

Investor's Business Daily

FOR PEOPLE WHO CHOOSE TO SUCCEED

Thursday, January 7, 1999

COMPUTERS MADE PLAIN

Web's The Vehicle To Get Out The Word

By David Noack
Investor's Business Daily

When Mike Farabee updates his biology glossary with the latest terms and definitions, the college professor goes to the Web.

Thanks to the Internet, he can include more than just a definition. He also can include links to relevant photos and, soon, sounds.

More online glossaries and dictionaries, on subjects ranging from poetry to microbiology, are appearing online. Just how many is impossible to determine. Most are the work of just a few interested people. But there are hundreds.

Farabee, who teaches biology and geology at Estrella Mountain College in Avondale, Ariz., started his online glossary in '95. (See box for addresses.)

"The advantage of hypertext (the Web's ability to link from one site to another) over printed text is interactivity," said Farabee.

He says students can find things quicker online. The only downside is that not all students have computers. But they can use a PC in the library.

"I feel that the glossary entries I and some users write are as good or better than what you find in an encyclopedia," said Farabee.

Lucy Snyder helped develop an online biotech dictionary in '95. Regular updates ended this year, but it's still a much-used site.

Coming To Terms

Online glossary and dictionary sites include the following

* **Campbell Harvey's Hypertextual Finance Glossary**
<http://www.duke.edu/~cnavar/Classes/wpg/glossary.htm>

Biotech Life Science Dictionary
<http://biotech.chem.indiana.edu/pages/dictionary.html>

Glossary of Poetic Terms
<http://shoga.wva.com/~rgs/glossary.html>

(Farabee's) Online Biology Book
<http://gened.emc.maricopa.edu/bio/bio181/BIOBK/BioBookTOC.html>

Newbies Dictionary
<http://www.geocities.com/~555babe/desc.html>

"One advantage is users don't have to shell out \$40 to \$75 for a science dictionary or have to go to the library," said Snyder, a public information assistant for an Ohio state agency that represents consumers in utility cases. "Another is that with an online dictionary, you can add many more layers of information than in a paper dictionary."

One problem, she says, is that some users misspell words, so their searches fail. Another is that some students have high expectations of what the site can offer. "Sometimes kids sort of expected us to do their homework for them," Snyder said.

Robert Shubinski started his online glossary of poetic terms three years ago. He says he updates it at least weekly.

"More now than just a glossary, my

aim is to provide a useful tool for all aspects of the study and appreciation of poetry," said Shubinski, a retired office manager from Berwyn, Ill.

He says one advantage of online glossaries is that "they're available in one place. You don't have to go from book to book or library to library."

Campbell Harvey's glossary of financial and investment terms has been online for more than three years. He first created it as part of a Duke University MBA program.

"My site was one of the first academic sites," said Harvey, a professor of finance at Duke's Fuqua School of Business.

He says the site gets more than 10,000 hits daily. The key advantage of the Web, he says, is its ability to link related material to a definition.

He says he'll add 1,000 new words and 2,500 links in the next version, giving him 3,500 words and 10,000 links.

Julie Workman, a Web page designer for a Midwest company, created the "Newbies Dictionary" about a year ago. She was prompted by her mother's questions about computers and the Internet.

"I figured there must be a lot of users, like mom, who were so new to computers that they needed a basic, layman's explanation of things," said Workman.

She gets about 60 to 80 e-mails a week from users looking for more info.

But pen and paper aren't dead. In June, Workman began publishing a monthly print newsletter that includes many questions posed by users, as a way of spreading the word even further.