

for NASA administrator at this critical juncture in the space agency's life. He will not shirk from applying tough and thorough technical analyses to the knotty technical, organizational, and money problems of the agency and will, I firmly believe, support a vigorous science research program." **PKG**

European expat network. Weaving together research in Europe with European researchers in the US is the aim of a network the European Commission (EC) is launching this fall: the European Researchers Abroad Link (ERA-Link).

An estimated 115 000 researchers from the European Union's 25 member states work in the US in the natural and social sciences, engineering, and the humanities. A planning paper for ERA-Link describes those researchers as "a patrimony of knowledge and experience, and a potential for transatlantic cooperation on which Europe could capitalise more effectively. . . regardless of the reasons that brought them overseas, and of whether or not they intend to return."

For their part, US-based European researchers are enthusiastic about the proposed network, a recent EC survey finds. Overwhelmingly, the nearly 2000 respondents across all fields and career levels said they are keen to forge closer ties with other European researchers in the US and with individual researchers and scientific organizations in Europe.

Initially, ERA-Link will consist of an electronic newsletter and website publicizing funding sources, visiting professorships, job postings in academia and industry, conferences, workshops, and student exchange opportunities in Europe. Later, it may be tailored to individual needs, says Alessandro Damiani, the science, technology, and education counselor in the EC's Washington, DC, office. "We want to keep it interactive and flexible."

For more information, or to join ERA-Link, see <http://www.eurunion.org/legislat/ste/eralink.htm>. **TF**

Attaining equality in astronomy. Nothing seems radical about the latest guidelines for establishing equality for women in astronomy.

The Pasadena Recommendations—so-called because they were drawn up by attendees of a national meeting on women in astronomy held in Pasadena, California, nearly two years ago—include principles like "women and men are equally talented and deserve equal opportunity" and "full participation of men and women will maximize excellence in the field." Specific recommendations are spelled out on tenure-track

hiring, career advancement and recognition, institutional policies, varied career paths, cultural issues, and statistics gathering. (The Pasadena Recommendations are posted on the Web at <http://www.aas.org/~cswa>.)

But less than a week after the recommendations were endorsed by the American Astronomical Society on 9 January 2005, their relevance was underscored by the controversial and headline-making comments of Harvard University President Lawrence Summers. In a closed meeting, Summers suggested that women are underrepresented in science and engineering because they don't work as hard as men, are not as good at math and science, and face discrimination. A transcript of his remarks was released on 17 February and is available online at <http://www.president.harvard.edu/speeches/2005/nber.html>.

Remarks like Summers's show that "we are not ready for complacency yet," says Meg Urry, director of the Yale Center for Astronomy and Astrophysics. "What we have learned in the past 20 years is that if you let the current system progress without intervention, nothing will change—the number of women won't increase, and may even regress." Urry, who helped draft the Pasadena Recommendations, notes that more than half of astronomy students aged 18–23 are women. "We are on the threshold of potentially being able to be fifty-fifty," she says. "It's important not to squander this exciting opportunity." **TF**

Carcinogen labels. X rays, gamma radiation, and neutrons were officially stamped as human carcinogens

by the National Toxicology Program this year. The US Food and Drug Administration's alarm over an increase in questionable whole-body computer tomography scans triggered the action, says Christopher Portier, associate director of the NTP. "The concern over CT scans led us to raise the priority for considering a review of x rays."

Some medical physicists and radiologists worry that the listing will scare patients away from using ionizing radiation for medical diagnosis. In late January, the American Association of Physicists in Medicine and the American College of Radiology each issued statements about their concerns over the NTP report, which was released that same month.

"We've worked for many years to maximize the benefit of medical radiation by minimizing the risk," says G. Donald Frey, chair of the AAPM board of directors. "We hope that the physicians are aware of this, that if they have calls from patients or colleagues, they'll be ready to explain the situation to people." NTP officials acknowledge that some carcinogens can be medically beneficial under specific circumstances.

The NTP, located in North Carolina at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, began listing human carcinogens in 1978. The listing now contains more than 200 individual substances, mixtures of chemicals, and exposure circumstances that are known or "reasonably anticipated" human carcinogens. For the first time, the listing also includes viruses—hepatitis B and C and

WEB WATCH

<http://silicongenesis.stanford.edu>



Inspired by Silicon Valley engineer Rob Walker, the **Silicon Genesis** project aims to record and publish the oral histories of the valley's pioneering physicists, engineers, and entrepreneurs. Stanford University hosts the site, which currently holds audio files and transcripts from 32 interviews.

<http://www.lightsources.org>

As its tagline declares, the online clearinghouse **Lightsources.org** provides "news, information, and educational materials" about the world's synchrotron facilities, 19 of which sponsor the site.



http://www.gemini.edu/index.php?option=com_gallery



Seven countries, including the US, funded the construction and support the operation of the two 8-meter Gemini telescopes. Images from the telescopes are available at the **Gemini Observatory Image Gallery**. For most noncommercial uses, prior permission to reproduce the images isn't required.

To suggest topics or sites for Web Watch, please visit <http://www.physicstoday.org/suggestwebwatch.html>.

Compiled and edited by Charles Day