

Rat Wires Schools for the Internet

Everyone's talking about wiring schools for the Internet, but how is it actually done? One way is to use Judy's Rat. Wearing a harness to pull a nylon string and computer cable behind her, Judy's Rat—usually called Rattie—scampers through crawl spaces too small for humans and areas contaminated by asbestos.

When a wiring job is too hard or too dangerous for a person, Rattie's trainer, Judy Reavis, puts Rattie in the wall or ceiling of a classroom. "And then I tap, and she follows the sound," says Reavis. Rattie knows where to come out from the walls by the treats laid out for her at the exit point: cat food and Gummi Bears. The final step, pulling the string to put the cable in place, is left to trained volunteers.

Reavis is a medical physicist and president of Hermes Systems Management, a Benicia, California, technology consulting firm specializing in new technologies for medicine and K-12 education. The company is one of about 10 000 business sponsors of NetDay 2000, a grass-roots effort to bring the Internet to the nation's more than 110 000 schools by the millennium. The project provides and installs cables, which Reavis says saves schools an average of \$27 000 apiece. "And it snowballs. Some companies help with donations of computers. Or parents do."

A former lab rat rescued by Reavis, Rattie had helped wire ten California schools by the time PHYSICS TODAY went to press. And she was in big demand. Reavis is currently training an apprentice, Rattie Junior, and she's had requests to teach kids to train rats for the job. Kids (and adults) can go to <http://www.judyrat.com> to ask Rattie questions about computers.

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making a big enough impact."

Kodak's 1997 financial setback followed three years of growth. The setback was due to losses in the company's investments in digital products, aggressive competition from Fuji Photo Film Inc and the effects of a strong dollar, Smith said. Now the company aims to reduce costs by at least \$1 billion, or about 6.7% over two years, with about half the reductions to be achieved through job cuts, and the rest through restructuring company operations. At a press briefing in mid-November, Kodak's president, Daniel Carp, summed up the company's streamlining strategy: "In general, we will do more within a smaller set of research opportunities."

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Stith Now Heads AIP's Physics Programs

James Stith is the American Institute of Physics' new director of physics programs. In that role, he oversees AIP's career services, education, public information and statistics divisions, its history center and its magazines (including this one). Stith, who succeeds John Rigden, is starting out this month on a part-time basis, and will be on the job full-time starting in March.

Stith earned his doctorate in physics education from Pennsylvania State University in 1972. He served in the US Army for more than two decades, mostly as a physics professor at the US Military Academy at West Point, New York, and then in 1993 he joined Ohio State University's physics faculty. A fellow of both the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Physical Society, Stith has been active on many committees of the AAAS, AIP, APS, the American Association of Physics Teachers and other organizations. He served as president of AAPT in 1992, and he is currently president-elect of the National Society of Black Physicists.

Asked how his West Point background influences the way he does things, Stith said he's learned to gauge when "there is enough information to make a timely decision. You can always change your plan if need be, but at least get things moving."

One thing Stith plans to look at is "the skills an emerging physicist really



JAMES STITH

Kodak to Cut Its Workforce by 10%

In November, Eastman Kodak Co announced plans to lay off about 10 000 of its 95 000 employees worldwide. The move was spurred by profit losses last year, said Charles Smith, a Kodak spokesman.

"For competitive reasons," Smith would not say how many physicists, or even how many scientists, will be laid off. But the first cuts in Kodak's R&D activities, which are based mainly at the company's Rochester, New York, headquarters, were made just after Thanksgiving, and included about 400 of Kodak's 7500 R&D positions total. (These figures include technical and support staff, as well as scientists.) Kodak will also reduce its investment in R&D by \$100-150 million in 1998 compared to 1997. The bulk of the company-wide job cuts will be announced in the coming weeks and months, Smith said.

"It's depressing," said one physicist who remains at Kodak but whose research area was hit hard. "It seems like people who were doing more basic research were affected more. The company would say those people were not

more international papers over the past few years: In 1990, 48% of its published papers were not of US origin; by 1996, the proportion had risen to 65%.

Merging the two national journals is seen by some as a tiny step in the move toward European unity. "Europe needs a channel for publications that really represents growing European co-operation," says Denis Jérôme, the former editor of the *Journal de Physique*, who is now the editor, with *Zeitschrift für Physik B* editor Siegfried Grossmann, of one of *EPJ*'s five bands. Jérôme hopes that *EPJ* will merge with yet other national journals and so "reflect the current political and economic drive toward unity in Europe." But at least for now, the UK's Institute of Physics will continue to publish its journals separately, though IOP's CEO Alun Jones says he "welcomes the merger."

English will be the main language of the new journal, Jérôme says, though "other European languages will be accepted if necessary." *EPJ*'s five bands cover hadrons and nuclei (A), condensed matter physics (B), particles and fields (C), atoms, molecules and clusters (D) and applied physics (*EPJ Applied Physics*). *EPJ* is available on-line at <http://www.ed-phys.fr> and <http://link.springer.de>.

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