resources, which developed the site, said the new program was like a "huge encyclopedia."

The site offers categories in fine arts, English, mathematics, science and social studies.

Once at the Study WEB site, researchers choose from a list of the five categories as well as others in college information, online dictionaries, newspapers and periodicals.

The category choice will link to a directory of related topics, which will then link to a list of all sites in that topic. The final list includes a brief description of the information in the site, a grading of the site's visual content and the appropriate ability level of the user.

The program was designed to help students and educators spend more time viewing targeted information and less time searching, Kenny said.

"When you go into a search you can come up with thousands of links that may or may not have something to do with your topic of interest and it takes a lot of time to weed through all of it," Kenny said.

Linda Roos, manager of user education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Information Services, agreed.

"There's a lot of information out there on the web and wading through all the junk is sometimes very difficult," Roos said. Though Internet search engines are designed to find desired information, they can be too time consuming and general, she said.

"Someone once told me they searched for information on Scotland and they got 7,000 hits," Roos said, "so I tried it in class and we got even more."

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>
> Linda Koos
> UNL's Information Services

Since the site went online in May, Kenny said, it has been a success. Summer hits averaged 100 a day and Kenny said she expected that number to increase at the start of the school year.

With the start of the school year, many students will be seeking more than research information. They will also be seeking part-time jobs, Kenny said.

American Computer Resources, a full-service, international distributor of commercial computer equipment, has hired high school and college students and others familiar with Internet research to help keep Study WEB up-to-date.

The weeding process for finding quality information sites to link from the Study WEB has been passed on to web users across the nation. Students find appropriate links for the site and prepare descriptions of the sites for 60 cents a site. More than 50 researchers work from their homes and, Kenny said, and Study WEB needs more. "It's a Herculean effort," she said.

Anyone interested in researching sites could apply by viewing the site's homepage at <http://www.the-acr.com/studyweb/studyweb.html>.

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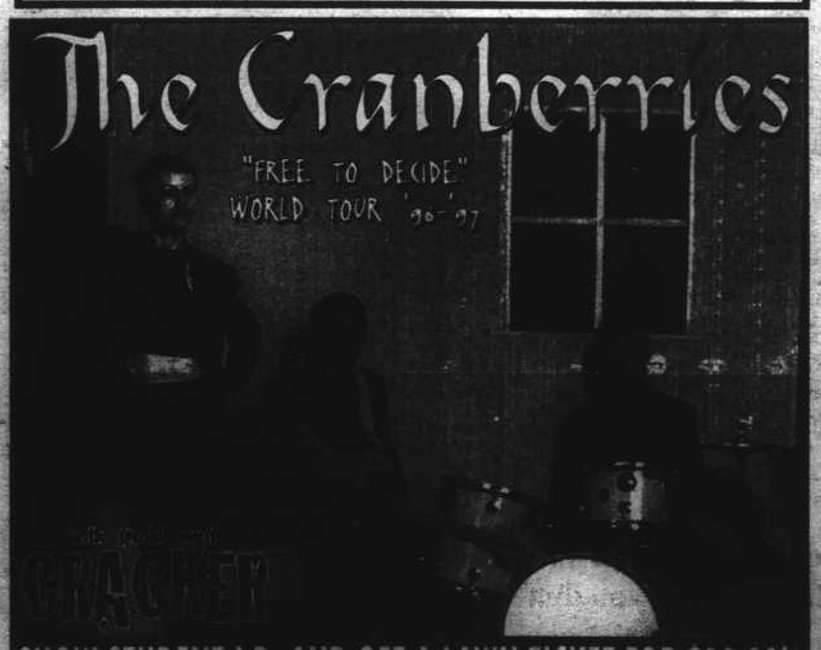
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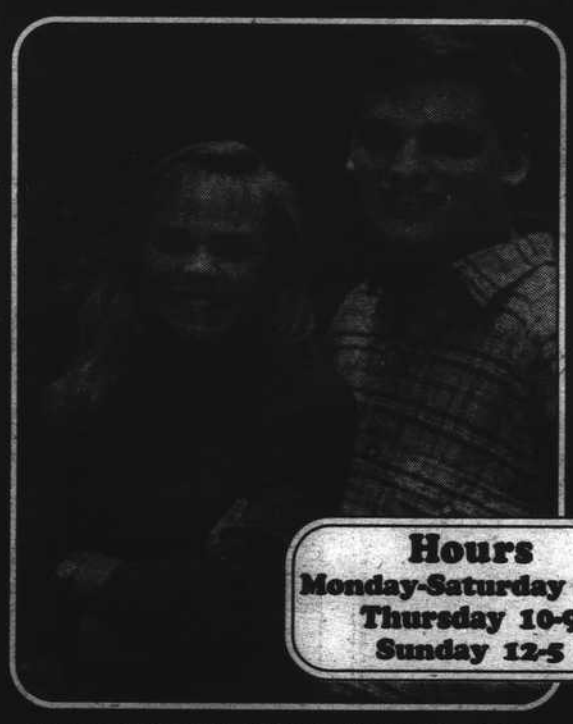
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