

IDEAS MARKET

WEEK IN WORDS: ERIN MCKEAN



A field guide to unusual words in this week's Wall Street Journal.

Coming and Going MIMO

On its new fourth-generation network, Verizon Wireless also is applying a technique that involves the use of more than one antenna at the transmitter and phone. Called multiple input, multiple output, or MIMO, it pushes through more data without requiring more bandwidth or power.

—"Wringing Out More Capacity," Corporate News, March 19

Other "in and out" acronyms include FIFO (first in, first out), LIFO (last in, first out), GIGO (garbage in, garbage out), and DIDO (day in, day out).

Ready to Bend flexicurity

Another key plank of the labor overhaul is inspired by the Scandinavian and Dutch labor models of so-called flexicurity which, while giving businesses more flexibility in managing their work force, also grant workers a greater safety net if they are between jobs.

—"Italy Plans Major Labor Overhaul in Bid to Help Youth," World News, March 21

Other flexi- words include flexitarian (someone who is normally a vegetarian, but who sometimes eats meat or fish); flexiplace (allowing workers to choose not just to work from home, but from cafes, other offices, etc.); and flexidisc (a record made from very thin vinyl).

Despicable Diagnosis

Drapetomania

Dr. Samuel Cartwright, a pillar of "scientific" racism, even invented a mental "disease"—he called it Drapetomania—to explain slaves' penchant for running away.

—"Delusions of the Master Class," Books, March 17-18

Drapetomania comes from Greek roots meaning "runaway slave" and "madness." One brutal "cure" for this "disease" was to remove both big toes, in order to make running impossible.

A Few Pointers

nibs

Navitas Naturals, sold by Navitas LLC, Novato, Calif., offers crunchy whole beans or nibs—beans with the shell removed—at \$10 for an 8-ounce bag.

—"Heart-Healthy Chocolate: Dark and Bitter Treat," Personal Journal, March 20

Nib is one of a set of words that all mean something like "sharp point" (including nab, a peak or prominent hill, and neb, a nose) and which all ultimately derive from an Indo-European root meaning "beak."

Ms. Mckean is a lexicographer and the founder of Wordnik, an online dictionary focusing on how words are used today.

SENTIMENT TRACKER: A COMPUTATIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE CONVERSATION ON SOCIAL NETWORKS

TEBOW AND THE JETS

The online buzz about the Denver Broncos trading Tim Tebow to the New York Jets.

Out of 28,000 posts.

29% FOR IT

'Jets getting Tebow was a great move. Rex & Tebow for the win!'

'Tim Tebow will look great in Jets green.'

'I am now a New York Jets fan!!!!'

'They need a leader and a reputation makeover!'

'Linsanity + Tebowmania = crazy great sports in NYC.'

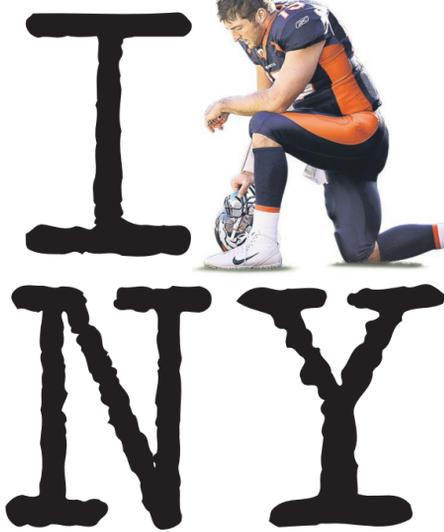
34% AGAINST IT

'Jets made a big mistake.'

'The Broncos really did Tebow dirty.'

'Just great. Now the Jets have the two worst QBs in the NFL!'

'Jets fans might as well kill themselves now.'



30% COMPARISONS TO MARK SANCHEZ

'Jets fans will start appreciating Sanchez when they see how bad Tim really is.'

'In terms of accuracy, Sanchez is better than Tebow. But that's like saying that D-student is better than that F student.'

'I'd take Tebow over Sanchez any day.'

7% JOKES

'Someone has told Tebow that there's a team called the Devils located fairly close to his new home stadium, right?'

'Now Tebow is back on the coast... Plenty of places to walk on water.'

'Tebow chose God, but God chose Peyton Manning.'

Associated Press (Tebow)

Source: **NETBASE** NetBase Solutions, Inc. Based on an analysis of traffic from Twitter and Facebook between March 19 and March 23.

WEEK IN IDEAS: CHRISTOPHER SHEA

ADDICTION Drying Out With LSD

A fresh analysis of six old experiments on LSD as a treatment for alcoholism found that the treatment worked—at least for a while.

Collectively the experiments showed one LSD dose to be roughly as effective against alcoholism as daily doses of three medications often prescribed today: naltrexone, acamprosate and disulfiram.

The six studies, between 1966 and 1970, involved more than 500 patients, of whom 325 received a single substantial dose of the psychedelic drug. The control groups either got



no drug or very low LSD doses. Overall, 59% of the patients who'd taken LSD showed improvement at the first follow-up after

treatment, compared with 38% for the control group. The improvement was also statistically significant at two to three months, and at six months—though not at the one-year mark.

"Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD) for Alcoholism: Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials," Teri S. Krebs and Pål Ørjan Johansen, *Journal of Psychopharmacology* (forthcoming)

PSYCHOLOGY Blogging as Therapy

Many therapists recommend that their patients keep diaries, but blogging might be even better for mental health, a study suggests.

Researchers in Israel recruited 160 nonblogging teenagers who had scored low on a test of social and emotional well-being. Participants were asked to blog about their problems for 10 weeks (under a pseudonym); to blog about anything they wished; or to keep a diary in an unshared computer file. There was also a control group.

Before and after the experiment, the teens took tests measuring their self-esteem and satisfaction with interactions with peers; and their writing was also analyzed for clues about their mental health.

By the end of the experiment, the teenagers who had blogged about their problems showed more improvement than the other groups—including those who'd kept a private diary. But given the risks of disclosure, the authors said this kind of frank blogging should occur only as part of a supervised treatment program.

"The Therapeutic Value of Adolescents' Blogging About Social-Emotional Difficulties," Meyran Boniel-Nissim and Azy Barak, *Psychological Services* (forthcoming)

EMPLOYMENT The Beauty Premium

When a photo accompanies a job application (as is common in Argentina), attractive job seekers of both sexes get called back 36% more often than unattractive ones, a study finds.

Three economists in Buenos Aires used what they described as objective measures of beauty: facial proportions that other studies have suggested are universally fetching. The researchers created composite photos of people in their 20s,



then adjusted the ratios to make them more attractive or less.

During two months in 2010, the researchers sent out 2,500 applications, with the résumés of the job candidates carefully made similar. Of the attractive fictional candidates, 10.3% were called, compared with 7.6% of the unattractive ones.

"The Labor-Market Return to an Attractive Face: Evidence From a Field Experiment," Florencia López Bóo, Martín A. Rossi, and Sergio Urzúa, *Institute for the Study of Labor Discussion Paper* (February)

► See more from Christopher Shea at the Ideas Market blog, blogs.wsj.com/ideas-market.

WHEN A SENSOR FLAPS...



The key to building remarkably fine-tuned heat sensors, at low cost, according to scientists at General Electric's Global Research Center? Butterflies.

The wings of the Morpho butterfly are covered with complex nanoscale structures—shaped vaguely like Christmas trees—that interfere with and diffuse light, producing shimmering colors. These structures also react to heat. By implanting carbon tubes in the "trees," the GE researchers improved their sensitivity, creating sensors that can identify changes in temperatures as small as 0.018 degrees Celsius, and express them through color changes.

Existing sensors with that degree of sensitivity can be prohibitively expensive and too mechanically complex for everyday use. Potential uses for the bionic-butterfly heat sensors include identifying inflammation in human tissue and detecting friction in machinery before it leads to irreversible damage.

MIND & MATTER: MATT RIDLEY



Nature Has No 'Balance' For Us to Keep

IN HER REMARKABLE new book "The Rambunctious Garden," Emma Marris explores a paradox that is increasingly vexing the science of ecology, namely that the only way to have a pristine wilderness is to manage it intensively. Left unmanaged, a natural habitat will become dominated by certain species, often invasive aliens introduced by human beings. "A historically faithful ecosystem is necessarily a heavily managed ecosystem," she writes. "The ecosystems that look the most pristine are perhaps the least likely to be truly wild."

In the Netherlands, for example, cattle are being used to re-create a simulacrum of a Pleistocene woodland, because their aurochs ancestors would have been vital in keeping forest patchy. To keep African national parks from deforestation, elephant control is sometimes needed. To let aspen, willow and beaver return to Yellowstone, it was necessary to reintroduce the wolf, which reduced elk numbers. To preserve Mojave Desert tortoises, it is essential to control native ravens, whose numbers have been boosted by distant landfill sites.

Some ecosystems are enriched and made more productive by invasive species. In terms of "ecosystem

services"—the provision of clean water, the absorption of carbon, the creation of soil, the prevention of erosion—Hawaiian forests dominated by alien tree species can perform better than the pristine habitats they replace. Though many invasive aliens are notorious for the harm they bring (pythons in Florida, cane toads in Australia, brown tree snakes in Guam), many others enhance the local nature scene.

Intense management is the only way to have a pristine wilderness. What's a good conservationist to do?

Where I live, in the U.K., American gray squirrels are exterminating native red squirrels with the help of a parapox virus and a better ability to digest acorns. Aesthetically, this is a pity: The red is nicer to look at and part of local culture. But ecologically, one has to admit that the gray is better at filling the squirrel niche in our broadleaf woodland. Reds are really a pine-adapted species that had responded to a broadleaf vacancy after



the most recent ice age.

Ms. Marris's book goes further, challenging the very idea of a balance of nature. In the first half of the 20th century, ecologists came to believe in equilibrium—that natural systems tended toward a steady state. So, for example, a bare patch of ground would be colonized by a succession of species—annual weeds, then grasses, then shrubs, then

trees—until it reached its "climax" state. Conservation, therefore, was a matter of restoring this climax.

Academic ecologists have abandoned such a static way of thinking for something much more dynamic. For a start, they now appreciate that climate has always changed, and with it, ecology. Twenty thousand years ago the spot where I live was under a mile of ice. Then it was tundra, then

birch forest, then pine forest, then alder, linden, elm and ash, then most recently oak, but beech was coming.

Which is its climax? We now know that oak seedlings rarely thrive under mature oaks (which rain caterpillars on them), so the oak climax was just a passing phase.

Yet even as academic ecologists have abandoned balance-of-nature thinking, it still dominates practical conservation management. Ms. Marris quotes the ecologist Daniel Botkin: "If you ask an ecologist if nature never changes, he will almost always say no. But if you ask that same ecologist to design a policy, it is almost always a balance-of-nature policy": preserve this rare species, maintain this habitat structure, freeze in time this ecological moment, return this degraded land to a particular state, whatever the weather and whatever the novel arrivals of exotic species. Just as in our management of the economy, we think of states, not processes.

So what's a good conservationist to do? Ms. Marris sets you free: "In a nutshell: Give up romantic notions of a stable Eden, be honest about goals and costs, keep land from mindless development and try just about everything."

Oliver Munday (alcoholism); Getty Images; General Electric

John S. Dylkes