



**AMERICAN INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER
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Electronic Journals – all e-journals	IIP Publications – all publications
	<p>Sketchbook USA December 2008 Sketchbook USA lavishly illustrates many aspects of American life. These excerpts depict Americans at work, at play, and engaging in civic activities. View the entire Sketchbook USA and all its many photographs</p>
<p>Ask America Ask America allow foreign audiences to interact with American citizens on wide range of topics using a chat tool over the Internet. U.S. government and private sector subject experts, academics, journalists, and everyday citizens are brought on as guests to do webchats on USINFO. You may visit the Ask America HomePage to see upcoming ones, and read the transcripts of the previous webchats.</p>	<p>Podcasts http://www.america.gov/multimedia/podcasts.html Audio files and transcripts from America.gov</p>
<p>Videos http://www.america.gov/multimedia/video.html?videoid=1498976413 Video files on foreign policy, U.S. politics, American life, democracy, science and health.</p>	<p>Blogs http://blogs.america.gov/ Blogs at America.gov offers readers a place to discuss designated topics with experts from the United States and around the world, and to share their comments and reactions with the broader Internet public.</p>

SIGNIFICANT E-DOCUMENTS

1.5 MILLION HOMESCHOOLED STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES IN 2007. National Center for Education Statistics. December 2008.

The Issue Brief provides estimates of the number and percentage of homeschooled students in the United States in 2007 and compares these estimates to those from 1999 and 2003. In addition, parents' reasons for homeschooling their children in 2007 are described and compared to 2003. Estimates of homeschooling in 2007 are based on data from the Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey (PFI) of the 2007 National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES).

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009030.pdf> [PDF format, 4 pages].

2008 REPORT TO CONGRESS ON CHINA'S WTO COMPLIANCE. U.S. Trade Representative. December 2008.

The report is the statutorily-mandated annual report on China's compliance with its World Trade Organization accession obligations. The report highlights the status of China's ongoing efforts in such areas as intellectual property rights, industrial policy, agriculture, and services.

http://www.ustr.gov/assets/Document_Library/Reports_Publications/2008/asset_upload_file192_15258.pdf [PDF format, 115 pages].

2008 STATE OF AMERICA'S CITIES: ANNUAL OPINION SURVEY OF MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS. National League of Cities. December 22, 2008.

A record number of municipal officials expressed their growing pessimism for the nation's direction, according to a survey. The Survey demonstrates the widespread nature of the current economic crisis is having on cities' bottom lines. It shows that at mid-recession, more than six out of 10 city officials are pessimistic about the nation's future.

The second issue cited most frequently for the new administration is deteriorating transportation infrastructure. Almost seven in ten say the quality of roads, bridges, and airports are problems for their city, with 29% saying the conditions worsened in the past year. The survey also found that two in five city officials responding say the worsening relationship between city and federal governmental bodies is posing a problem for their city; 50% report that city-state relations are posing a problem. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

<http://www.nlc.org/ASSETS/43A4BDCCFDAE4D029D66719CE63F43DA/StateofAmericasCities2008.pdf> [PDF format, 6 pages].

5% OF EU GDP IS SPENT BY GOVERNMENTS ON EDUCATION. Europa.
Fernando Reis. December 2008.

Most of the education expenditure in the European Union (E.U.) comes from public funds, amounting to 5% of GDP. However, students and their families together with other private entities provided 12% of the funds of education institutions in 2005. The level of private funding clearly distinguishes the E.U. from the United States, where 33% of the funding of educational institutions is private. [Note: contains copyrighted material]
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-08-117/EN/KS-SF-08-117-EN.PDF [PDF format, 8 pages].

AASA SURVEY RESULTS: OPPORTUNITY FOR FEDERAL EDUCATION FUNDING. American Association of School Administration. December 18, 2008.

America's public schools have a list of ready-to-go construction and renovation projects that, with an infusion of federal economic stimulus funds, would work to both stimulate a stagnating economy and improve the educational environment for children, according to a national survey. AASA administered the survey to superintendents nationwide in December 2008 to learn how school districts would spend one-time block-grant funds, if they were to become available as part of an economic stimulus package. Almost all respondents, 99 percent, identified budget gaps that they could direct stimulus money to and 97 percent identified short-term projects that could be placed in the bid market in 60-90 days. [Note: contains copyrighted material]
<http://www.aasa.org/files/PDFs/Publications/FINALResults121008Memo.pdf> [PDF format, 3 pages].

ABRUPT CLIMATE CHANGE. U.S. Climate Change Science Program and the Subcommittee on Global Change Research. December 19, 2008.

The United States faces the potential for abrupt climate change in the 21st century that could pose clear risks to society in terms of our ability to adapt. "Abrupt" changes can occur over decades or less, persist for decades more, and cause substantial disruptions to human and natural systems. The report, based on an assessment of published science literature, makes conclusions about the potential for abrupt climate changes from global warming during this century. [Note: contains copyrighted material]
<http://downloads.climate-science.gov/sap/sap3-4/sap3-4-final-report-all.pdf> [PDF format, 477 pages].

ALL AMERICA'S STAGE: GROWTH AND CHALLENGES IN NONPROFIT THEATER. National Endowment for the Arts. December 26, 2008.

Nonprofit theaters in the United States have seen unprecedented expansion across the United States, according to the research. It examines developments in the growth, distribution, and finances of America's nonprofit theater system since 1990. The investigation revealed that National Endowment for the Arts funding is a likely catalyst in drawing sizeable contributions from other sources. Each dollar in NEA grant support is

associated with an additional \$12 from individual donors, \$1.88 from businesses, and \$3.55 from foundations. [Note: contains copyrighted material]
<http://www.nea.gov/research/TheaterBrochure12-08.pdf> [PDF format, 8 pages].

AMERICAN MOBILITY: WHO MOVES? WHO STAYS PUT? WHERE'S HOME?
Pew Research Center. Paul Taylor et al. December 25, 2008.

As a nation, the United States is often portrayed as restless and rootless. Census data, though, indicate that Americans are settling down. Only 13% of Americans changed residences between 2006 and 2007, the smallest share since the government began tracking this trend in the late 1940s. The Pew survey finds that most Americans have moved to a new community at least once in their lives, although a notable number, nearly four-in-ten, have never left the place in which they were born. Asked why they live where they do, movers most often cite the pull of economic opportunity. The stayers most often cite the tug of family and connections. [Note: contains copyrighted material]
<http://pewsocialtrends.org/assets/pdf/Movers-and-Stayers.pdf> [PDF format, 44 pages].

ANNUAL ENERGY OUTLOOK 2009: EARLY RELEASE. Energy Information Administration. December 17, 2008.

The early release report presents updated projections for U.S. energy consumption and production through 2030. For the first time in more than 20 years, the new reference case projects virtually no growth in U.S. oil consumption, reflecting the combined effect of recently enacted CAFE standards, requirements for increased use of renewable fuels, and an assumed rebound in oil prices as the world economy recovers.
http://www.eia.doe.gov/oiaf/aeo/pdf/aeo2009_presentation.pdf [PDF format, 21 pages].
<http://www.eia.doe.gov/oiaf/aeo/pdf/appa.pdf> [PDF format, 41 pages, Tables].

BENCHMARKING FOR SUCCESS: ENSURING U.S. STUDENTS RECEIVE A WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION. International Benchmarking Advisory Group and National Governors Association. Web posted December 22, 2008.

Underscoring the link between a world-class education and a sound U.S. economy, leading education experts issue a report offering sweeping recommendations to internationally benchmark educational performance. The study provides states a roadmap for benchmarking their K-12 education systems against those of top-performing nations. The report explains the urgent need for action and outlines what states and the federal government must do to ensure U.S. students receive a world-class education that provides expanded opportunities for college and career success. [Note: contains copyrighted material]
<http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0812BENCHMARKING.PDF> [PDF format, 52 pages].

CANADIAN PROVINCIAL INVESTMENT CLIMATE: 2008 REPORT. Fraser Institute. December 2008.

The allocation of investment capital, both internationally and domestically, is increasingly acknowledged as a leading contributor to a jurisdiction's economic success or failure. It is, therefore, critical to have objective, empirical measurements that document differences in investment climates. The Provincial Investment Climate Index includes seven components: (1) Corporate income tax (CIT), (2) Fiscal prudence, (3) Personal income tax (PIT), (4) Transportation infrastructure, (5) Corporate capital tax (CCT), (6) Labor market regulation, and (7) Burden of regulation. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.fraserinstitute.org/commerce.web/product_files/ProvincialInvestmentClimate2008.pdf [PDF format, 69 pages].

THE CASE FOR PUBLIC PLAN CHOICE IN NATIONAL HEALTH REFORM: KEY TO COST CONTROL AND QUALITY COVERAGE. Institute for America's Future. Jacob S. Hacker. December 18, 2008.

A health care system that contains costs and drives value must include a good public plan if the broad goals of reform, universal insurance and improved value, are to be achieved. Private insurance and public insurance have distinct strengths and weaknesses, and thus should be encouraged to compete side by side to attract enrollees on a level playing field that rewards plans that deliver better value and health to their enrollees, according to the report. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://institute.ourfuture.org/files/Jacob_Hacker_Public_Plan_Choice.pdf [PDF format, 27 pages].

CENSUS BUREAU PROJECTS U.S. POPULATION OF 305.5 MILLION ON NEW YEAR'S DAY. U.S. Census Bureau. December 29, 2008.

As our nation rings in the New Year, the U.S. Census Bureau projected the Jan. 1, 2009, total U.S. population will be 305,529,237 — up 2,743,429, or 0.9 percent, from New Year's Day 2008. In January 2009, one birth is expected to occur every eight seconds in the United States and one death every 12 seconds. Meanwhile, net international migration is expected to add one person every 36 seconds to the U.S. population in January 2009, resulting in an increase in the total U.S. population of one person every 14 seconds.

<http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/013127.html> [HTML format, various paging].

CISCO 2008 ANNUAL SECURITY REPORT: HIGHLIGHTING GLOBAL SECURITY THREATS AND TRENDS. CISCO. December 15, 2008.

The report warns that Internet-based attacks are becoming increasingly sophisticated and specialized as profit-driven criminals continue to hone their approach to stealing data from businesses, employees and consumers. The 2008 edition identifies the year's top security threats and offers recommendations for protecting networks against attacks that are propagating more rapidly, becoming increasingly difficult to detect, and exploiting technological and human vulnerabilities. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

<http://cisco.com/en/US/prod/collateral/vpndevc/securityreview12-2.pdf> [PDF format, 52 pages].

COMING TO OUR SENSES: EDUCATION AND THE AMERICAN FUTURE. College Board. December 2008.

The board recommends that the United States must take immediate action to reverse its fall from the top ranks of countries with a college-educated workforce. If postsecondary success is not made a national priority, our country's economic and social health will continue to weaken. The report provides recommendations to strengthen our education system across, increase the number of students earning postsecondary degrees or certificates and regain our global competitive edge for the 21st century. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/coming-to-our-senses-college-board-2008.pdf> [PDF format, 51 pages].

COST OF THE WARS IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN, AND OTHER MILITARY OPERATIONS THROUGH 2008 AND BEYOND. Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. Steven M. Kosiak. December 16, 2008.

Steven Kosiak, Vice President for Budget Studies at CSBA offers a comprehensive picture of the direct budgetary costs of US military operations conducted since 2001. The report also discusses the means used to budget for and finance these operations, and includes projections of how much more these operations might cost over the coming decade. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/PubLibrary/R.20081215.Cost_of_the_Wars_i/R.20081215.Cost_of_the_Wars_i.pdf [PDF format, 108 pages].

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS REPORT IN AFGHANISTAN-III. Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. December 2008.

The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) releases its third report on the economic and social rights of Afghans. The report evaluates the progress and challenges faced by the Afghan government in ensuring the social and economic rights of its citizens over the course of the past year and a half, and contain specific recommendations about promoting and protecting human rights in the country.

Most of the inputs are due to numerous interviews with government representatives, the United Nations and civil society in order to have the view of all three sides on the issue. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.aihrc.org.af/2008_Dec/Ecn_soc/Eng_Eco_Soc_rep.pdf [PDF format, 70 pages].

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS HITS HOME: THE UNFOLDING INCREASE IN CHILD AND YOUTH HOMELESSNESS. First Focus. December 19, 2008.

The study finds that school districts across the country have experienced a significant spike in the number of homeless students. The report centers around a voluntary survey conducted during the fall of 2008 by the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth and First Focus. [Note: contains copyrighted material] <http://www.firstfocus.net/Download/TheEconomicCrisisHitsHome.pdf> [PDF format, 22 pages].

ENDANGERED AND THREATENED WILDLIFE AND PLANTS. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior. December 10, 2008.

The notice is a yearly appraisal of the current status of plants and animals that are candidates for protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Two species have been removed from candidate status, one species has been added, and 11 have a change in priority from the last review in December 2007. There are now 251 species recognized by the Service as candidates for ESA protection.

<http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/pdf/E8-28986.pdf> [PDF format, 70 pages].

FAITH ON THE HILL: THE RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS OF MEMBERS OF CONGRESS. Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. December 19, 2008.

Members of Congress are often accused of being out of touch with average citizens, but an examination of the religious affiliations of U.S. senators and representatives shows that, on one very basic level, Congress looks much like the rest of the country. Although a majority of the members of the new, 111th Congress, which will be sworn in on Jan. 6, are Protestants, Congress, like the nation as a whole, is much more religiously diverse than it was 50 years ago. Religious Landscape Survey of over 35,000 American adults finds that some smaller religious groups, notably Catholics, Jews and Mormons, are better represented in Congress than they are in the population as a whole. However, certain other smaller religious groups, including Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus, still are somewhat underrepresented in Congress relative to their share of the U.S. population. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

<http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=379> [HTML format, various paging].

FIRST CONTACT IN THE GREATER MEKONG: NEW SPECIES DISCOVERIES.

World Wildlife Fund. December 15, 2008.

A rat thought extinct for 11 million years and a hot-pink, cyanide-producing dragon millipede are among a thousand new species discovered in the Greater Mekong Region of Southeast Asia in the last decade, according to the report. It reports that 1068 species were discovered or newly identified by science between 1997 and 2007, which averages two new species a week. This includes the world's largest huntsman spider, with a foot-long leg span and the Annamite Striped Rabbit, one of several new mammal species found here. New mammal discoveries are a rarity in modern science. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

<http://www.worldwildlife.org/who/media/press/2008/WWFBinaryitem10994.pdf> [PDF format, 40 pages].

FOR SIXTH STRAIGHT YEAR, IRAQ DEADLIEST NATION FOR NATION FOR PRESS. Committee to Protect Journalists. December 19, 2008.

For the sixth consecutive year, Iraq was the deadliest country in the world for the press, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists' end-of-year analysis. The 11 deaths recorded in Iraq in 2008, while a sharp drop from prior years, remained among the highest annual tolls in CPJ history. Worldwide, CPJ found that 41 journalists were killed in direct connection to their work in 2008, down from 65 last year. It is investigating another 22 deaths to determine whether they were work-related. The decline in the worldwide death toll was largely attributable to Iraq, where deaths dropped from a record 32 in both 2007 and 2006. The decline in media deaths is consistent with an overall improvement in security conditions in Iraq, journalists told CPJ. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

<http://cpj.org/reports/2008/12/for-sixth-straight-year-iraq-deadliest-nation-for.php>
[HTML format, various paging].

GENEROSITY IN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES: THE 2008 GENEROSITY INDEX. Fraser Institute. December 2008.

Interest in the charitable sector is heightened each year as the holiday season approaches. The charitable sector depends on the generosity of thousands of ordinary citizens who donate privately to charities to enhance the quality of life in their communities and beyond. The Fraser Institute's annual Generosity Index measures this private monetary generosity using readily available data on the extent and depth of charitable donations, as recorded on personal income tax returns in Canada and the United States. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.fraserinstitute.org/commerce.web/product_files/Generosity_Index_2008.pdf
[PDF format, 10 pages].

GLOBAL TEMPERATURE FOR NOVEMBER FOURTH WARMEST ON RECORD. National Climatic Data Center, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. December 16, 2008.

The year 2008 is on track to be one of the 10 warmest years on record for the globe, based on the combined average of worldwide land and ocean surface temperatures, according to a preliminary analysis. For November alone, the month is fourth warmest all-time globally, for the combined land and ocean surface temperature. The early assessment is based on records dating back to 1880.

http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2008/20081216_climatestats.html [HTML format, various paging].

HAMAS AND ISRAEL: CONFLICTING STRATEGIES OF GROUP-BASED POLITICS. Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College. Sherifa Zuhur. December 2008.

Efforts to separate HAMAS from its popular support and network of social and charitable organizations have not been effective in destroying the organization, nor in eradicating the will to resist among a fairly large segment of the Palestinian population. According to the author, it is important to consider this Islamist movement in the context of a region-wide phenomenon of similar movements with local goals, which can be persuaded to relinquish violence or which could become more violent. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict bears similarities to a long-standing civil conflict, even as it has sparked inter-Palestinian hostilities in its most recent phase.

<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/files/PUB894.pdf> [PDF format, 107 pages].

HIGHLIGHTS FROM TIMSS 2007: MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE ACHIEVEMENT OF U.S. FOURTH- AND EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT. National Center for Education Statistics. December 2008.

The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2007 is the fourth administration of this international comparison since the 1995 initial administration. TIMSS is used to compare over time the mathematics and science knowledge and skills of fourth- and eighth-graders. TIMSS is designed to align broadly with mathematics and science curricula in the participating countries. The results, therefore, suggest the degree to which students have learned mathematics and science concepts and skills likely to have been taught in school. The focus of the report is on the performance of U.S. students relative to their peers in other countries in 2007, and on changes in mathematics and science achievement since 1995. For a number of participating countries, changes in achievement can be documented over the last 12 years, from 1995 to 2007. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009001.pdf> [PDF format, 112 pages].

HOW HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS USE TIME: A VISUAL ESSAY. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. Web posted December 2008.

High school students have many demands on their time, and how they choose to spend that time on any given day depends on a variety of factors, such as the age and the sex of the student. The data show how much time per day, on average, high school students devote to leisure activities, household activities, work, and homework. It also reveals differences in students' use of time between weekdays and weekend days.

<http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2008/11/art4full.pdf> [PDF format, 11 pages].

HUNGER AND HOMELESSNESS SURVEY. United States Conference of Mayors. December 2008.

Hunger and homelessness are both on the rise according to the report. For more than 22 years, the Conference of Mayors has documented the magnitude of the issues of hunger and homelessness in our nation's cities. The report provides an analysis of the scale of the problem in twenty-five of America's major cities and the efforts these cities are making

to address the issue. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.usmayors.org/pressreleases/documents/hungerhomelessnessreport_121208.pdf [PDF format, 85 pages].

IMPORTING POLLUTION: COALS'S THREAT TO CLIMATE POLICY IN THE U.S. NORTHEAST. Union of Concerned Scientists. December 2008.

The Northeast's cap-and-trade system for global warming pollution will be compromised unless utilities are prevented from importing additional coal-fired electricity, according to the report. The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), which applies to power plants in 10 Northeastern states, does not preclude the utilities that supply electricity to Northeast homes and businesses from buying more electricity from coal-fired power plants outside the region. That could increase the carbon dioxide emissions from those plants outside the region, offsetting emissions reductions under RGGI. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.ucsusa.org/assets/documents/clean_energy/importing-pollution_report.pdf [PDF format, 44 pages].

INTERNATIONAL LABOR MIGRATION: A RESPONSIBLE ROLE FOR BUSINESS. Business for Social Responsibility. Web posted December 20, 2008.

With more than 90 million people around the world migrating for work every year, labor migrants are often subject to human rights violations such as unsafe work conditions, unfair wages, and cramped and unhygienic living situations. And because these migrant workers often lack knowledge about local resources and legal processes, they don't usually seek help. Current regulations in emerging economies fail to provide adequate protection for foreign contract workers. As a result, migrant workers have become akin to other sourced commodities, with cost considerations often overshadowing rights protections. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.bsr.org/reports/BSR_LaborMigrationRoleforBusiness.pdf [PDF format, 68 pages].

JELLYFISH GONE WILD! National Science Foundation. December 12, 2008.

Massive swarms of stinging jellyfish and jellyfish-like animals are transforming many world-class fisheries and tourist destinations into veritable jellytoriums that are intermittently jammed with pulsating, gelatinous creatures. Areas that are currently particularly hard-hit by these squishy animals include Hawaii, the Gulf of Mexico, the east coast of the U.S., the Bering Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, Australia, the Black Sea and other European seas, the Sea of Japan, the North Sea and Namibia. Massive jellyfish swarms—some of which cover hundreds of square miles—have caused injuries and even occasional deaths to water enthusiasts, and have caused serious damage to fisheries, fish farms, marine mines, desalination plants, ships and nuclear power plants.

http://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/jellyfish/index.jsp [HTML format with links to texts and multi-media reports].

KEY ISSUES IN ANALYZING MAJOR HEALTH INSURANCE PROPOSALS.
Congressional Budget Office. December 2008.

The proposals are built upon Congressional Budget Office's (CBO) previous analytical work on health insurance and health care financing issues and are intended to assist the Congress as it contemplates possible changes, both large and small, to federal health programs and the nation's health insurance and health care systems.

<http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/99xx/doc9924/12-18-KeyIssues.pdf> [PDF format, 196 pages].

LATINO WORKERS IN THE ONGOING RECESSION: 2007 TO 2008. Pew Hispanic Center. Rakesh Kochhar. December 15, 2008.

A small but significant decline has occurred during the current recession in the share of Latino immigrants active in the U.S. labor force, according to the Center report. In a year when jobs have become scarce for everyone, the proportion of working-age Latino immigrants participating in the labor force has fallen, at least through the third quarter of 2008, while the proportion of all non-Hispanics as well as of native-born Hispanics has held steady. Jobs attract many Hispanic immigrants to the United States, and their labor force participation rate, the proportion of the working-age population that is either working or actively seeking work, is typically higher than the rate in the native-born population. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

<http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/99.pdf> [PDF format, 31 pages].

LAUNCHING THE 21ST CENTURY AMERICAN AEROSPACE WORKFORCE.
Aerospace Industries Association. December 2008.

The report promotes the need to convince more students to study math and science and makes proposals to senior policy makers to improve those education disciplines. It documents steps the industry is taking to head off a potential workforce crisis and makes nine policy recommendations to government partners. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.aia-aerospace.org/pdf/report_workforce_1208.pdf [PDF format, 44 pages].

LIVING CONDITIONS IN EUROPE: DATA 2003-06. Eurostat. December 17, 2008.

The data provides a comprehensive picture of the current living conditions in the Member States and the Candidate Countries of the European Union. Different areas of the social field are described by a selection of indicators which are presented in tables and graphs and accompanied by a short commentary. Data are drawn from sources available in Eurostat, such as the European Union Labour Force Survey or SILC project (European community Statistics on Income and Living Conditions). [Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-DZ-08-001/EN/KS-DZ-08-001-EN.PDF [PDF format, 176 pages].

THE LONG WAIT FOR PROGRESS: WOMEN AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL EQUALITY. Century Foundation. Beverly Goldberg. December 21, 2008.

The report shows that despite some progress, America is a nation in which neither minorities nor women have yet achieved anything approaching economic or social equality. The report analyzes the substantial gap in wages between men and women, and then measures that gap in the context of women's educational achievements and the continuing discrimination against women in the workplace, with attention to the impact of the issues of health and child care. [Note: contains copyrighted material]
http://www.tcf.org/publications/economicsinequality/longwait_brief.pdf [PDF format, 19 pages].

MEDIA RE:PUBLIC: NEWS AND INFORMATION AS DIGITAL MEDIA COME OF AGE. Berkman Center for Internet & Society, Harvard University. Web posted December 18, 2008.

This is a series of papers exploring the potential and the challenges of the emerging networked digital media environment.[Note: contains copyrighted material]
<http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/pubrelease/mediarepublic/downloads.html> [HTML format with links to PDF files].
http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.law.harvard.edu/files/Overview_MR.pdf
Overview Paper. [PDF format, 52 pages].

NATIONAL DRUG THREAT ASSESSMENT: 2009. National Drug Intelligence Center, U.S. Department of Justice. December 16, 2008.

The assessment provides a strategic overview and predictive outlook of drug trafficking and abuse trends within the United States. The assessment identifies the primary drug threats to the nation, tracks drug availability throughout the country, and analyzes trafficking and distribution patterns of illicit drugs within the United States. It evaluates the threat posed by illegal drugs by examining availability, production and cultivation, transportation, distribution, and demand.
<http://www.usdoj.gov/ndic/pubs31/31379/31379p.pdf> [PDF format, 94 pages].

OECD INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY OUTLOOK 2008. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. December 23, 2008.

The economic downturn will hit the Internet economy hard in 2009, according to the OECD estimates. The Outlook says that the IT industry is likely to have grown by 4% at most in 2008 compared to the previous year. But with the outlook for the global economy worsening and business and consumer confidence plummeting, growth will remain flat or decline in 2009. Some sectors are expected to weather the storm better than others. Spending on software and IT services, including outsourcing, by governments and business is likely to continue. However, major corporate customers in sectors hard hit by the downturn, such as banking, insurance and retail, are cutting back spending plans in 2009. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

<http://browse.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/pdfs/browseit/9308041E.PDF> [PDF format, 350 pages].

OVER THE LIMIT: EATING TOO MUCH HIGH-MERCURY FISH. Mercury Policy Project, Oceana. Edward Groth. Web posted December 28, 2008.

Real people have been sickened by mercury in fish according to the report, demonstrating the importance of strong FDA advice about mercury in fish. It shares stories like those of Dan Deeter, Will Smith and Wendy Moro, who each ate enough store-bought fish to suffer mercury's effects, according to their physicians. From New Jersey to Wisconsin to California, these stories show that seafood contamination is a very real problem that should not be ignored. [Note: contains copyrighted material]
<http://www.oceana.org/fileadmin/oceana/uploads/mercury/reports/OvertheLimit.pdf> [PDF format, 54 pages].

PANEL DISCUSSES EMERGING MEDIAL MODEL FOR INTERNATIONAL NEWS COVERAGE. [Broadcasting Board of Governors]. December 10, 2008.

As mainstream media retrenches from international news coverage, a new breed of citizen journalist is stepping in to fill parts of the void. Armed with cell phones, text messages, small digital cameras and blogs, citizen journalists can broadcast information from places the mainstream media simply isn't any more. These new voices present a variety of challenges and opportunities to the free flow of information. [Note: contains copyrighted material]
<http://www.bbg.gov/pressroom/pressreleases-article.cfm?articleID=333> [HTML format, various paging].

PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM: WHAT'S IN IT FOR CHILDREN AND TEACHERS. Albert Shanker Institute. December 16, 2008.

The Albert Shanker Institute suggests that early, age-appropriate instruction in language, literacy, mathematics and science can have significant, long-lasting effects on preschool children's social and cognitive skills. While 43 states and the District of Columbia have adopted early childhood standards designed to prepare children to take on the academic requirements of the elementary grades, these standards are of varying quality, often underestimate what young children are capable of absorbing, and are not always adapted to the unique ways in which young children learn best. [Note: contains copyrighted material]
<http://www.shankerinstitute.org/Downloads/Early%20Childhood%2012-11-08.pdf> [PDF format, 32 pages].

PROSPECTS FOR THE U.S. AND THE WORLD: A CRISIS THAT CONVENTIONAL REMEDIES CANNOT RESOLVE. Levy Economics Institute of Bard College. Wynne Godley et al. December 2008.

The economic recovery plans currently under consideration by the United States and many other countries seem to be concentrated on the possibility of using expansionary fiscal and monetary policies alone. The Levy Institute's Macro-Modeling Team argues that, however well coordinated, this approach will not be sufficient; what's required, they say, is a worldwide recovery of output, combined with sustainable balances in international trade. [Note: contains copyrighted material]
http://www.levy.org/pubs/sa_dec_08.pdf [PDF format, 11 pages].

RANKINGS AND ESTIMATES: RANKINGS OF THE STATES 2008 AND ESTIMATES OF SCHOOL STATISTICS 2009. National Education Association. December 2008.

Teachers across the nation are continuing to lose spending power for themselves and their families as inflation continued to outpace teacher salaries last year. Over the decade from 1997-98 to 2007-08, in constant dollars, average salaries for public schoolteachers declined 1 percent while inflation increased 31.4 percent. According to the report, the average one-year increase in public schoolteacher salaries was 3.1 percent, while inflation increased 4.3 percent. [Note: contains copyrighted material]
<http://www.nea.org/edstats/images/rankings08.pdf> [PDF format, 130 pages].

THE RECENT SURGE IN HOMICIDES INVOLVING YOUNG BLACK MALES AND GUNS: TIME TO REINVEST IN PREVENTION AND CRIME CONTROL. Northeastern University. December 2008.

The report shows, despite the small fluctuations in overall homicide rates, there has been a dramatic surge in homicides involving young black males with guns. The findings paint a very different picture concerning recent trends in murder from the apparent tranquility suggested by overall statistics released by the FBI. The authors find that between 2002 and 2007, the number of homicides involving black male juveniles as victims grew by 31% and, as perpetrators, by 43%. The numbers escalate even more within the same group when guns were used as weapons, with increases of 54% for victims and 47% for perpetrators. [Note: contains copyrighted material]
<http://www.jfox.neu.edu/Documents/Fox%20Swatt%20Homicide%20Report%20Dec%2029%202008.pdf> [PDF format, 25 pages].

REDUCING DRUG USE IN AMERICA. Office of National Drug Control Policy. December 2008.

The new data demonstrates significant success reducing drug availability and use. The data, which cover a broad spectrum of key indicators, offer strong evidence of the effectiveness of a counter drug strategy which balances reducing drug availability along with drug demand. The study, which surveys 8th, 10th, and 12th graders nationwide, shows that in 2008, illicit drug use among youth continued to decline from 2001, with a 25 percent reduction in overall youth drug use over the past seven years. This reduction equates to approximately 900,000 fewer young people using drugs today, compared to 2001.

http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/news/press08/MTF2008_factsheet.pdf [PDF format, 2 pages].

REFORMING THE LABOUR MARKET IN JAPAN TO COPE WITH INCREASING DUALISM AND POPULATION AGEING. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Randall S. Jones. December 2008.

The proportion of non-regular workers has risen to one-third of total employment. While non-regular employment provides flexibility and cost reductions for firms, it also creates equity and efficiency concerns. A comprehensive approach that includes relaxing the high degree of employment protection for regular workers and expanding the coverage of non-regular workers by the social security system would help to reverse dualism, according to the report. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

[http://www.oalis.oecd.org/oalis/2008doc.nsf/LinkTo/NT00007942/\\$FILE/JT03256610.PDF](http://www.oalis.oecd.org/oalis/2008doc.nsf/LinkTo/NT00007942/$FILE/JT03256610.PDF) [PDF format, 26 pages].

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT IN AFGHANISTAN. United Nations Security Council. Web posted December 23, 2008.

The report focuses on grave violations perpetrated against children in Afghanistan and identifies parties to the conflict, both State and non-State actors, who commit grave abuses against children. In particular, the report highlights the fact that children have been recruited and utilized by State and non-State armed groups and that non-State armed groups such as the Taliban continue to train and use children as suicide bombers. The report sheds light on the detention of children accused of association with armed groups by the Government of Afghanistan, and international military forces in violation of Afghan law and international best practice. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2008/695 [PDF format, 18 pages].

REPORT TO CONGRESS ON THE DEMONSTRATION OF THE INTERIM STORAGE OF SPENT NUCLEAR FUEL FROM DECOMMISSIONED NUCLEAR POWER REACTOR SITES. Department of Energy. December 2008.

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)'s report discusses the status of the commercial spent nuclear fuel (SNF) inventory in the United States, at both decommissioned and operating commercial nuclear power reactor sites. It also summarizes the contractual arrangement the Government and utilities have under the Standard Contract for Disposal of Spent Nuclear Fuel and/or High-Level Radioactive Waste (10 CFR Part 961), related litigation, and the financial liabilities resulting from the Department's delay in performance under these contracts. Further, the report identifies legislative changes and actions that would be necessary for the Department to develop an interim storage facility and demonstration program for commercial SNF from the decommissioned reactor sites. http://www.ocrwm.doe.gov/info_library/program_docs/ES_Interim_Storage_Report_120108.pdf [PDF format, 26 pages].

REVIEW OF FEDERAL STRATEGY FOR NANOTECHNOLOGY-RELATED ENVIRONMENTAL, HEALTH, AND SAFETY RESEARCH. National Research Council. December 10, 2008.

The study finds serious weaknesses in the government's plan for research on the potential health and environmental risks posed by nanomaterials, which are increasingly being used in consumer goods and industry. An effective national plan for identifying and managing potential risks is essential to the successful development and public acceptance of nanotechnology-enabled products, the committee emphasizes. A new national strategic plan is needed that goes beyond federal research to incorporate research from academia, industry, consumer and environmental groups, and other stakeholders, the committee concludes. [Note: contains copyrighted material]
http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12559#toc [HTML format with links to full text].

RISING FOOD PRICES TAKE A BITE OUT OF FOOD STAMP BENEFITS. U.S. Department of Agriculture. December 2008.

The Food Stamp Program is designed to provide low-income families with increased food purchasing power to obtain a nutritionally adequate diet. As in most other Federal Government assistance programs, benefits are adjusted in response to rising prices, in this case, rising food prices. In FY 2008, the amount grew from almost \$8 in October 2007 to \$34 in July 2008 and to \$38 in September 2008. In an average month, food stamp households faced shortfalls of over \$2 in FY 2003, \$12 in FY 2007, and \$22 in FY 2008. [Note: contains copyrighted material]
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EIB41/EIB41.pdf> [PDF format, 21 pages].

RISK INTELLIGENCE IN EMERGING MARKETS: EXECUTIVE WORKSHOP. Deloitte and Economist Intelligence Unit. Web posted December 27, 2008.

Highlights of the workshop, held in Paris in November 2008, were a presentation that included an interactive workshop on how to create a risk intelligence organization in today's challenging Emerging Markets and the EIU offering of 10 key points about the current financial climate and its impact on Emerging Markets' economies. Some of the analysis shows China's impact on Emerging Markets and uncovering hotspots and vulnerabilities, and a case study from Christian Wiest, who serves as executive vice president in the International Operation Division at Schneider Electric. [Note: contains copyrighted material]
http://www.deloitte.com/dtt/cda/doc/content/dtt_erm_emea.pdf [PDF format, 28 pages].

SOURCE BOOK: GREEN STIMULUS PROPOSALS. U.S. Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources. December 20, 2008.

'Green' Stimulus Proposals is a compilation of green jobs ideas for the next economic recovery bill. The proposals come from a range of sources, including statements by witnesses testifying at our Dec. 10 full committee hearing regarding investments in clean

energy and natural resources projects/programs to create green jobs and to stimulate the economy.

http://energy.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=IssueItems.View&IssueItem_ID=ce27babd-d579-40ce-91e9-7b41510d97d3 [HTML format, with links to PDF files].

SRI LANKA: TRAPPED AND MISTREATED. Human Rights Watch. December 15, 2008.

Sri Lanka's separatist Tamil Tigers are subjecting ethnic Tamils in their northern stronghold, the Vanni, to forced recruitment, abusive forced labor, and restrictions on movement that place their lives at risk, the study shows. It details how the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which have been fighting for an independent Tamil state for 25 years, are brutally abusing the Tamil population in areas under their control. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/lte1208webwcover.pdf> [PDF format, 23 pages].

STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF THE UNITED STATES: 2009. U.S. Census Bureau. December 17, 2008.

The U.S. Census Bureau released the new Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2009. First published in 1878, "Uncle Sam's Almanac" is a summary of statistics on a wide range of important topics, from A (aquaculture) to Z (zinc production). The 128th edition contains more than 1,400 tables of social, political and economic facts about our nation and the world. Among topics covered in the 49 new tables in this edition are the religious composition of our nation's population, osteopathic physicians, online news consumption, expenditures for wildlife-related recreation and women in parliaments around the globe.

http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/statab2006_2009.html [HTML format, with PDF links].

UNBEARABLE BURDEN?: LIVING AND PAYING STUDENT LOANS AS A FIRST-YEAR TEACHER. Cato Institute. Neal McCluskey. December 15, 2008.

Some policymakers believe that the U.S. could be facing a situation in which recent college graduates cannot afford to go into teaching because they will be unable to repay their college debts. The author, Neal McCluskey, assesses first year teachers' ability to pay back college loans given their actual salaries and expenses, and concludes that there is no need for policymakers to intervene in either teacher pay or student aid to assure that college graduates can afford to become public school teachers. [Note: contains copyrighted material]

<http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/PA629.pdf> [PDF format, 24 pages].

U.S. SENATE MINORITY REPORT: MORE THAN 650 INTERNATIONAL SCIENTISTS DISSENT OVER MAN-MADE GLOBAL WARMING CLAIMS

SCIENTISTS CONTINUE TO DEBUNK “CONSENSUS” IN 2008. U.S. Senate Committee on Environment & Public Works. December 11, 2008.

Over 650 dissenting scientists from around the globe challenged man-made global warming claims made by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and former Vice President Al Gore. The report features the skeptical voices of over 650 prominent international scientists, including many current and former UN IPCC scientists, who have now turned against the UN IPCC. The over 650 dissenting scientists are more than 12 times the number of UN scientists (52) who authored the media-hyped IPCC 2007 Summary for Policymakers. The chorus of skeptical scientific voices grow louder in 2008 as a steady stream of peer-reviewed studies, analyses, real world data and inconvenient developments challenged the UN and former Vice President Al Gore’s claims that the “science is settled” and there is a “consensus.”

http://epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore_id=37283205-c4eb-4523-b1d3-c6e8faf14e84 [PDF format, 231 pages].

THE STATE OF AMERICA’S CHILDREN 2008. Children’s Defense Fund. Web posted December 25, 2008.

The report is a statistical compendium of key child data showing epidemic numbers of children at risk: the number of poor children has increased nearly 500,000 to 13.3 million, with 5.8 million of them living in extreme poverty, and nearly 9 million children lack health coverage with both numbers likely to increase during the recession. The number of children and teens killed by firearms also increased after years of decline.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

<http://www.childrensdefense.org/site/DocServer/state-of-americas-children-2008-report.pdf?docID=9061> [PDF format, 80 pages].

WHEN GIANTS FALL. Economic Policy Institute. Robert E. Scott. December 2008.

If bankruptcy shuttered one or more U.S. auto-makers, the effect would be the loss of up to 3.3 million jobs in the U.S. within the next year, according to a study. Michigan alone could lose over 400,000 jobs, and stands to be the hardest hit state both in the number of jobs lost and the share of total state employment (8.9%) lost. The report lists possible job losses in each state and the District of Columbia. When the wages from those auto sector jobs dry up, an additional 576,700 to 2.1 million “re-spending” jobs would be lost. These are jobs that would have been supported by the spending of auto and related workers. Tax losses and increased government payments would exceed \$150 billion in the first three years following bankruptcy of all three domestic auto companies. Without cars to export, the U.S. trade deficit would rise by \$109.3 billion, according to the author. [Note:

contains copyrighted material]

<http://www.epi.org/briefingpapers/227/bp227.pdf> [PDF format, 14 pages].

WORKING ASSETS: REINVESTING IN NATIONAL PARKS TO CREATE JOBS AND PROTECT AMERICA’S HERITAGE. National Parks Conservation Association. December 21, 2008.

The new report highlights several of the more than \$2.5 billion worth of job-creating projects in national parks. It encourages Congress and the incoming Obama Administration to include national parks in economic recovery legislation to create jobs and restore our national treasures. [Note: contains copyrighted material]
http://www.npca.org/media_center/pdf/stimulus_report-dec_16.pdf [PDF format, 12 pages].

THE WORLD CAN'T WAIT: MORE FUNDING NEEDED FOR RESEARCH ON NEGLECTED INFECTIOUS DISEASES. Families USA. December 26, 2008.

The report reveals that the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which accounts for about 78 percent of the nation's public funding for medical research, spent less than 1 percent of its fiscal year 2007 budget on diseases that are prevalent among more than a quarter of the world's population. The eight diseases, African sleeping sickness, Buruli ulcer, Chagas disease, cholera, dengue, leishmaniasis, malaria, and tuberculosis, in the report are classified by the scientific community as "neglected infectious diseases" because of their high prevalence in impoverished and marginalized populations in the developing world and because of the limited funds allocated for research on them. [Note: contains copyrighted material]
<http://www.familiesusa.org/assets/pdfs/global-health/the-world-cant-wait.pdf> [PDF format, 68 pages].

ARTICLES

DEMOCRACY AND GLOBAL ISSUES

Barnes, James A. OBAMA'S FIRST YEAR (National Journal, December 13, 2008)

National Journal surveyed 129 members of Congress and 232 political insiders (party chairmen, political strategists, pollsters, lobbyists, fundraisers and media consultants) to get some insight on what they expect the first year of the Obama administration to be like. Overall, the findings "suggest that 2009 will be a year of opportunity for Obama, provided that he and his Democratic allies remain focused on the overarching task of righting the economy," the author writes. While Obama campaigned on a theme of change, most insiders do not expect there to be a major transformative change in Washington. Some of those surveyed note that the economic crisis could provide an opportunity for the next president. "A crisis gives you the opportunity ... to energize [the public]," said Ken Duberstein, President Reagan's chief of staff. The author suggests that Obama may have more opportunity for success with his policy proposals by linking them to economic goals. Available online at
http://www.nationaljournal.com/njmagazine/cs_20081213_2134.php

Hines, Andy GLOBAL TRENDS IN CULTURE, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND VALUES (Futurist, vol. 42, no. 5, September/October 2008, pp. 18-23)

The author, director of Custom Projects at Social Technologies in Washington, DC, notes that just a decade or so ago, many were concerned about a homogenized global culture dominated by the U.S. and its powerful entertainment industry. However, local cultures around the world have been more robust than originally thought. The author notes that people are quite capable of taking the aspects of global culture they like, ignoring the rest, and retaining what they are attached to in their native cultures; this adaptability serves as a long-term driver of change. The author explores ten trends whose influence he believes will grow in the coming decades, including cultural multipolarity; new electronic media, particularly the Internet and mobile phones; the spread of new ideas; electrification; mobility; ethical consumption; women's rights; social freedom; and transparency. Currently available online at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/7597839/Global-Trends-in-Culture-Infrastructure-and-Values-by-Andy-Hines>

Lee, Hsin-Yin CULTURE CONUNDRUM: NEWS OUTLETS STRUGGLE TO FIND A PLACE FOR INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL STORIES (Global Journalist, Vol. 14, no. 3, Fall 2008, pp. 42-45)

Reporting on cultural events is a tough sell for overseas media outlets unless the topic directly relates to a bilateral relationship or a "hard news" interest, such as Japanese reporters in Washington covering the annual Cherry Blossom festival or American reporters writing about Middle Eastern culture due to some connection with the war on terror. But cultural reporting is important as a means of understanding "how people in other countries work, think, dream and worry," and language barriers and other obstacles should be overcome in order to improve this aspect of two-way communication offered by journalism. In doing so, universal themes and truths can be discovered and encouraged which would increase mutual understanding. Currently available online at http://www.globaljournalist.org/content/emprint/2008_fall.pdf

Nielsen, Peter E. TRIPLE HELIX: DESIGNING A NEW MOLECULE OF LIFE (Scientific American, December 2008)

Peptide nucleic acid, a synthetic hybrid of protein and DNA, could form the basis of a new class of drugs -- and of artificial life unlike anything found in nature. A synthetic molecule called peptide nucleic acid (PNA) combines the information-storage properties of DNA with the chemical stability of a protein-like backbone. Drugs based on PNA would achieve therapeutic effects by binding to specific base sequences of DNA or RNA, repressing or promoting the corresponding gene. Some researchers working to construct artificial life forms out of chemical mixtures are also considering PNA a useful ingredient for their designs. PNA-like molecules may have served as primordial genetic material at the origin of life. Currently available online at <http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?id=triple-helix-designing-a-new-molecule>

Patton, Zach FREE ON FRIDAY (Governing, November 2008)

Most Americans work five-day work weeks, eight hours a day. But in an effort to save operating costs and counter high gas prices, many local governments are adopting four-day work weeks, with employees working ten-hour days. In August, Utah became the first state to implement what is known as a "4/10" schedule. The state has decided to try the schedule for a year, and many state and local governments are watching to see how this schedule works. Already the state has saved significant energy costs and has seen a decline in absenteeism. A survey found that 80 percent of the state's employees like the new schedule -- and being able to offer flexible work schedules can be a powerful recruitment tool. "The governments that have moved to 4/10s are learning that adopting these schedules is complex -- there are unanticipated challenges as well as some unforeseen benefits," the author writes. What works for one state may not work for another, Patton writes -- "don't bet on too many other states or cities following with mandatory 4/10s immediately." Currently available online at <http://www.governing.com/articles/0812week.htm>

Raffaele, Paul THE PYGMIES' PLIGHT (Smithsonian, Vol. 39, no. 9, December 2008, pp. 70-77)

Vague accounts of the diminutive Pygmies of the African jungles can be found in the works of Homer, but not until the mid-19th century was their existence verified to the outside world. Today, the Pygmies' existence, along with that of African wildlife, is threatened by encroachment; Pygmies are also subject to prejudice and violence from Bantus, as taller Africans are known. The author notes that the Pygmies are the largest group of hunter-gatherers left on Earth, but their traditional ways are being abandoned as the equatorial lands they have inhabited for thousands of years are lost to them by the declaration of national preserves and the activities of logging companies. A nongovernmental organization in Uganda is working to protect the interest of the Batwa, the largest Pygmy tribe with some 80,000 members -- but its representative tells the author that the only way for their people to survive is to adopt the ways of the dominant Bantu. Currently available online at <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/people-places/34347839.html>

Rosen, Jeffrey GOOGLE'S GATEKEEPERS (New York Times Magazine, November 30, 2008)

The author, a law professor at George Washington University, notes that even though the Web might seem like a free-speech panacea, there is less focus on how the Internet is actually regulated, and by whom. As more and more speech migrates online, the ultimate power to decide who has an opportunity to be heard, and what people may say, lies increasingly with Internet service providers, search engines, and other Internet companies like Google. With control of two-thirds of the world's Internet searches, as well as ownership of YouTube, Google has enormous influence over who can find an audience on the Web; it has adopted a decision-making process about what controversial user-generated content stays up or comes down on YouTube and other applications owned by Google. Google's increasing role in policing content on its applications is also working at cross-purposes with many national governments, which are also blocking access to YouTube, such as recent incidents in Thailand and Turkey. Currently available online at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/30/magazine/30google-t.html?_r=1

Sanchez, Yoani LOST IN CYBERSPACE: IS THERE A WAY OUT? (Global Journalist, vol. 14, no. 2, Summer 2008, pp. 3-4)

Sanchez, a 'Generation Y' Cuban journalist who blogs from Havana, says despite that the limited availability of Internet access in the country, the Web is helping to spur an end to years of public silence about Cuba's problems and unfulfilled promises. She relates how her posts are "marked by some emotional outbursts that serious newspapers would never publish," and how change, rather than coming from the top, is being "loosened" from the inside. She concludes that the homogeneity and sloganeering of the official press and the Cuban state's monopoly on information is currently being lost "once and for all." Currently available online at http://www.globaljournalist.org/content/emprint/2008_summer.pdf

Schmidle, Nicholas FAITH & ECSTASY (Smithsonian, Vol. 39, no. 9, December 2008, pp. 36-47)

Most Western media coverage of Islam in recent years has focused on fundamentalists, their strict beliefs, and their link to terrorism. But less attention has been paid to Sufism, which represents the mystical side of Islam -- a personal experience with Allah, instead of the doctrinal approach of fundamentalists like the Taliban. Sufis say that attempting to define Sufism is like defining love, but the author writes that its practitioners consider Islam a religious experience, and not a social, or political one. "Sufis represent the strongest indigenous force against Islamic fundamentalism," Schmidle writes. While the West has attempted to counter fundamentalism with public diplomacy, interfaith dialogues and other efforts, the author writes that it has failed to recognize the counterterrorist power that lies in Sufism. A tradition started by a group of 13th-century mystics, including Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, Sufism has many devotees today in the

provinces of Sindh and Punjab, the home of the family of the assassinated prime minister, Benazir Bhutto. One Sufi interviewed by the author believes that the “spirit of Qalandar resided in Bhutto, and lives on in her son.” Currently available online at <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/people-places/34347399.html>

ECONOMIC SECURITY

Collier, Paul THE POLITICS OF HUNGER (Foreign Affairs, Vol. 87, No. 6, November-December 2008, pp. 67-79)

According to Collier, professor of economics and director of the Center for the Study of African Economies at Oxford University, policy makers have the power to end the food crisis by bringing food prices down: in the short term by changing regulation to increase supply, in the medium term by encouraging organizational changes to raise the growth of production, and in the long term by encouraging innovations in technology. “Feeding the world will involve three politically challenging steps,” Collier says. First, as the Brazilian model of high-productivity large farms demonstrates, the world needs more commercial agriculture, not romantic attachment to inefficient small-scale farms. Second, Europe and other parts of the world need to end their bans on genetically modified crops. Third, the United States should lift its self-damaging subsidies for biofuel. Currently available online at <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20081001faessay87605/paul-collier/the-politics-of-hunger.html>

Mihm, Stephen SO, YOU WANT TO SAVE THE ECONOMY? INSIDE THE INFLUENTIAL NEW WORLD OF ECONOBLOGGERS (Boston Globe, December 7, 2008)

As the financial disaster unfolded on Wall Street, Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson pressed Congress to pass the bailout plan but provided sparse justification for how he would spend the money. The author notes that a disparate range of experts in economics and finance, including some well-known individuals, starting picking apart Paulson’s plan live, on the Internet, in public blogs. Many bloggers provided historical context and offered counterproposals; their readers began badgering their Congressional representatives to oppose the plan. Whether the blogs influenced Washington’s response to the crisis, notes Mihm, it’s clear that policymakers “are no longer operating alone.” The blogs are essentially a crash course in economics and finance, a “conversation that’s simultaneously esoteric and irreverent, combining technical discussions of liquidity traps and yield curves with profane putdowns and heckling headlines.” Many journalists used the blogs to fill in gaps in their knowledge of esoteric aspects of mortgage finance. Currently available online at http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/ideas/articles/2008/12/07/so_you_want_to_save_the_economy/?page=1

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Amr, Hady; Singer, P. W. TO WIN THE ‘WAR ON TERROR,’ WE MUST FIRST WIN THE ‘WAR OF IDEAS’: HERE’S HOW (The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, no. 618, July 2008, pp. 212-222)

The authors, both fellows at the Brookings Institution, offer instructions for the next president to undertake initiatives in public diplomacy to reach Muslim states. They feel that these initiatives

should be of the highest national security importance and receive commensurate resources. The authors note that American efforts at communicating with Muslim-majority nations since 9/11 have been unsuccessful because they lacked energy, focus and an integrated strategy. To improve the deteriorating image of the United States in the Muslim world, the authors suggest ten public diplomacy initiatives, including establishing American Centers across the region, bolstering cultural exchange programs, and involving the whole federal bureaucracy in public diplomacy. Currently available online at <http://ann.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/618/1/212>

Idov, Michael COOLING DOWN THE NEW COLD WAR: HOW PRESIDENT OBAMA SHOULD MANAGE RUSSIA (New Republic online, December 9, 2009)

The author offers advice to the incoming Obama administration on likely flashpoints in relations with Moscow, which since the November elections has been stepping up provocative acts, such as an uptick in Anti-American propaganda, threats to deploy new short-range missiles, naval tours in Latin America and overtures to regimes hostile to Washington. The author welcomes NATO's decision to defer membership consideration for Ukraine and Georgia. He recommends that the Obama administration take a go-slow approach to this initiative and allow Russia to take a stronger role in nuclear negotiations with Iran, but that Washington join with Norway and Canada to strongly resist Moscow's attempted claims in the Arctic. Obama's charisma could also serve as a force multiplier for soft power, and the author urges him to consider a tour in Russia, which could go a long way toward repairing America's image and repudiate the Kremlin's hostile rhetoric. Currently available online at <http://www.tnr.com/politics/story.html?id=a6ddceef-c50d-4b27-bbd1-1b2b65b53aa6>

Johnson, Reuben F. TENNIS SHOES AND STOLEN TOILETS: RUSSIA'S MILITARY 'RENAISSANCE' (Weekly Standard, Vol. 14, no. 10, November 24, 2008)

While Russia has announced several grandiose plans to restore its military in recent years, economic realities — specifically its overdependence on energy exports — assure that these lavish promises are unlikely to materialize. While President Medvedev has announced increases in military spending, these sums are dwarfed by defense spending in the United States and Europe and will be largely absorbed in maintaining its existing assets. Russia's success in its August 2008 conflict in Georgia was the result of superior numbers, says the author, who relates anecdotes of Russian troops wearing sneakers into battle and their awe at the sight of Georgia's U.S.-built military facilities. The wasteful naval maneuvers in Venezuela and a recent accident aboard a next-generation nuclear submarine also reflect the massive economic, political, intelligence and administrative chasms that Russian defense policymakers will need to bridge in the coming years. Available online at <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/015/821gzfgw.asp>

King, Charles GEORGIA WITHOUT THE SPIN (Foreign Policy online, posted November 20, 2008)

The author, faculty chair at Georgetown's Walsh School of Foreign Service, takes a hard look at the August 2008 Georgia crisis, coming away with strong criticism for the brinkmanship style of Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili. While granting no allowances for Russia's actions, the author argues that new revelations about Georgian actions in the lead-up to the conflict complicate the narrative championed by many policymakers in Washington — a view of Georgia as blameless victim that Saakashvili showcased in a sophisticated media campaign during the conflict and combined with U.S. and European statements of support to escalate tensions with Moscow before the crisis. Recent polls show rising anxiety among Georgian citizens and eroding support for Saakashvili's policy course. "None of the sides remains blameless," writes the author, "but in light of this new information, it is now clear that for U.S. President-elect Barack Obama, constraining Georgia will be a task no less important than containing Russia." Currently available online at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4559

Piper, Paul NETS OF TERROR: TERRORIST ACTIVITY ON THE INTERNET (Searcher, vol. 16, no. 10, November/December 2008, pp. 28-38)

The author, a reference librarian at Western Washington University, provides a detailed overview of the presence and activity of terrorist groups on the Internet. He notes that rogue groups are drawn to the Internet because it is easy and inexpensive to communicate and disseminate information instantaneously and in an uncensored fashion worldwide. Terrorist groups use the Internet for a variety of purposes, chiefly for public announcements, data mining, recruitment, fundraising, information sharing, logistics and training. Terrorist websites, chat rooms, bulletin boards and forums are very unstable, with continually changing URLs, due to the cat-and-mouse game with authorities and private watchdog groups. The author describes and gives the website URLs of the many organizations keeping track of terrorist groups, as well as a complete listing of terrorist groups by country, with the most recently known web URLs. He believes that the terrorist presence on the Internet is still in a beginning phase, aimed mostly at staking out territory, but may eventually lead to cyberterrorism. Currently available online at <http://www.infotoday.com/searcher/nov08/Piper.shtml>

U.S. SOCIETY & VALUES

Boyer, Jennifer Horne RETHINKING DEATH: STATES FORM COMMISSIONS TO STUDY CAPITAL PUNISHMENT (State News, vol. 51, no. 8, September 2008, pp. 28-31)

The increase in exonerations due to new DNA evidence has led to many states to re-examine the way their criminal justice systems handle capital punishment cases. Illinois took the lead in 2000, when then-Governor George Ryan declared a moratorium on executions, stating that he had "grave concerns" about the "state's shameful record of convicting innocent people and putting them on death row." Ryan appointed a commission whose extensive research and analysis led to more than 80 recommendations, many of which resulted in legislative reforms. At least 10 other states have followed suit; in some cases, state commissions have recommended abolishing the death penalty. Following the recommendation of its commission, the New Jersey state legislature in December 2007 repealed the death penalty, and thus became the first state to do so since the death penalty was reinstated nationwide in 1976. Some states turn to the courts to recommend death penalty reforms; the Nevada Supreme Court, for example, recently issued new standards and guidelines to ensure higher quality legal representation. Whatever the method, reforms are essential to improving the quality of justice. Says the co-chair of the Illinois commission: "While we may differ on the wisdom and effectiveness of capital punishment, all should insist that the death penalty be imposed only through an accurate, fair and just system." Currently available online at: <http://www.csg.org/pubs/Documents/sn0809.pdf>

Hess, Frederick AFTER MILWAUKEE: THE MOST HERALDED EXPERIMENT IN EDUCATION MARKETS TEACHES US VALUABLE LESSONS (The American, September/October 2008)

Almost 20 years ago, the Wisconsin legislature enacted the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, allowing a few hundred students to attend local private schools on public scholarships. Today Milwaukee's voucher program enrolls nearly 20,000 students in more than 100 schools, and cities like Youngstown, Ohio, and Washington, D.C., have tried school choice programs on an even larger scale. The results of school choice, however -- even to staunch proponents -- have been disappointing. Yet, with more than one million students now enrolled in charter schools, U.S. Department of Education research shows charter school mean scores in reading and mathematics are lower, on average, than those for public non-charter schools. What went wrong? Hess argues charter school advocates made two critical mistakes -- failing to recognize what market-based reforms would need to produce results and confusing choice with competition. Certain isolated schools have succeeded beautifully, but those who run them do so for intrinsic

rewards and have no incentive to expand. He proposes inducing the successful to serve more children by “compensation, professional stature or something else.” He calls for the production of “reliable, third-party guides” to schools that would help parents choose schools the way Consumer Reports ratings help them choose automobiles. He calls for abolishing certification requirements that keep the untrained out of teaching and the kinds of regulations that make it more expensive to open a school in New York City. Currently available online at <http://www.american.com/archive/2008/september-october-magazine/after-milwaukee>

Perlman, Ellen; Maynard, Melissa WORKING IN WIKI (Governing, May 2008, pp. 1-11)

Web 2.0 is a new generation of Internet applications that consist of social networking tools, including websites like Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Second Life and Wikipedia. The authors write that state and local government have begun utilizing these social networking tools, and that these tools can transform the way government functions. As opposed to the current top-down culture of emails, briefings and conferences, Web 2.0 encourages a more democratic approach – for instance, employees can be involved in creating and maintaining a Wiki page. Virtual reality Web 2.0 applications like Second Life can help bring employees at disparate locations closer together and provide a better alternative to conference calls. Second Life can also save costs through virtual training of employees. However, implementing these technologies takes managers who eager to learn the new technology and see it as a means to improve the efficiency of the organization. Success in implementing Web 2.0 in government also requires employees to select what aspect of a project they want to work on. The authors say that Web 2.0 is inevitable for government -- “Governments can either play an active role in transforming themselves or wait and let change hit them; either way, it’s coming.” Currently available online at <http://www.governing.com/articles/0805wiki.htm>

Tucker, Patrick THE 21ST-CENTURY WRITER (Futurist, vol. 42, no. 4, July/August 2008, pp. 25-31)

Tucker, senior editor of The Futurist, notes that for both writers and readers, these are times of upheaval. The information technology revolution has led to an explosion in written content. For book publishers, the mission is to reinvent the concept of the book for the digital age. For many writers, particularly nonfiction writers, it means joining the online world of blogs, vlogs, and RSS feeds where the pace of news is accelerated. Some bloggers report that the money from ad clicks related to their blog content is barely enough to cover the cost of blogging. Book publishers are finding it harder to back first-time or less popular authors. Across the United States, newspapers and magazines are focusing their resources more and more on their Web sites. In the process, they're giving voice to an entirely new breed of digital journalist even as they show the door to news department veterans. Many writers are justifiably alarmed by the shift, but writers who are willing to view themselves as storytellers first and foremost, who are eager to incorporate new technology into the writing process, have a bright future. Currently available online at <http://www.wfs.org/May-June%20files/Futwrite1.htm>

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