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Letters

Illinois' Elgin marvels

I read with fascination the account of the antique instruments at the Adler Planetarium in Chicago ("Instrumental Changes in Astronomy," SN: 12/19&26/92, p.424). I wonder whether the Websters are aware of the excellent book titled *Adler Planetarium and Astronomical Museum*, written by Philip Fox and published by the Chicago Parks District in 1937. Twenty pages and photographs are devoted to a scholarly discussion of the Mensing collection.

In the same general area of Illinois there is a collection of clocks, the Elgin collection, of the same age and beauty as the Mensing instruments. When I last visited the exhibit, it was housed in a most unlikely location: a large motel at the intersection of routes U.S. 20 and Interstate 90. My map shows Cherry Valley, on

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Cover: Water in its many forms is a common, familiar substance. But on a molecular level, it remains mysterious. Scientists are now looking more closely at water's role in protein function and in the formation of coal and oil. (Photo: Ivars Peterson)



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Science Service, which publishes SCIENCE NEWS, is a nonprofit corporation founded in 1921. It gratefully accepts tax-deductible contributions and bequests to assist its efforts to increase the public understanding of science, with special emphasis on young people. More recently, it has included in its mission increasing scientific literacy among members of underrepresented groups. Through its Youth Program it administers the International Science and Engineering Fair, the Science Talent Search for the Westinghouse Science Scholarships, and publishes and distributes the *Directory of Student Science Training Programs for Precollege Students*.

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the outskirts of Rockford, Ill., as the nearest community.

J. Earl Thomas
Ithaca, N.Y.

The rug is mite-ier than the vacuum

"Mite" the reason that "Mites in the carpet stay under the couch" (SN: 1/9/93, p.27) have something to do with vacuuming? You say that "mites may be sensitive to relative humidity and so may do best in protected spots. . . ." Perhaps it is protection from the vacuum cleaner that leaves more mites beneath the couch than "along traffic patterns."

Steve Vogel
Maple Shade, N.J.

Actually, Mollet and her colleagues find that vacuuming sucks up just a small proportion of the mites.

— E. Pennisi

Reach out and touch Argonne

It is nice to know the phone number of the Argonne National Laboratory electronic bulletin board for science teachers and students ("Briefs: Help is on the way," SN: 1/9/93, p.31).

It would be even nicer to know the allowable baud rates, number of data bits, parity, and so on and whether the system is full duplex or half duplex.

For most of us, 708-252-8241 is long distance. How many calls would it take to get these essential communications parameters correct by trial and error?

Kenneth H. Folse
Oxon Hill, Md.

This should save you at least one call. Set your modem for: 8 data bits, no parity, one-stop bit, full duplex. Those using Internet can reach Newton at the following addresses: "newton.dep.anl.gov" or 130.202.92.50."

— J. Raloff

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