

## NewsBank Hot Topics

February 2008

### CURRENT EVENTS

*See more information about these current events topics in NewsBank Special Reports*

#### **CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS - Super Tuesday**

**TOPIC:** Super Tuesday is the most significant day of the primary season in the race for the presidency. How many states voted on Super Tuesday? What were the largest states? What is the significance of the delegate counts? What are some examples of how some states differ from others in the way their primaries are run? Who were the winners? Was this the expected outcome?

**SEARCH TERMS:** primaries AND "Super Tuesday"

#### **ECONOMICS – Microsoft Bid to Buy Yahoo!**

**TOPIC:** Microsoft Corp. has made a bid to buy Yahoo! Inc. What are some problems that could occur in this transaction? What would be the impact on the computer software and Internet search engine industries? Who has offered to help Yahoo? Why would this company do this?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Microsoft Corp. AND Yahoo! Inc.

#### **ENVIRONMENT - China Snow Storms**

**TOPIC:** Central and Southern China have had a disastrous snow-storm. When did it occur? What was affected by it? What did this storm reveal about the infrastructure of China? How did the government respond to it?

**SEARCH TERMS:** China AND snow AND storms

#### **ENVIRONMENT - Tornadoes**

**TOPIC:** A violent wave of tornadoes has torn through the southern U.S. What are some of the theories as to the cause of these tornadoes? What is the assessment in damage and fatalities?

**SEARCH TERMS:** tornadoes

### **SOCIAL STUDIES RESEARCH TOPICS**

#### **CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS - Kenya Unrest**

**TOPICS:** After President Mwai Kibaki was narrowly elected, supporters of rival Raila Odinga claimed the election was rigged. Riots and killings between tribes ensued. What tribes are involved? What do they want? How has former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan tried to help the situation?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Kenya AND Mwai Kibaki AND violence

#### **CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS - Iraq's New Flag**

**TOPIC:** Iraq has passed a new law which changed the design of their national flag to eradicate any vestiges of the Saddam Hussein era. What will the new flag mean to Iraqis? Will this new design help in building peace between the different political factions?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Iraq AND flags

#### **CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS - Bush's Budget**

**TOPIC:** President Bush has presented his new budget to the U.S. Congress. What is the total cost of the new budget? What are some of the key costs? What are some of the key cuts?

**SEARCH TERMS:** budget AND George W. Bush

#### **CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS- Uprising in Chad**

**TOPIC:** President Idriss Deby amended the constitution of Chad to allow himself to hold office in perpetuity. What does this mean? Rebels have arisen to challenge his power and are presently fighting to depose him. What do the rebels hope to accomplish if their coup is successful?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Chad AND coups d'etat

#### **CRIME AND LAW - Marijuana Vending Machines**

**TOPIC:** Los Angeles has allowed some 24-hour vending machines to sell medical marijuana. How many machines have been set up? How does a patient gain access to the machine? How is the legality being investigated?

**SEARCH TERMS:** marijuana AND vending machines

**ECONOMICS - U.S. Economic Woes Impact Canada**

**TOPIC:** With their economies so closely linked, Canada is feeling the effects of the U.S. economic downturn as much or more than any other country. What are the major Canadian industries most effected by the U.S. economic slowdown? What part of Canada is most affected? What role, if any, do currency exchange rates play in the situation?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Canada AND U.S. AND Economy

**ECONOMICS - Economic Recovery Plan**

**TOPIC:** At President Bush's urging, Congress has put together an economic stimulus bill to spur the economy. What are some of the factors in the bill designed to stimulate the economy? What are some of the hotly debated points?

**SEARCH TERMS:** George W. Bush AND economic policy

**ECONOMICS - Nokia Boycott in Germany**

**TOPIC:** After the Nokia Corp. announced the closing of a plant in Germany, citizens of that country boycotted cellular phones manufactured by the company. Are these types of boycotts useful? Do you think these types of boycotts are legal? Has this helped resolve the situation?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Nokia Corp. and boycott AND Germany

**EDUCATION - Toronto Considers Separate Schools for Black Students**

**TOPIC:** In an effort to reverse the high dropout rate by black students, the Toronto school board is considering establishing alternative schools for these students with an Afrocentric based curriculum. Why does the school board think that this alternative school will reduce the drop out rate? What has been the public reaction to the idea of separate schools for black students? How will the curriculum differ from that taught at traditional schools?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Toronto AND Afrocentrism AND high schools

**EDUCATION - University Endowment Gap**

**TOPIC:** A growing gap is showing in college and university endowments. What kind of schools are receiving the largest endowments and which are receiving the smallest? What are some ideas to correct this problem?

**SEARCH TERMS:** endowments AND colleges

**HISTORY - Japanese Immigration to Brazil**

**TOPIC:** Brazil is celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Japanese immigration to their country. What are some of the contributions the immigrants have made to their new country? Is immigration good or bad for a country?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Brazil AND Japan AND immigration

**HISTORY - Vietnam War Anniversary**

**TOPIC:** The Tet offensive was one of the major battles of the Vietnam War. It was North Vietnam's attempt to both rout the South Vietnamese and the U.S. Now after forty years, the many people believe that battle was a turning point, especially in U.S. public opinion, and the start of serious peace negotiations. Do you think the Tet offensive obtained the desired results? Was the Tet offensive a military victory for either side?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Vietnam War AND anniversaries

**HISTORY - Ernie Pyle Photo Found**

**TOPIC:** A photo of the body of famous World War II journalist Ernie Pyle has been found. Where was it found? What kind of articles did Pyle become famous for? How and where did he die?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Ernie Pyle

**SOCIAL ISSUES - Turkey and Head Scarves**

**TOPIC:** Secular Turkey's ruling party has introduced legislation to lift the headscarf ban at Turkish universities. Critics say it undermines Turkey's secular constitution and public space and will result in a revival of religious practices. What is the Turkish law? Who supports the ban and who opposes it? What will be the effect on Turkey's move toward European integration?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Turkey AND Islamic clothing and dress

**SOCIAL ISSUES - Mardi Gras**

**TOPIC:** Mardi Gras began this year on February 5<sup>th</sup>. Where is it held? Why is Mardi Gras always on a Tuesday? What does the name translate to in English? What is being celebrated?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Mardi Gras

### **SOCIAL ISSUES - Australia to Apologize to Aborigines**

**TOPIC:** Australia's Prime Minister Kevin Rudd intends to issue an apology on behalf of the government to the Aborigines whose lives were disrupted by the "stolen generation" policies of the 1950's and 1960's. What was the policy that caused this term? Why wouldn't former Prime Minister John Howard issue an apology during his 11 years in office? Does the government plan to offer compensation to the Aborigines affected by the "stolen generation" policy?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Aborigines AND Australia AND apologies

### **SCIENCE AND HEALTH RESEARCH TOPICS**

#### **ENVIRONMENT - Wood Stoves**

**TOPIC:** The number of homes using wood stoves has risen significantly in the United States. What is the primary reason why people have been turning to heating their homes with wood? What has been an environmental concern with wood heating?

**SEARCH TERMS:** wood stoves

#### **ENVIRONMENT - China's Air Pollution**

**TOPIC:** China's capital city cancels outdoor activities for students on days with heavy pollution. With the Olympics on the way, efforts are being made to clean the environment. How will the air pollution affect athletes' performance at the Olympic Games? How are some teams preparing to compete in these conditions?

**SEARCH TERMS:** China AND Beijing AND air pollution

#### **HEALTH - Blood Type Change**

**TOPIC:** A young girl in Australia who received a liver transplant five years ago found her blood-type and immune system changing to match that of the donor. She no longer has to take the drugs that prevent her body from rejecting the new organ. Will this discovery lead to more transplants? Will organ donations increase to cover the demand?

**SEARCH TERMS:** blood types AND transplants AND Australia

#### **HEALTH - Public Dental Care Conditions in Great Britain**

**TOPIC:** British public dental care services are going through a difficult period as dentists increasingly refer patients to the private sector. What are the primary reasons causing this trend? Why do dentists feel the public health care system is failing them and their patients? Who feels the economic impact of this problem most strongly?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Great Britain AND dentists AND public health

#### **HEALTH - Magnesium Sulfate Cuts Palsy Risk in Premies**

**TOPIC:** Research has discovered the magnesium sulfate, found in Epsom salts, given to mothers just before giving birth prematurely can cut the risk of cerebral palsy in half. How have Epsom salts already been used during pregnancy? How does this work? What are the risks? What risks are reduced by this?

**SEARCH TERMS:** heart disease AND anxiety

#### **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY - Nuclear Power in Great Britain**

**TOPIC:** The British government is considering increasing the use of nuclear power to meet its energy needs. A new report has brought attention to the high cost of decommissioning older power plants and storing the radioactive waste. What is the estimated cost of decommissioning and disposing of the waste? What is Prime Minister Gordon Brown's nuclear power policy? What legal actions have been taken by environmental groups to stop or slow down any nuclear power plant construction?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Great Britain AND nuclear power

#### **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- Ships and Wind Power**

**TOPIC:** After several years of research and development, the world's first wind power assisted cargo ship has set sail across the Atlantic. What kind of technology is used? Is there an alternative power source? What will be the economic impact of this innovation?

**SEARCH TERMS:** ships AND wind power

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY – Mercury is Shrinking**

**TOPIC:** The planet Mercury is shrinking in size. What is causing this? How have scientists been able to determine this?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Mercury AND planet

**SPORTS RESEARCH TOPICS**

**SPORTS –Giants upset the Patriots in the Super Bowl**

**TOPIC:** The New York Giants have won the Super Bowl. What was so astounding about their win? What were some aspects of the game that decided the victory?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Super Bowl

**SPORTS – Bobby Knight**

**TOPIC:** Bobby Knight has resigned his post as basketball coach for Texas Tech University. What career record can Mr. Knight boast of? What was Mr. Knight's record with Texas Tech? What other university was Mr. Knight associated with during his coaching career? What was his record there? What are some controversies that have happened in Mr. Knight's career?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Bobby Knight

**SPORTS – Australian Open**

**TOPIC:** The Australian Open was recently held. Where did it take place? Who won? Were there any upsets or surprises in the matches?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Australian Open and tennis

**SPORTS – Cricket between India and Australia**

**TOPIC:** India's national cricket team recently toured Australia to play a series of International Test matches. The tour was disrupted by allegations of racism and poor sportsmanship on the parts of both teams. Who was accused of racism and why? What team was accused of poor sportsmanship? Why did the Indian team threaten to boycott the final matches? How was the situation resolved?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Australia AND India AND cricket

**SPORTS- Synthetic Ice**

**TOPIC:** The Betech Company of the Netherlands has succeeded in developing an artificial surface for ice skating. The new product is being installed in rinks around the world. What are the properties of this surface? Are there advantages to its use?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Netherlands AND ice skating

**SPORTS – Russell Baze**

**TOPIC:** Jockey Russell Baze has won his 10,000<sup>th</sup> race. What record does Mr. Baze hold in horse racing? What goal is he now going for?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Russell Baze

**SPORTS – Super Bowl Ads**

**TOPIC:** Television advertising during the Super Bowl is some of the highest paid ads in the world. How have user-generated content sites like YouTube impacted TV advertising such as ads seen during this year's Super Bowl? What are the Super Bowl's biggest advertisers?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Super Bowl AND advertising

**ARTS AND LITERATURE RESEARCH TOPICS**

**FILM AND TELEVISION - Berlin Film Festival**

**TOPIC:** The Berlin Film Festival is one of the three major European venues for international films. What is on view this year? How is this festival different from the others?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Berlin Film Festival

**FILM AND TELEVISION – Screen Actors Guild Awards**

**TOPIC:** The Screen Actors Guild Awards have been presented. What films were the winners? What actors and actresses took top prizes? What strike had an impact on the ceremony? What late actor was honored at the awards?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Screen Actors Guild

**FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE – Model for the Mona Lisa**

**TOPIC:** A researcher at the University of Heidelberg has recently uncovered evidence that confirms the identity of the woman portrayed in Leonardo Da Vinci's Mona Lisa. Who is the woman? What is the evidence that was used to identify this woman?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Mona Lisa AND art

**LITERATURE – Margaret Truman**

**TOPIC:** Novelist Margaret Truman was known for many reasons. What kind of novels did Ms. Truman write? Who was Ms. Truman's father? What career did Ms. Truman have before writing novels?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Margaret Truman

**LITERATURE - Best Sellers on Phones**

**TOPIC:** In Japan, cell phone novels are now considered a new literary genre and readers are spending 2 to 3 hours a day on their phones. Publishers are printing the more popular stories to keep up with the trend. Will this type of fiction delivery be good for building a new nation of readers? Do you believe the fiction will ever receive any major literary prizes?

**SEARCH TERMS:** cellular telephones AND fiction

**PERFORMING ARTS – Donizetti's Tudor Trilogy**

**TOPIC:** New York's Metropolitan Opera will be presenting the first two operas of Gaetano Donizetti's Tudor Trilogy. What has prevented the Met from presenting Donizetti's third opera in the trilogy? Who are the usual opera composers favored by the Met? How many of Donizetti's operas have the Met presented in the past?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Gaetano Donizetti

**PEOPLE RESEARCH TOPICS**

**PEOPLE – Bobby Fischer**

**TOPIC:** Bobby Fischer was a champion chess player. What was Fischer's role in the Cold War? What are some of the controversies late in Fischer's life? What championships did he hold?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Bobby Fischer

**PEOPLE - Geert Wilders**

**TOPIC:** Geert Wilders has spoken out strongly against Islamic fundamentalism in the Netherlands. Are his positions far from the mainstream? How have Netherlands' Muslims reacted? What policies does he propose?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Netherlands AND Geert Wilders

**PEOPLE - Sir Edmund Hillary**

**TOPIC:** Sir Edmund Hillary conquered Mount Everest and was a great friend and humanitarian to the Nepalese people. He also spent much of life on environmental issues. How will Hillary be remembered?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Edmund Hillary

**PEOPLE - Ryuta Kawashima**

**TOPIC:** Ryuta Kawashima is the scientist who invented the Nintendo "brain games". What is he doing now? What is unique about his attitude? How are these games being used today?

**SEARCH TERMS:** brain AND video games

**PEOPLE – Heath Ledger**

**TOPIC:** Heath Ledger was a famous actor. What country was he from? What are the mysterious circumstances surrounding his passing? What are some of the great films and awards of Mr. Ledger's career?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Heath Ledger

**PEOPLE- Samak Sundaravej**

**TOPIC:** After a year and a half of military rule, Thailand's elections have returned the country to democracy. Samak Sundaravej is the new prime minister. What is his party and what does it stand for? What is their connection to deposed President Thaksin Shinawatra and the disbanded Thai Rak Thai Party? What experience does Sundaravej have?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Samak Sundaravej

**PEOPLE- Thojib Suharto**

**TOPIC:** Thojib Suharto served as Indonesia's president for over 30 years before being ousted in favor of democracy. Who was Suharto and what did he do for Indonesia?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Thojib Suharto AND Indonesia

**PEOPLE – New Mormon President**

**TOPIC:** Thomas S. Monson has been chosen to replace the late Gordon B. Hinckley as president of the Mormon Church. What was the legacy to the church of Mr. Hinckley? What are some of the achievements of Mr. Monson?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Thomas Monson