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Joining and Using the NMFRC—An Update

The National Metal Finishing Resource Center (or simply the NMFRC, or Resource Center) is a comprehensive metal finishing technical assistance and environmental compliance site that includes more than 20,000 pages of text and graphics. It is also a place to meet finishers from all over the world and to communicate with them on a regular basis. All of these features are accessible by "clicking" on the various menu icons that represent different elements of the NMFRC. Although the information is well-organized and indexed, its sheer magnitude can be staggering to a new user. This month's column provides assistance for maximizing the benefits derived from the first visit, and each return visit.

Joining the NMFRC

Joining the NMFRC is easy. Just follow the directions contained in this column. By the way, there is still no charge for using the Resource Center.

To visit the Resource Center Website, you must be using Netscape 2.0 or higher or an equivalent browser.* Set your browser for <http://cai.eclipse.net>. When you arrive at the home page (Fig. 1), click on "New Users Start Here." Your next screen will be a welcome message from the Director of the NMFRC. At the bottom left of this page, click on "Obtain User ID and Pass Code." You will then be presented with a simple electronic form. Complete the form and click on "Join the NMFRC" located at the bottom of the form. Within about two hours, you will be notified by e-mail that your user ID and pass code are activated. If you

have any questions about joining, or difficulty viewing or using the Resource Center, call the Webmaster (Mark Eelman) at 908/755-7753. Mark is an ex-metal finisher who has lots of experience with getting people connected to the Internet and solving software and hardware problems.

Navigating the NMFRC

The Resource Center home page is displayed in Figure 1. This page is divided into two sections. The larger of the two sections presents the NMFRC logo, some directions for new users and links to favorite spots on the Resource Center. The smaller box on the left is known as a "frame." The frame contains the table of contents, or menu, for this Website. When you click on a menu item, the larger screen moves to that feature while the menu frame remains. The permanent left frame or menu makes it much easier to navigate the various sections of the NMFRC without getting lost. A description of the elements linked to each of the menu items is displayed in Fig. 2.

Tips on Using

The On-Line Conferences

The On-Line Conferences are one of the most popular features of the Resource Center, because they offer a method of interfacing with the other members. New users may require a little help with this area. We are, therefore, focusing on the conferences this month.

With the On-Line Conference, people don't have to be simultaneously connected to interface with other users. Questions and other information typed in by users are retained in a database. When other users log onto the conferences, they select a particular conference and read through the messages. At any time, they can respond to a question or add

their own comment. All responses are retained for subsequent users.

The conferences are used for a variety of purposes like asking and answering technical or regulatory questions, making announcements about new plating technologies, and even having committee meetings. The latter purpose is well-facilitated by the on-line conference format. A committee chairman can post assignments or question committee members. Each member can get on-line at leisure and participate in the "meeting" by typing in comments, questions, etc. There are several committees already using the On-line Conferences. Also, access to any particular conference can be limited to a specific group of people. At the Resource Center, this is only done for committees where sensitive information is being shared. All technical conferences are open to the entire membership.

The following instructions will help you get started using the On-Line Conferences:

1. Select "Conferences" from the main menu (on the small left frame).
2. At the "User Name" and "Password" pop-up window, enter your Resource Center user name and password.
3. The first screen will ask you if you are a new user. Select "Yes, I am entering as a new user."
4. Note the new user form. Your user name and password are already entered. If you followed step 2, your user name and password are the same as for the Resource Center.
5. Please complete the rest of the form (your real name and e-mail address are important). "Off-line" discussion is very convenient with conferences because e-mail can be

* AOL users can download and install Netscape by following the instructions presented in the August issue of *Plating and Surface Finishing* (page 37) and updated in the November issue.

sent to any user directly from the conferences.

6. The signature, Web page, and interest and hobbies fields are optional (although your company name might be useful). Make sure you press the Submit button at the bottom of the page.
7. You will get a welcome screen. Click on "Main Menu," then list conferences, then select the conference you wish to visit or choose any of the other menu items.
8. The conferencing software organizes conference communications into what are commonly known as "threads," or groups of postings that represent replies to or comments on an original posting on that subject. When you post a new message, first decide whether your subject matter is part of an existing thread (there may be several threads running) or whether it is a new subject.
9. To begin discussion on a new subject, select *post* from the message listing of a conference. To add your message to a thread, select *post* or *post (quote)* after reading one of the messages in a thread.
10. During subsequent visits to the NMFRC On-Line Conferences, you will be informed of any new messages that have been posted since your last visit. Click on "Your Name, you have XX unread messages" to go directly to the new postings.
11. Help is available from each of conference screens and from the "Help" button on the main menu.

What's New at the NMFRC?
Here are some new features recently added to the NMFRC. (Click on "What's New" on the main menu.)

- Sep 4, 1996: Get 10-minute-delayed precious metals prices (gold, silver, platinum, palladium and rhodium) now on the Metals page.
- Sep 8, 1996: Need help right now? Try out the NMFRC Chat where you'll find staff and other NMFRC members to talk to.
- Sep 30, 1996: Read recent articles posted in the On-line Conferences in the new On-line Conference Reprints page.
- Oct 1, 1996: Now a broadcast e-mail message can be sent to all of

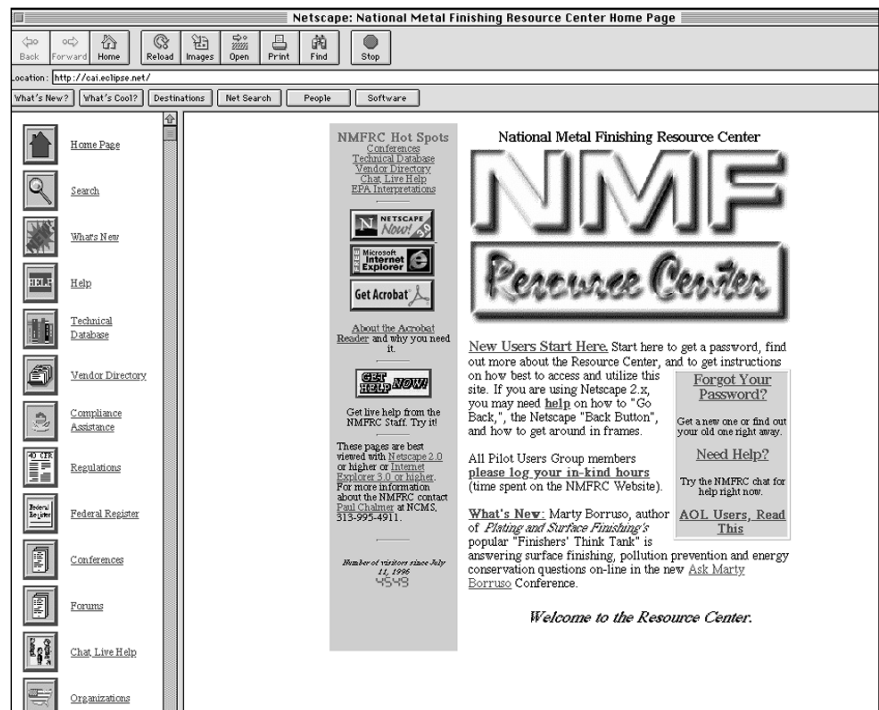


Fig. 1—The Resource Center Menu Frame.

the matches of a Vendor Database search (if the vendor has supplied us with an e-mail address). This powerful feature allows product inquiries and other communications to be sent to a number of vendors with a single message.

- Oct 1, 1996: Read recent articles posted in the On-line Conferences in the new On-line Conference Reprints page.
- Oct 2, 1996: Marty Borruso, author of *Plating and Surface Finishing's* popular "Finishers' Think Tank," is answering surface finishing, pollution prevention and energy conservation questions on-line in the new "Ask Marty Borruso" Conference (use of this feature is reserved for AESF members only).
- Oct 3, 1996: You can now search the NMFRC membership by state, province or country in the improved Member Directory.

- Oct 6, 1996: A new Platers' Calculator has been added. This one calculates the mass of metal in coatings where the thickness and surface area is known. If the price of the metal is known, the cost of the metal contained in the coating is calculated.
- Oct 11, 1996: A hypertext list of plating shops we've found with Internet websites. **P&SF**

Editor's Note: This column is one of a series highlighting the NMFRC, an Internet-based information system being established with the support of AESF, the National Association of Metal Finishers (NAMF), the Metal Finishing Suppliers' Association (MFSa) and the National Center for Manufacturing Sciences (NCMSJ).

Check out the AESF Website

AESF operates a major website through **Finishing.com, Inc.** Visit it to get the latest information on all the programs and services available to surface finishers at:

<http://www.aesf.org>

Fig. 2—Navigating the NMFRC

<u>Click Here</u>	<u>Go Here</u>
Home Page	The NMFRC home page. Locate general information about the Website.
Search	Various searching methods applicable to the NMFRC Website, the Internet, the <i>Federal Register</i> and the Business Commerce Daily.
What's New	Descriptions and links for the latest NMFRC features. Check here to see "What's New."
Help	Various types of assistance—help desk, "how to use the NMFRC," how to search the databases, how to configure your browser, how to use the on-line conferences, etc. Also, send an e-mail to the Webmaster.
Technical Information	Search the NMFRC technical databases for abstracts and full text articles and reports (more than 4,200 in the database). You can search by topic or by using a sophisticated search engine.
Vendor Directory	Search for vendors/suppliers of metal finishing equipment and services (more than 250 are in the directory). You can search by product, service or by company name. After finding applicable companies, send them all an e-mail message—automatically. Request quotations or information.
Compliance Assistance	Get in touch with local, state, regional or Federal employees who can assist you with regulatory compliance questions.
Regulations	Read summaries of environmental, safety and health regulations. Download, read and print-out full text regulations. Search through regulatory determinations (letters from EPA and others addressing specific provisions of regulations written under RCRA, Clean Water Act, etc.).
Federal Register	Search the <i>Federal Register</i> (FR) and read full text regulations. Read "today's" FR table of contents. Quickly locate recent Federal regulations that pertain to the finishing industry.
Conferences	Enter the NMFRC On-Line Conferences. Read messages, post a question, etc.
Chat	If you need help or have a question for the NMFRC staff, or if you would like to chat with other members, try out the NMFRC Chat.
Member Directory	Enter the NMFRC Member Directory. Search by name, state, province, country. Just click on a name to send an e-mail message.
Links	Link to hundreds of other metal finishing-related resources on the Internet. The links are categorized so you can quickly locate pertinent resources.
Metals, Stocks & Economy	Enter the metals, stocks and economy page. Get up-to-the-minute data on today's trading prices.
Calendar of Events	Check out what's going on in our industry over the next 12 months. Locate AESF conference dates and locations. Add an item to the calendar.
Platers' Calculators	Use on-line calculators to determine the rate of evaporation from plating tanks, calculate flow requirements for rinsing, determine coating weights and costs for plating jobs, etc.