

THE P.O.V.

100

WITNESSING THE WEB'S GROWTH THESE DAYS—OR BETTER, PLAYING a role in it—is something like sitting in a Porsche 911 with your speed-fiend buddy at the wheel. You're cruising at a comfortable 85 miles per hour, with diners and cows flashing along the roadside when suddenly—wham!—you're thrust back into your seat, tears spray from your eyes and you've got no choice but to gaze at the road ahead and smile.

We're on a fast, wild ride, no doubt about it. And we've got the evidence right here, with our fourth annual list of the Web's top 100 sites, our best yet. That's hardly a boast. Sure, we'll take some of the credit, but how could we go wrong as the Web morphs into a dazzling combination of radio, television and telephone?

Each site in the P.O.V. 100—from giants like ESPN.com to start-ups like onebox.com—combines ingenuity, creativity and, yes, cash. The Web started as a labor of love, but it's been the pursuit of that last ingredient that has stoked the dreams of thousands—millions?—of budding entrepreneurs, at least some of whom possess the brainpower (or good fortune) to help change communication as we know it. When the upstarts get gobbled up by the Yahoos of the Web (as happened with our number-one site, broadcast.com), the cycle of innovation and acquisition only churns at a speedier rate. If this were a celestial phenomenon, viewed from afar, it would look like the creation of a galaxy.

Whether or not you bought shares of Amazon way back in '97, or work for a hip Web design firm like Razorfish, you're a lucky beneficiary of all of this innovative overdrive. Here, with the P.O.V. 100 (all linked from www.povmag.com), you've got the bounty of the Web's entrepreneurial frenzy: 100 sites, the best of the Web. At the turn of the century, cyberspace just keeps getting better and better.











By Allan Hoffman
Illustrations by Mark Matcho



To find out the criteria for how we selected the P.O.V. 100, head to www.povmag.com.










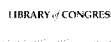
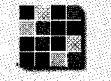











RANKING		SITE	
'98	'99	The lowdown	
3	1	broadcast.com www.broadcast.com Where worlds collide. The worlds of television, radio and the Net, that is. One minute you're seeing Al Jarreau in concert, the next you're watching the horse races at Ellis Park, listening to the free-form radio of New York's little gem WFMU, or learning about stress reduction (via reflexology) in a training video. If it's broadcast, it's here, from old TV shows, like <i>Dobie Gillis</i> , to police scanners, audio books and author interviews. Five hundred channels? Compared to this, that's nothing. Think of broadcast.com as the Web's ultimate network, with every interest accommodated. Broadcast.com caters to entrepreneurs, hockey fanatics, even B-movie buffs (who'll groove to <i>Dinosaur Valley Girls</i>). Is this the Web, or what? Sure it is—the Web of the future, with enough tube-like programming to mash a million couch potatoes. Info-overload may be the chief hazard, what with the site's Yahoo-like directory, covering careers, health, news and every other topic you can imagine. (Yahoo, as it happens, acquired broadcast.com in a \$5.7 billion deal.) Overwhelming? No doubt. But awe-inspiring, too. Broadcast.com is a media playground in pixels—the place you'll one day watch man land on Mars.	
74	2	MP3.com www.mp3.com A revolution, really. For fans and indie artists, it's a newly democratized music world thanks to MP3, the hot downloadable audio format. The evidence? They Might Be Giants, for one, released an MP3-only album, <i>Long Tall Weekend</i> . Come here to find the tunes, from artists you know and those you don't, along with CD rippers and Winamp skins. Confused? MP3.com has the answers. It's music from your desktop to your ears.	
17	3	Amazon.com www.amazon.com A bookstore? How '98. More like the Microsoft of e-commerce. Now with CDs, videos, toys, auctions, e-cards, gifts and lots more, like prescription drugs (from drugstore.com) and groceries (from HomeGrocer.com). An acquisition animal and now owner of a wild mix: Alexa Internet, with its as-you-surf site suggestions; PlanetAll.com, an online address book and networking companion; and comparison-shopper Shop the Web (formerly Junglee). What doesn't Amazon.com own? Not much. The re-tailer for the next century? Looks that way.	
-	4	DEN www.den.com Just scan the selections, from frat ratz ("jocks, geeks, fabulous babes") to tales from the eastside ("la guerra entre los amantes") and you know you've left the safe space of the tube. Raw, adventurous, youth-oriented shows, like <i>exoticom</i> , with two dudes parasailing on Thailand's Ko Phi Phi. Tune into DEN and witness a fantastic fusion of TV and the Net.	
8	5	ESPN.com www.espn.com All things sports, from pitches to pucks. Schedules, stats and special sections, like one on the top North American athletes of the century. Golf's your game? ESPN.com's got it, with leader boards, insights on the latest irons and even a fantasy golf game. Into hoops? Completely covered. Same for baseball, tennis, hockey and on and on. You'll have typed and clicked so much you'll feel like you ran the Boston Marathon on your fingertips.	
12	6	CNET www.cnet.com You're surrounded. PCs, digital cameras, PalmPilots, electronic books, wireless phones. Technology is everywhere. Which means if you've got any chance of surviving—of thriving—you've got to take control of your techno-life. CNET covers it all, in language you can understand. The site delivers comparison-shopping, hardware reviews, Internet economy news and free software downloads—all of it integrated in a slick cyberpackage, ready for your consumption.	
1	7	Tripod www.tripod.com Got an obsession? Get a homepage! Here's where you build one, among the millions of other home-steaders, with pages like Zen and the Art of Dice Maintenance. Easy-to-use Web-building tools with killer features like "Info Flash-es" (for the latest news and weather). Chat, chill, or just browse—or, even better, build the Web yourself. Tripod makes it easy.	
-	8	Imagine Radio www.imagineradio.com Ever want your own radio station? With Imagine Radio, you've got one. Just select the genres—and specific artists—you want to hear, then start broadcasting. Alternative country and hip-hop your thing? You got 'em. Don't like Garth Brooks? Ax him from the playlist. Name your station and spread the word (by e-mail)—or listen to stations others have built. Acquired by—you guessed it—MTV.	
-	9	onebox.com www.onebox.com The next killer app? Consumer-friendly, if ominous-sounding, "unified messaging." Which means, quite simply, one phone number—free, of course—for voice, e-mail and fax. Sign up and you can retrieve messages—voice, fax, whatever—whether you're online or off, in Santa Cruz or Singapore. Save voice mails (and faxes), or forward them. Pick up the mic and send voice messages over the Net. Say goodbye to your answering machine, your fax machine and lots of hassles.	
-	10	ArtMuseum.net www.artmuseum.net Art exhibits, such as the Whitney Museum's "American Century: Art and Culture 1900-2000," presented with flashing interactive brilliance. Timelines, annotated images, silent flicks—the whole multi-media shebang, with context and history for the art. A magical masterpiece.	


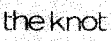









KEY TO ICONS	Hot deals and cheap things	Heaven for techies	P.O.V. 100 member all four years	Digital toolkit essential	Shocking success story
	Beware: dangerously addictive	Literate: Nabokov approves	More fun than a barrel of monkeys!	Warning: convergence ahead	Inventive! Wish you thought of it
					Supremely stylish



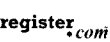









RANKING '98	RANKING '99	SITE	The lowdown
2	11	Pseudo www.pseudo.com	An emerging alternanetwork, with channels like Koolout ("vintage urban music") and SpaceWatch ("space news and exploration"). Narrowcasting at its niche-crazed best. 
-	12	E-Trade www.etrade.com	Lots of online brokers offer lots of online services. E-Trade's site has all the basics—quotes, charts, trading, portfolio management—along with plenty of extras. The best interface in its class: a simple, seamless integration of stats and tools. Coming soon via a pending merger with Telebank (www.telebank.com): All your banking needs online—no matter how often you move. 
9	13	Hollywood Stock Exchange www.hsx.com	In case you didn't know, you can trade Ellen Barkin (EBARK) or Def Leppard (DEFLE). An addictive stock-trading game, with entertainment news and reviews humming happily in the background. Prizes, too. 
-	14	Ask Jeeves www.askjeeves.com	"Who won the World Series in 1948?" Jeeves knows. Ask a question, get an answer. A wondrous way to search the Web, and Wall Street-approved, with a \$779 million market cap. 
6	15	Feed www.feedmag.com	Erudite, bookish and thoughtful. At Feed, thinkers and writers wax poetic on everything from Open Source software to the "effluvia of Nabokov's life." An intellectual turn-on, everyday. 
15	16	CNN Interactive www.cnn.com	Bypass the homepage and head to the NewsCenter (www.cnn.com/newscenter), where you've got a "Control Room"—sort of like the one in Atlanta—to build your own newscast from CNN clips. 
-	17	DealTime www.dealtime.com	Comparison shopping, and not just for PCs: DealTime's got everything from Ping putters to Sony Digital Cameras in its database. With e-mail (or pager) notification when prices go down, down, down. 
47	18	Kodak www.kodak.com	That digital camera you've got? Here's its darkroom. Use PhotoNet to upload those snaps, order prints (or photo gifts) and share them with your grandma in Miami. 
-	19	The Sync www.thesync.com	"Stuff you can't see on TV." For sure. Like <i>The JenniSHOW</i> , with Jennifer Ringley of JenniCAM fame, now fully clothed. Or <i>Here and Now</i> , an unedited <i>Real World</i> from Oberlin College students. Edgy entertainment, electronically. 
13	20	eBay www.ebay.com	You want it, someone's got it—some 2.5 million (and counting) items for sale. Perhaps the best thing you could've bought when this site launched: eBay stock. The company's now worth \$16.2 billion. 

RANKING '98	RANKING '99	SITE	The lowdown
7	21	SonicNet www.sonicnet.com	Techno, hip-hop, rock—SonicNet's got it all, from the news to the new MP3s. In one area, artsy animations accompany the Flaming Lips or Garbage. 
11	22	Salon.com www.salon.com	A cultural refuge in the unwieldy Web: an eclectic combo of criticism, reporting and commentary on technology, politics and trends. Powered by the newfangled OpenIPO, with shares auctioned off to bidders. 
4	23	The Motley Fool www.fool.com	Fools? Hardly. One of the original stock-trading communities, with thriving messages boards, tips galore and an investing philosophy that's fun and friendly. The godfather of its genre. 
18	24	TheStreet.com www.thestreet.com	The <i>Wall Street Journal</i> for the 21st century. Aggressive reporting on biotech, mutual funds, the Fed and tech, including the pen of part-owner Jim Cramer. Tripled on its IPO debut, sparking much journalistic envy. 
20	25	Monster.com www.monster.com	Where to find work, with jobs searchable by location, category or keyword. Or, for free agent types, there's Monster Talent Market, where you can auction your services. 
14	26	Trip.com www.thetrip.com	With Flight-Tracker, watch a flight cross mountains and valleys. Business travel at its best, with airport guides, currency converters and reservations. 
5	27	MSNBC www.msnbc.com	Better than cable, with news from a super selection of sources: <i>The Wall Street Journal</i> , <i>Slate</i> , NBC. 
34	28	Nerve magazine www.nerve.com	Literate smut, with highbrow pieces like "Horse Lust: Bondage and Discipline to the Would-be Equestrienne." A Photo of the Day, too, and NerveLink, to lead you to seamier destinations. 
36	29	CitySearch www.citysearch.com	City guides for everywhere from D.C. to Dallas (and beyond). Tickets, too, via Ticketmaster. An events empire, with its recent takeover of Sidewalk. 
-	30	The Station www.station.sony.com	The future of game shows: Play solo or with contestants in Vienna, Vancouver or virtually anywhere. Alex Trebek's worst nightmare. 
-	31	TheCentury.com www.thecentury.com	Choose your topic: adventurers, civil rights, genocide, inventions, terrorism. An awe-inspiring tour through history. 
-	32	AtomFilms www.atomfilms.com	Indie flicks for your lunch break, like <i>Bad Bosses Go to Hell</i> and <i>Much Ado About Puberty</i> . A cinephile's playground. 

RANKING		SITE	RANKING		SITE
'98	'99	The lowdown	'98	'99	The lowdown
-	33	Third Voice www.thirdvoice.com The bane of Web designers: Third Voice lets you place Post-it-like notes on Web pages for all the world to see. Graf-fiti? Maybe. A digital test in open expression. 	-	44	WetFeet.com www.wetfeet.com Looking for a job in investment banking? Biotech? Law? Here you'll find the inside scoop on jobs and companies. Hardcore interview prep, too. 
					
-	34	drkoop.com www.drkoop.com From the former U.S. Surgeon General, a patient empowerment powerhouse. Help with asthma, stress, or whatever else ails you. A medical encyclopedia, Drug Checker and health chats. The doc is omnipresent these days, with an \$89 million alliance for health content on AOL. 	-	45	Everything2000 www.everything2000.com Y2K mania in all its incarnations, from party preparations to "Millenni-moms" with January 1 due dates. 
					
-	35	About.com www.about.com A confusion-free way to explore the Web. Online guides for everything from archaeology to urban legends dispense info and advice in neatly packaged, manageable communities. Clarity for the chaos of the Web. 	-	46	The Obscure Store and Reading Room www.obscurestore.com Summarized stories with headlines like TEEN DIES AFTER YEARS OF CHEWING HAIR. Obscure zines to read, too—from <i>Profane Existence</i> to <i>Cometbus</i> . From the creator of MediaGossip.com, also a must for media junkies. 
					
25	36	The New York Times www.nytimes.com Aside from the solid coverage you'd expect, there's lots of extras, like CyberTimes (for thoughtful tech news) and a book bonanza, with 50,000 archived reviews. 	22	47	CarPoint www.carpoint.com Start your engines, folks. Car-buying at its best: free quotes, quick comparisons, reviews and rebates. Audi TT, here we come. 
					
16	37	FinanCenter www.financenter.com Handy calculators to answer your big money queries, such as "What will it take to become a millionaire?" and "Should I pay points to lower the rate?" Solid financial advice, all of it free. 	40	48	CNN/SI www.cnn.com A Statitudes center, for stats on streaks and salaries, along with games, like Fantasy Golf Challenge and enough news and commentary in a day to read for a lifetime. Bonus: 54 Web-only "exclusives" from Swimsuit '99. 
					
10	38	Razorfish Subnetwork www.rsub.net A thinking man's zine from Razorfish Studio, the young Web consulting firm with a market value of more than \$650 million. One of the "subnetworks," RSUBOX, boasts about having the "finest streaming video: stuff you've never seen!" True. 	50	49	HotWired www.hotwired.com Once revolutionary...and now? Still awesome, with the edgy tech of Wired News, the instruction of Webmonkey and the art of RGB Gallery. 
					
19	39	Learn2.com www.learn2.com Learn to do just about anything, from "capture a mouse" to "help a hangover." A solution for your own stupidity and ignorance, all with the click of your mouse. 	100	50	Word www.word.com A relentlessly inventive experiment in Web publishing. Words, yes, with writers like Mary Gaitskill and Alex Garland, but it's the vibrant interface that's awe-inspiring. 
					
-	40	Visto www.visto.com You mobile? Most certainly. Here's an all-purpose online toolkit (and storage spot) for life's digital necessities, from calendars to Web bookmarks and MP3s. 	51	51	ChickClick www.chickclick.com A fun and ferocious network of "girl sites that don't fake it," as it says; intriguing, funny, useful stuff in areas like Breakup Girl and Disgruntled Housewife. 
					
-	41	CDnow www.cdnw.com Is CD-buying retro? Not yet. The latest news, too, and on-target recommendations. A participant in the consolidation craze, via a merger with Music Boulevard and one pending with Columbia House. 	-	52	PalmCentral.com www.palmcentral.com Palm news, Palm software, Palm knickknacks, from Tetris (for fun) to the NYC Bar Guide (for facts, when thirsty). 
					
30	42	Slate www.slate.com Essential for Today's Papers, a zippy summary of news from the major newspapers. Plus, pieces on politics and culture, served up with smarts. Most of the site free once again. 	26	53	PBS Online www.pbs.org Forget the megapromotions of other TV spots. Here you've got awesome minisites, ranging from the siege at Khe Sanh to the savvy tech commentary of legendary Silicon Valley gossip Robert X. Cringely. 
					
39	43	Epicurious www.epicurious.com Flatbread, fancy pesto-infused pizzas and everything else related to eating (and imbibing). All served up with style, from the Drink Recipe Search to the Vintage Cookbook Finder. 	76	54	ICQ www.icq.com The ultimate tool for the ultra-wired. Lets you know if your brother's online. Or your boss. Converse, conduct conferences, even host your own chat. 
					
			-	55	ClearStation www.clearstation.com Stock trends, intricately interpreted with technical analysis and multicolored charts and graphs. A feast for statheads. 
					

RANKING		SITE	RANKING		SITE
'98	'99	The lowdown	'98	'99	The lowdown
45	56	Travelocity www.travelocity.com Choose the Best Fare Finder for cheap retreats. Industrial-strength travel bookings, with e-mails to track favorite fares. 	28	67	CareerPath.com www.careerpath.com Not ready to give up paper classifieds? You've got them, from the <i>New York Times</i> , the <i>Idaho Statesman</i> and 88 others. 
37	57	CBS SportsLine www.sportsline.com Stats, scores and lots more, like coverage of rock climbing and rugby. Featuring GolfWeb, for the links obsessed. 	-	68	JustTheMusic.com www.justthemusic.com Joe's radio station, with a new show, weekly. Sebadah, Ben Folds Five, Dove-tail Joint. Who's Joe? Who knows? An online mix-tape from a friend you haven't met. 
85	58	MapQuest www.mapquest.com Lost? You've got no excuse. Colorful maps and point-to-point driving directions, down to the exact address, along with listings of more than 20,000 hotels and restaurants. 	-	69	ComedyNet www.comedynet.com Stand-up comics, sketches and general hilarity, with shows like <i>Party in Our Shorts</i> . 
-	59	Platform Network www.platform.net Urban vibes, with a combo of hip-hop, sports and streetwear. Listen to Brand Nubian as you're reading about halfpipe rider Todd Richards. 	92	70	Deja.com www.deja.com All about ratings. Of Robert De Niro, of the Janus Money Market Fund, of the Whistler I500 Series radar detector. Contribute your own ratings, or get back to the site's roots in newsgroups. 
-	60	NASA Human Spaceflight spaceflight.nasa.gov The place where you get to watch the assembly of the International Space Station, with diagrams, movies and countdowns. For anyone who dreams of outer space, an impressive replacement for the real thing. 	49	71	The Library of Congress www.loc.gov All about knowledge. Of Congress, with committee reports and bill summaries, and of the nation's past, with exhibits like "Origins of American Animation." 
-	61	sixdegrees www.sixdegrees.com Total members: 2,759,812 (and growing). Some of whom you're bound to know. And they know people with interests like yours, and on and on. A neverending networking party. 	-	72	FONE ICQ www.foneicq.com Into ICQ instant messaging? Here's voice mail for you. Your buddy calls 800-FONE-427, punches your ICQ number and you retrieve the message online or by phone. Stay connected. 
58	62	Talk City www.talkcity.com A chat-centered community (and, full disclosure: a P.O.V. partner), with free homepages and talk about everything from pro wrestling to <i>Star Wars</i> . 	-	73	FasTV.com www.fastv.com From Brett Favre highlights to the latest biz news, video clips archived for your viewing pleasure. 
64	63	The Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition www.wsj.com A lively, digital version of the nation's most hallowed financial newspaper, with e-mail news alerts, <i>Barron's</i> Online and some of the Web's best business research resources. 	52	74	Internet Movie Database www.imdb.com For the flick fiend, an encyclopedic repository of movie data, with 207,000 movies listed. Plus: viewer ratings, indie film news and movie recommendations. Compendious. 
95	64	Food.com www.food.com Up for Lebanese tonight? Enter your address and you've got on-line menus and easy ordering. Same for any other cuisine you can imagine. 	-	75	The Brunching Shuttlecocks www.brunching.com Beware "the occasional swear word." Generally arcane humor, absurdity and playthings, like the "lame domain name" generator. Worth a try. 
60	65	Encyclopaedia Britannica Online www.eb.com Just \$5 per month for the Encyclopaedia Britannica, from the aardwolf, that dastardly African carnivore, to Zamyatin, the Russian satirist. Authoritative. 	-	76	Jeffrey Zeldman Presents www.zeldman.com Venture capitalists: Give Zeldman your money! A Web designer's personal site, with everything from gifPLEX ("not your father's gif animations") to the illustrious Ad Graveyard (rejected ads, like one asking, "Has your third nipple lost its charm?"). 
-	66	ClassicGaming.com www.classicgaming.com Miss that old Atari 2600? Don't despair. Pong lives: the site offers a way to "emulate" ancient video-game hardware. Retro yet vibrant. 	-	77	MountainZone.com www.mountainzone.com So much to do on a mountain: climb, snowboard, bike, ski. Here's where you read tales of awesome adventure, like "Everest '99" (and the discovery of George Mallory's body), or embark on your own adventure. 

RANKING	SITE
- 78	eGroups.com www.egroups.com A hypercharged system for e-mail lists and group discussions. The basics (for, let's say, an online newsletter), plus lots of extras, like group calendars, private chat rooms and even a twenty-megabyte "document vault." 
- 79	The Knot www.theknot.com Fiancée have you stressed? Here's a wedding planner, Web-style, with nifty tools, from the Big Day Budgeter to a Wedding Gift Registry. Guy-gear advice, too, like "A Groom's Checklist: 22 Critical To-dos." 
- 80	SimCity www.simcity.com A free, Web-based version of the original game, plus a way to share—and build!—skyscrapers and other buildings for Sim-City 3000. A classic. 
- 81	EMusic.com www.emusic.com Pay to download music? One day, you'll do it. Start here, maybe with the Lemonheads' debut, <i>Hate Your Friends</i> . Just 99 cents a song, or the whole album for \$8.99. Sure beats Sam Goody. 
- 82	Blue Mountain Arts www.bluemountain.com E-cards for all occasions: All Souls' Day, Bastille Day, Purim. Hallmark? Ha!—you'd be dating yourself. 
62 83	ZDNet www.zdnet.com A mammoth, we've-got-everything-tech site. A software library. Terrific reviews of PCs and peripherals. Some 30 channels for tech junkies of all stripes. 
35 84	Morningstar www.morningstar.com One-stop shopping for all your mutual fund needs, from ratings to top holdings to returns and more. A must for minding your money. 
- 85	Consumer Reports www.consumerreports.org Site subscribers cough up \$24 a year for trusty advice with ratings and recommendations of 27-inch TVs, mutual funds, Olestra chips and anything else you're able to buy (or consume). Rely on it. 
63 86	Switchboard www.switchboard.com Where to find the roomie who stole your Bruce bootlegs. Search for phone numbers, e-mail addresses, businesses. Extras, too, like maps and a way to store your bookmarks online. 
67 87	iOwn www.iown.com Own, as in a home. Finance, refinance. Shop for rate and point combos at multiple banks, with tools to help you decide how much you can afford. The bottom line: a new way to borrow. Formerly HomeShark. 
- 88	The Industry Standard www.thestandard.com The way to stay on top of the Internet economy, from cable modems to e-commerce. Sign up for the e-mail newsletters, like Media Grok, which organizes updates on the never-ending Net coverage from around the world. 

RANKING	SITE
68 89	Bluefly www.bluefly.com Duds from Brooks Brothers, Hickey Freeman, Mossimo and more. Outlet-level prices, lotsa product. 
- 90	911gifts.com www.911gifts.com Gifts galore. Gearhead brother's birthday? A digital tire gauge. Grandparents' anniversary? A leather photo album. Suggestions for every occasion. 
- 91	register.com www.register.com The new, hassle-free spot where you search for—and buy—domain names, with dot-com monikers going for \$70 for two years. Register now, start a biz later. 
80 92	FANOnly www.fanonly.com Alma mater fandom at its best, with obsessive attention to college sports, from recruiting rumors to "Gameday Hangouts" for tossing back a brew. 
- 93	Google www.google.com Remember your basic "search engine"? Here's one that really works, scouring billions of links for junk-free matches—and it does so quickly. 
75 94	Priceline www.priceline.com Round-trip to Paris for \$305? Or should it be \$285? You decide. Well, sorta. Name your price (for hotels, cars and more) and wait for the answer. A clever way to shop—and to build a biz. 
94 95	Moviefone.com www.moviefone.com Movie times and fix, plus lots more, like previews and interviews with moviegoers. Wait on line? No way. 
- 96	the remedi project www.theremediproject.com Experimental art exhibits, expressly for the Web. Astonishing and enigmatic, yet somehow soothing. Like looking at a painting in progress. 
- 97	The Onion www.theonion.com Mock news ("Congress Approves \$4 Billion for Bread, Circuses") beamed to a salivating planet via the Web. Irrelevant, ironic and deadpan hilarious. 
- 98	Cardhouse www.cardhouse.com The detritus of life, collected for your amusement (like 55 found photos). An observational outpost for the ephemera elite. 
- 99	The Blair Witch Project www.blairwitch.com Delve deeper into the disturbing secrets of the Blair Witch, with a timeline tracing the myth from the blood-drawing accusations of 1785 to the footage found in 1995 (and then some). A study in marketing mastery. 
- 100	memepool www.memepool.com An ongoing conversation about what's new on the Web (and in life). When you're done surfing the p.o.v. 100, here's a way to tap into an ever-expanding list of links, from smart folks who exist only in cyberspace. 

CONVERGENCE Ahead

All Together Now...

THE INTERNET ECONOMY, TO EMPLOY THE BUZZPHRASE DU JOUR, TEEMS WITH jargon for the latest trends. "Sticky" Web apps, "push" technology, "viral" marketing—these catchwords enter (and exit) the infomaniac's vocabulary with the speed of a T3 line.

Now and then, one of these buzzwords actually jives with a concept that will be around for a while. Convergence is one of these, and for a reason: it's happening, now. Broadcast.com, our number-one site, turns your PC into a TV, radio and screening room, all at once. Everywhere you look on the Web, you'll witness one medium or communications device, from the television to the telephone, cavorting with another in a digital mating dance that's so frenzied, so overt, it would garner an NC-17 rating if it were a flick. Luckily, the offspring is available for immediate viewing.

For a time, I was suspicious of all the talk of convergence. You know, buzzword-phobia. No longer. I've been transformed from Convergence Crank to Mr. Convergence. Not because I think convergence is the future of the Web, which I do, but because much of the Web experience—the tools and the entertainment I use, view and hear on a daily basis—is evidence of converging media. Buzzword? Definitely. Bunk? Definitely not.

Here, then, is the proof, with five examples of convergence ready for your consumption:

As I write this, I am listening to an Internet radio station of my own creation, with the name *Anywhere's Better Than Here*. You'll find my station at *Imagine Radio* (www.imagineradio.com), along with scores of other user stations, like *Soft Side of the Moon* and *Lizard Lounge*. Currently playing: "Wolfman's Brother," from Phish. I can rate artists as I hear them, giving them less "weight" for future rotations, or review entire playlists, awarding John Hiatt a "5," let's say, while consigning Zep to a "1" or "2." I haven't turned on my stereo in days. And that, let's face it, is the true convergence test—when something new lets you ignore your treasured, if aging, electronic paraphernalia.

Animation is at the forefront of the convergence frenzy,

largely because it doesn't require the multimegabyte downloads of full-blown video. One of these days, a Web-created character will move to film (or the tube), *South Park*-style. Maybe it will be that chunky superhero, *Fatman*, now broadcast on *Animation Express* (www.hotwired.com/animation). Be the first to see *Fatman*, along with other subversive Saturday morning cartoons, for your lunch-break enjoyment.

Early attempts at next-generation entertainment for the Web, like the soap opera *The Spot*, were, for the most part, unbearably awful. Now, with better methods of streaming video, along with the rush toward high-speed connections, new Web-based entertainment networks with video-driven programming have begun to appear—often with the backing of Hollywood cash and talent. At *The Sync* (www.thesync.com), feature films, like the classic *Nosferatu*, fraternize with edgy video shows like *SnackBoy*.

I'll let you draw your own conclusions about why someone would use *AT&T Chat 'N Talk*, which is available through Excite (talk.excite.com/chatntalk/).

Just consider this *Chat 'N Talk* scenario: You've met someone in a chat room and, after a few preliminaries, you're yearning to hear the individual's melodious voice. What better way than a phone call! But you don't want to give her—uh, the other individual—your phone number. *Chat 'N Talk*

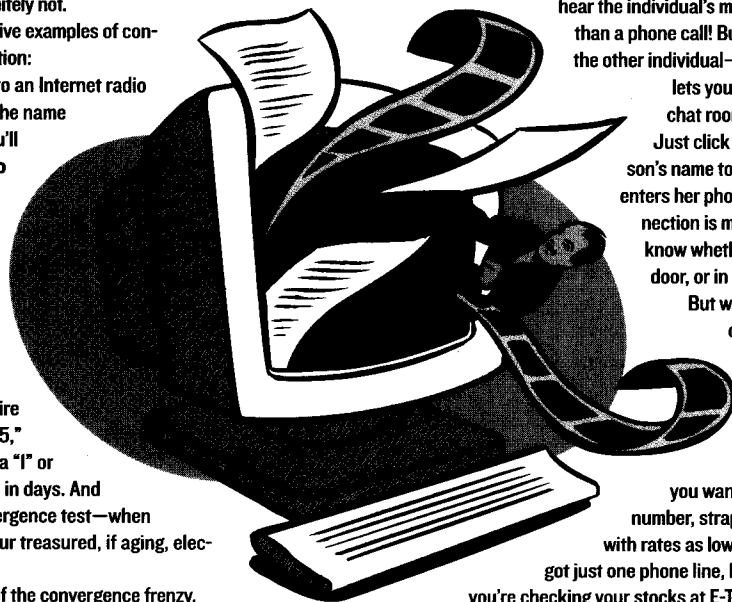
lets you phone someone you've met in a chat room without exchanging numbers.

Just click on the phone icon next to the person's name to start the call. If she's game, she enters her phone number, as you do, and the connection is made behind the scenes. You won't know whether she's in the apartment next door, or in Anchorage.

But who says you need copper wires to connect? *Net2Phone* lets you place telephone calls via the Internet. Once you've installed *Net2Phone* (www.net2phone.com), a handset pops up on your screen when

you want to make a call. Enter the phone number, strap on your headset and you're off, with rates as low as five cents per minute. If you've got just one phone line, here's a way to call Mom even as you're checking your stocks at E-Trade.

—A.H.



NICHE Fever

The Portals They Are A-Changin'

IS BOLT, AN ONLINE SPOT FOR TEENAGERS, A COMPETITOR OF LYCOS? YOU BET, as destinations designed for niche audiences target anyone disenchanted with the cookie-cutter aspects of the megaportals. *Yahoo*, *AltaVista*, *Excite* and the rest of the Web's primary portals evolved from the Internet's bare-bones search engines, transforming themselves in a few fast years into one-stop shops for all your digital needs: stock quotes, weather reports, news, free e-mail, shopping. Along the way, they added personalization to snag your attention, letting you set up a "start" page (like *My Yahoo*, for example) with your own television listings and sports scores. Portals aim to please everyone, with an unfortunate result: while high on convenience, they're low on character.

Enter the "vertical portal," insider jargon for a spot with niche-focused content and community, along with a service-driven, portal-like approach. *Bolt* (www.bolt.com) epitomizes the trend, with its free e-mail, talk of hair-

bleaching and dating disasters, as well as a look that's way cooler than anything you'll see at *Yahoo*. Go to *WebMD* (www.webmd.com) and you'll find the same thing, but now your world revolves around health. Expect to see these niche portals proliferate, even as your favorite sites, from sports hubs to online brokers, tack on portal-like features. The reasoning is simple: the center of your online life should be a spot devoted to something that matters to you—your career, your friends, your hobby.

That said, the mainstream portals still offer a more complete selection of features than what you'll find elsewhere. What's more, they add new gizmos, like free voice mail and instant messaging. Most portals will serve you well, but we prefer *Excite* and *Yahoo* as our top picks. Also worth a look: *GO Network* (www.go.com), *Lycos* (www.lycos.com) and *Netscape Netcenter* (www.netcenter.com).

—A.H.

INTERNET on the Run

We Have Seen the Future...



INTERNET ACCESS FROM YOUR PC? HOW TWENTIETH CENTURY. UNLESS YOU'RE HOPELESSLY retro, or a die-hard Luddite, you'll soon be grabbing an appliance to get online.

Let's agree on a basic proposition: convenience should be at the heart of the online experience. Movie tickets, e-mail, MP3s, weather reports, stock quotes—you want these anytime, anywhere. Yet neither the computer, that bulky, deskbound, crash-prone dinosaur, nor even the laptop offers much convenience. These machines were designed for the working drone, not for the mobile everyman.

Enter the Internet appliance: any digital device, from an Internet-capable wireless phone to an MP3 player, offering hassle-free online access or connectivity. The "appliance" moniker conveys everything the PC is not—easy to use and designed for just one or two purposes (compared with the computer, with its "I can do anything" approach).

Consider the **Sharp TelMail TM-20** (\$149, with a \$9.95 monthly access fee), a checkbook-sized e-mail grabber. Just dial an 800-number and hold the TelMail up to the phone—even a pay phone—to send or receive e-mail. With two AA batteries, it runs for 100 hours. At 9.5 ounces, you can throw it in your backpack without having to beg your girlfriend for a massage at the end of the day.

Or try the **iToaster** (\$19.95 per month for two years, from Microworkz.com), a nifty little box—sort of like a stripped-down computer—which lets you surf the Web, check e-mail, track your finances and handle other PC-like tasks, but without the glitches that come with a souped-up PC. It's an easy answer for those who want to be a little wired with as little thought as possible.

For a more multipurpose tool, the **Palm VII** (about \$599, from 3Com) offers the usual PDA features, but also the ability to connect to the Net wirelessly, via a pop-up antenna: trade stocks, pay bills, get driving directions. It's the latest and greatest gadget in the ever-expanding Palm universe.

This is, of course, just the beginning. We're entering a networked future in which Internet-connected appliances will be everywhere. In your car, you'll use voice commands to check messages and find the closest sushi joint. In the kitchen, you'll place grocery orders from a barcode-reading Internet fridge. Ultimately, you yourself may become an Internet appliance, with networked chips traveling through your body, *Fantastic Voyage*-like, to alert your doc to invader viruses. Stranger things have happened: turn on the tube for an hour or two and you've got a fifty-fifty chance of seeing Matt Drudge.

—A.H.