

## The National Park Service: ParkNet.

Access: <http://www.nps.gov/>.

With 384 parks, monuments, battlefields, seashores and other areas, 15,000 employees, and 90,000 volunteers, the National Park Service (NPS) is a large operation, with a Web site to match. Well designed, with liberal use of color and black-and-white photos, this site



is enjoyable to use and informative. It is aimed at the general public, but parts of the site also serve park employees, with links to items such as search and rescue forms.

"Visit Your Parks" provides detailed information for each park: activities, fees, camping, lodging, maps, news, volunteer information, activities for kids, park bookstores, and much more. "ParkSmart" offers NPS background information and educational materials. In "Links to the Past," users will find a wide array of historical and cultural resources.

For information on air quality, wildlife and plants, water resources, geology and people in the national parks, click on "NatureNet." On this page, "Data/Science" offers items of particular interest to academics, such as summaries of research projects in the national parks, research opportunities, guidelines, and permit information for conducting scientific studies. Extensive GIS data is available and information on the Sabbaticals in the Parks program. Apply now!

"Info Zone" includes the Reference Desk, with a searchable staff directory and park statistics. Also in the "Info Zone" are job announcements, information on NPS planning, budget, mission, and history. The legislation section includes links to recent laws related to NPS and announcements of upcoming hearings on the NPS budget. "Press Room" includes recent press releases, interesting bits of news from parks around the country, and daily news compilations with everything from

fire updates to train derailments in national parks.

As of this writing, a special section focuses on African American history in the national parks with photo archives, writings, speeches (such as Martin Luther King Jr.'s), and links to readings and related educational materials. One of the goals of Robert Stanton, the recently retired director of NPS, was to increase diversity in the NPS and among park visitors.

Although many of the pages on this site have been recently updated, many pages have no dates, while others were last updated just before the 2000 election. Since a new NPS director has not been appointed at this writing, it remains to be seen how this site might change under the new administration.—*Susan E. Clark, University of Washington, seclark@u.washington.edu*

## The Urban Institute. Access: <http://www.urban.org/>.

For researchers engaged in projects related to public policy on social and economic issues, publications of research institutes (or think tanks) can be valuable sources of statistics and expert analysis. These sources may be discovered in the course of index and library catalog searching, so an awareness of access tools provided by the institutes themselves is helpful.

A nonpartisan economic and social policy research organization based in Washington, D.C., the Urban Institute's (UI) "goals are to sharpen thinking about society's problems and efforts to solve them, improve government decisions and their implementation, and increase citizens' awareness about important public choices." In pursuit of these goals, UI produces reports about economic and social issues and makes these available online at no charge. It also collects and publishes statistical

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Joni R. Roberts is associate university librarian for public services and collection development at Willamette University, e-mail: [roberts@willamette.edu](mailto:roberts@willamette.edu), and Carol A. Drost is associate university librarian for technical services at Willamette University, e-mail: [cdrost@willamette.edu](mailto:cdrost@willamette.edu)

information through two centers: the Federal Justice Statistics Resource Center and the National Center for Charitable Statistics. Since its inception in 1968, much of the institute's work has involved government-funded projects. Current government partners include "more than 45 states and 20 countries."

For researchers looking for UI publications available online, there is a prominent menu labeled "Research." Although the rest of the homepage appears otherwise cluttered with icons, they are grouped broadly into categories such as "Special Projects," "News," and "Forums." This treatment highlights notable individual publications, events, and commentary—all of which are useful for serendipitous browsing rather than systematic access. To gain a sense of the site's overall organization, it is easiest to choose the "Site Map."

Within "Research," documents may be retrieved from a topic or author list or via keyword searching. The major topic areas are federalism, economics, social welfare, and community building, with several subtopics listed for each. Most documents are available in both text and .pdf format. In addition to the online material, UI also produces print publications, which may be explored from the UI Press link.

Of most interest to individuals seeking original research and statistics for economic, social, and public policy topics, the UI site provides access to a universe of research that is not easily accessible elsewhere.—*Cheryl Gunselman, Washington State University, gunselma@wsu.edu*

*Editor's note:* UI informs us that they will be releasing a revised version of their site in the near future.

**Women's Health Interactive.** *Access:* <http://www.womens-health.com/>.

Women's Health Interactive (WHI) is a commercial site established in 1996. Its mission is "to be a unique, interactive learning environment where women gain knowledge and mastery of their health through the multidisciplinary resources that are offered for consumers and women's health professionals." The bulk of the site's information is in ten different "Health Centers," covering topics such as mental health, infertility, head-

ache, and menopause. These Health Centers include quizzes to determine individual learning needs, informational content, FAQs, discussion boards, and an "Action Plan"—an online form for setting and tracking personal goals. Video Webcasts consisting of panels of experts are available for some topics. The main menu also includes "Women's Services," "Resources," and "Affiliations," which provide links to other sites, health care providers, and medical associations. A search of the entire site is also available.

The information is presented in a straightforward and attractive manner and is aimed at health consumers. Although women's health professionals are part of the mission statement, very little professional-level information is presented. There are advertisements and some health-related retail "alliances," but they are not intrusive. Users must create an account to use some of the services, such as action plans and consumer surveys. The WHI privacy policy is well stated and readily available.

The WHI site seems surprisingly unfinished for one that has been around for so long. While some of the Health Centers, such as Reproductive Health, contain significant amounts of information, the Nutrition Center offers only brief information on "nutrition for



a healthy heart." The discussion section contains only seven groups, the busiest of which had only eleven posts in six months. Some internal links were invalid, and a developer's note ("I recommend a picture here . . .") appeared on one of the pages. Links enabling the user to return to previous pages or sections sometimes aren't present.

WHI provides a good introduction to many women's health topics appropriate for a general audience. It is a promising site with some bright spots, but substantial growth would help it become a more complete resource. They do plan to continue adding more information and additional Health Centers. Comparable sites are the National Women's Health Information Center (<http://www.4woman.gov/>) and allHealth.com (<http://www.allhealth.com/>).—*DeAnne Luck, Austin Peay State University, LuckDL@apsu.edu* ■