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Bearing with pollutants

"Pollution conundrum has fishy solution" talks about the role of migratory salmon in spreading pollutants such as DDT and PCBs (SN: 5/9/98, p. 293). Since bears in these areas prey upon the salmon during their spawning migration, do the bear populations also contain high concentrations of DDT and PCBs?

*Robert Richards
Metairie, La.*

Numerous studies over the past 15 years have documented a growing accumulation of organochlorine pollutants, including DDT, in large marine mammals, fish-eating birds, and polar bears.
—J. Raloff

Surfing the Web with Dewey?

Lawrence and Giles point to the explosive growth of the Internet as the reason many Web searches turn up less than optimum information ("Web searches fall short," SN: 5/2/98, p. 286). While this may be true, much of the problem lies with the keyword search technique itself.

Such searches are limited, for example, by language. Only languages known to the searcher may be employed. They are limited by vocabulary. If the creator of a Web page has not used the same lexicon as the searcher, the page will not be found.

They are also limited by a lack of hierarchical organization. If you're looking for information on dogs, you may not find—and the keyword search will not lead you to—more general material on other carnivores or more specific information about the various uses and functions of dogs.

Most of the search engines on the Web attempt to overcome these shortcomings by cataloguing their information, but this is reinventing the wheel. All of the deficiencies of the keyword search method, as well as the shortcomings of the cataloguing systems themselves, were encountered long ago and solutions worked out by the folks who administer the Dewey decimal classification.

Yes, I know, Dewey has been around since the year 1, but it is the only classification that is specifically designed to classify information on all subjects in all languages in every kind of collection. It has a detailed hierarchical structure and a means for manipulating

that structure in both more general and more specific directions.

Yahoo, Infoseek, and the others, take note.
*Robert G. Chester
Clearwater, Fla.*

Is this patent chimerical?

Only inventions are patentable. Ideas are not ("Patenting the Minotaur?" SN: 5/9/98, p. 299). Stuart A. Newman and Jerry Rifkin cannot hope to be granted a patent on the making of human-animal chimeras, since "such creatures have not been made yet."

*Jeffrey D. Mueller
Eldersburg, Md.*

According to Newman and Rifkin's lawyer, human-animal chimeras do not have to exist before a patent can be issued for a technique to create them. Scientists have created chimeras between other species, demonstrating the legitimacy of the method. Newman and Rifkin are merely seeking a patent on the use of the same method to create human-animal chimeras for specific medical or research purposes. While an idea may not be patentable, the novel application of that idea to a specific goal is potentially patentable.
—J. Travis

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Cover: The Mediterranean has been invaded by a beautiful but aggressive alien plant that is turning diverse seafloor ecosystems into monoculture meadows. Help may be on the way, however, as scientists investigate the possibility of unleashing some equally alien mollusks to graze on the newcomer. **Page 8** (A. Meinesz, Univ. of Nice-Sophia Antipolis)

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