

For events, debates and in-depth reports, visit www.bbcnews.com

Search news
Subscribe to our FREE newsletter

NewScientist.com

HOME | NEWS | HOT TOPICS | THE LAST WORD | OPINION | WEBLINKS | PRINT EDITION | SUBSCRIBE | ARCHIVE | JOBS & C



FEEDBACK

LETTERS

INTERVIEW

BOOKS

TOP NEWS STORIES

[Shuttle 'on track' for 2004 lift-off](#)

[Face transplants feasible - but not yet](#)

[Man versus machine chess match drawn](#)

[Microsoft news site to customise content](#)

[Nigerian vaccine tests refute contamination claim](#)

[Copper decimates coral reef spawning](#)

[All latest news](#)



TOP SCIENCE JOBS

Best live jobs in the hottest areas of sciences

[Cell Biology](#)

[Software Engineering](#)

[Genetics](#)

[Analytical Chemistry](#)

[Sales & Marketing](#)

Or [search all](#) of our jobs and opportunities

Strange but true tales from the world of science

First published in New Scientist print edition, [subscribe](#) and be entertained every week

- [Feel their pain](#)
- [What event horizon?](#)
- [Perfect for 183-year-olds](#)
- [Exquisitely boring](#)
- [Wordverbiage](#)
- [Affectionate tuna](#)
- [Keep tigers on leads](#)
- [Feedback competition](#)

DO YOU feel a sense of hopelessness when you read of yet another tragedy or disaster in the news? Do you feel guilty that you are powerless to provide any real help for those who are victimised or abused? Would it help at all if you could share their pain?

If so, <http://www.unbehagen.com/> might have an answer with its WiFi-SM: "WiFi-SM is an internet-connected wireless device that you can fix on any part of your body. It automatically detects the information from approximately 4500 news sources worldwide, updated continuously, and analyses them looking for specific keywords such as death, kill, murder, torture, rape, war, virus, etc. Each time the text of the news contains one of these keywords, your WiFi-SM device is activated through the WiFi network and provides you with an electric impulse. This impulse is calibrated so that you can feel a certain amount of pain, but is completely safe."

It's all a joke, of course. But it wouldn't surprise us if one of these days someone does make a device like this for real.

HAVE the newscasters at GWN News in Western Australia been mugging up on string theory? A recent item contained a segment on the Mars Express probe and the satellite dish at New Norcia, near Perth, that is monitoring it. The presenter explained that with two other similar dishes elsewhere in the world it will be possible to "explore our universe and beyond".

IS THIS ageism, or what? To access past articles on the [washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com) site, you have to choose a gender (M or F), enter country and zip code, and type in your year of birth. In a spirit of bloody-mindedness, a colleague of Feedback's entered 1897 as his year of birth, only to be asked to re-enter a "valid" year.

He then tried 1898. No go. 1899? Still no access. But 1900 worked fine and Feedback's colleague could read the item he was after.

So it seems *The Washington Post* does not want people over the age of 103 to access its archives. How unfair is that?

No such problems with an item in The Original Gift Company's catalogue offering "birth date newspapers". According to the catalogue, you can order copies of *The Times* published on the day you were born. A fine present for an elderly friend, we thought, and that includes very, very elderly friends. The catalogue assures us that newspapers for birth date gifts are available "dating back as far as 1820".

CONGRATULATIONS to NASA for sending out a press release with



Anyone think storing an in number of vi a disc should the Sorensor website, whe reader Theric discovered tl Sorenson Sq "Can reduce file size by 0 per cent"

Do you have Feedback? Send it to us

ADVERTISEMENT

For unbiased review cameras use **Digi**

- [Digital Camera](#)
- [Digital Cameras](#)
- [Digital Camera R](#)
- [Digital Camera R](#)
- [Sony Digital Cam](#)
- [Canon Digital Car](#)
- [Camcorder](#)
- [Camcorders](#)
- [Canon 300D](#)
- [Digital Camera Li](#)

possibly the most boring headline ever. We wonder how many journalists rushed to file a story when they opened an email entitled: "NASA administrator participates in panel discussion."

Stop the presses!

AT Clapham Junction railway station in south London, an announcement tells commuters: "To avoid overcrowding, we advise customers who are changing platforms to cross by the overbridge, rather than the station subway."

The "overbridge"? OK, but then why not the "undersubway"?

And, if this way of talking catches on, will we start hearing of "throughdoors" and "steppingstairs" and "insideinteriors"?

Very oddstrange.

IT SOUNDS like a film title in the style of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Reader Richard Tateson's canteen at work has taken to providing baguettes with enthusiastic descriptions of their contents. The cards with the descriptions are so small that Tateson's favourite tuna mayonnaise baguette is described as:

TASTY DOLPHIN

FRIENDLY TUNA

What a difference the lack of a hyphen can make.

EMILY Pearce, a reader from Hounslow, Middlesex, was puzzled by a sign in her local park that said: "In this area only dogs allowed off the lead." She wants to know what other animals people take to the park on leads.

FINALLY, a reminder about the Feedback annual competition.

This year you are invited to invent a new scientific word that we need and define it in an appropriately pompous way.

You may submit up to three entries per person by letter, fax or email. Thanks to the generosity of its makers, 10 lucky winners will each receive a bottle of Labrot & Graham's award-winning Woodford Reserve bourbon whiskey, and, thanks to Cambridge University Press, they will also receive a copy of *Climate: Into the 21st Century*, the outstanding overview of our weather edited by William Burroughs.

The winning entries will be chosen on the basis of their wit and originality. All entries must reach us by Monday 8 December.

The winners will be announced in the 20/27 December issue. The editor's decision is final.
