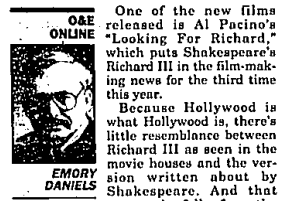


# Internet sites feature contests



**ONE ONLINE**  
One of the new films released is Al Pacino's "Looking for Richard," which puts Shakespeare's Richard III in the film-making news for the third time this year.

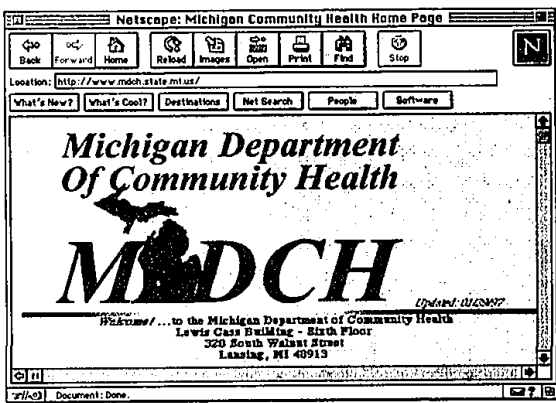
Because Hollywood is what Hollywood is, there's little resemblance between Richard III as seen in the movie houses and the version written about by Shakespeare. And that upsets the folks from the Richard III Society.

Compton Reeves, a professor of history at Ohio University and chairman of the American Branch of the Richard III Society, is pleased that the current focus on the classics returns Shakespeare to the hearts of the people. But, at the same time, Reeves is dismayed that "Looking for Richard" perpetuates a lot of myths about a historical person who was well-thought of by his contemporaries.

Shakespeare's demon-king, who murders family and friends to capture and keep the throne, bears little resemblance to the historical Richard, according to the society. "We are not anti-Shakespeare," said Reeves. "As a matter of fact, many of our members relish a rousing performance of 'Richard III.' Anything that increases interest in the humanities is important to us, and we applaud Al Pacino's efforts to make Shakespeare more accessible. But setting the historical record straight is also very important to us."

This column is not the place to set the record straight, but Internet users can examine on-line texts including 15th and 16th century documents long out of print by pointing to <http://www.webcom.com/blanchrd/gateway.html>.  
Information on the Richard III Society, founded in England in 1924, was forwarded to our newspaper by society member Janet Trimbath of Rochester Hills and passed on to me. The society is dedicated to the noble purpose of the study of late 15th century English history and culture and to a celebration of the life and times of Richard III. It has more than 4,000 members of whom 750 are in the U.S.

**Vital records on-line**  
Applying for vital records such as birth certificates is now much easier by simply visiting the Michigan Department of Community Health's Office of the State Registrar Web site at <http://www.michdch.state.mi.us/>.  
Applications for birth, death, marriage, and divorce certificates can be printed while online or downloaded from the Web site. "MDCH will be continuing to develop ways to make it more convenient for citizens to request copies," said James J. Levenson, department director. "It's important for people to be able to get these documents with a minimum of red tape."  
Personally, I found the site quite useful. Last summer I learned that what I thought was an official birth certificate was really only a hospital certificate not legally recognized. So I visited this site and printed out



**MDCH: You can print order forms for vital records such as birth, death, marriage and divorce certificates online at the <http://www.michdch.state.mi.us/>.**

the application with ease. It saved me half a couple phone calls and waiting for the mail to arrive by email. It printed out with complete instructions and the address where to send the form.

The site also provides interesting statistics such as rates of cancer cases for the state and counties, leading sites of cancer, county and state death rates, infant death rates, leading causes of death, fertility, abortion and pregnancy rates, hospitalization rates, and estimates of the number of physicians by county.  
The site also includes reports on early diagnosis of breast cancer, the leading causes of death, availability of nurses in Michigan, and the changing use of MRIs.

**Help with repairs**  
Autoassistance provides unbiased professional help with auto repair questions, product recalls, safety recalls, warranties, consumer rights in auto repair matters, and much more.

"Today people would rather endure a root canal without Novocain than take their car in for service," said Roy Sufin, president of Autoassistance. "This is primarily because they feel they will be taken advantage of, and rightly so."  
Autoassistance helps consumers avoid repair fraud by helping them become informed consumers and by placing experts in their corner. The Plymouth-based firm works only for its members who have phone access to ASE certified automotive technicians with a minimum of 10 years experience.

Anyone interested in the services provided by Autoassistance can visit its Web site at <http://home.earthlink.net/~autoassistance/> for a picture of what the firm does and how it does.

**AutoConnect**  
Speaking of automobiles, a joint partnership recently has been formed to promote the use of the Internet as an automotive retailing medium.

Joining hands were Hall Auto World, one of the largest automotive dealership retail chains in the U.S., and ADP AutoConnect, a new one-stop free automotive Internet service.  
Point to <http://autoconnect.net> and you will find AutoConnect, which allows consumers to easily and conveniently find answers to virtually any automotive question. This site has links to nearly 4,000 auto dealerships, more than 90 auto manufacturers, auto clubs and associations, parts and service sites, and on-line auto industry publications.

With direct access to a dealership home page, potential car buyers and service customers can access information on sales, service, location, personnel and hours of operation.

**Savings Bond on-line**  
The Savings Bond Informer, Inc., a company that has tried to educate U.S. Savings Bond owners since 1990, has made its expertise and insight available on a Web site.

The TSBI Web site contains tips and information for bond owners on such topics as common misconceptions, tax traps, and savings bond resources. Dan Pederson, an author and savings bond expert, also is featured on the site. Point to <http://www.bondinformer.com>.  
(Emory Daniels may be reached via E-mail at [emoryd@online.com](mailto:emoryd@online.com). Past columns are archived on-line at <http://observer.earthlink.com/main/emoryd/archive.html>.)

## Tots from page E1

"We are teaching 1,000 children on a weekly basis," said Computertots marketing manager Joan Patzelt.

Some school districts welcome the program as an after-school activity. Pre-schools and day care centers have it available to their students as an extra curricular program offered to interested families on a weekly basis, said Patzelt.

Setting up a Computertots program is a very flexible process. The company works hard to meet time frames and schedules to accommodate their clients.

"We do it a lot of different ways," explained Patzelt. "For community education, it's usually a six- to eight-week course but for the day cares or pre-schools we can have the same schedule as the schools or we even go year-round at some locations."

Computertots currently employs 18 part-time instructors and all have either two- or four-year college degrees.

On class days, teachers arrive at the classroom sites with a computer and all the accessories necessary to work with their pupils.

The instructor works with a maximum of three students at any one time and each class is 30 minutes long, said Patzelt.

The youngest students, 3 to 5 year olds, are enrolled in a course called Computertots. Basic information about the computer and its equipment, including the use of disks, the hand-held mouse and the keyboard, are introduced to the little ones.

The first through sixth grade pupils are part of a class dubbed "the explorers program."

They work with more advanced software and get involved in ongoing projects and a variety of special programs geared to their age level.

"Every class has something about computer hardware introduced and then the focus is to provide something educational for them too," said Patzelt.

Software utilized by Computertots instructors has been researched and is always free of violence and cultural bias.

The programs are not game based like Nintendo but rather all have an educational focus.

"The software is fun and colorful and there's sound with talking and singing and interactive things," said Patzelt.

"There are a lot of games in

**"It's so interesting to watch the 3-year-olds on the computers because they are totally fearless and they pick it up so fast."**  
**Joan Patzelt**  
Marketing manager

there but it's all educational."

"Computer Turtle" is a hand puppet that delights the students when he comes into the classroom and sings songs.

The positive response from both students and parents at Echo Park has been a pleasant surprise for Diano Quarles.

"We didn't do a lot before with computers because we thought the children would be involved in that at home," she said. "But when we asked parents about this class, the response was overwhelming."

The preschool has 55 4-year olds stepping up to the terminals set up by Computertots every Friday afternoon. The programs became so popular so fast that the company sends five teachers to the site to work with the group.

"It's so interesting to watch the 3-year-olds on the computers because they are totally fearless and they pick it up so fast," said Patzelt.

When Computertots takes their program to day care centers that house children of all ages, getting the appropriate program set up is no problem, said Patzelt.

The instructors simply customize their lesson plan to accommodate the skill levels of each set of students.

"And we are always updating the software so we're staying up with technology," said Patzelt.

"We recently got a digital camera as part of their software and the kids have been creating and developing their own slide shows."

Said Quarles: "The language is there, it's well supervised the staff is great and the student/teacher ratio is low."

"It's a good organization and we have been really a happy with them."

Computertots course fee is \$30 a month, which pays for four 30-minute classes.

A lower rate can be arranged if the group is large like the one at Echo Park Learning Center.

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