

## NUMBERS

## Oil Job Growth Picks Up Its Pace, But Not Uniformly

Analysts, economists widely agree, are trying things right through the recession, and since then have led the expansion. One way to track the recovery is consumer spending in the local economy. To look at hiring by the region's major employers.

For retailers, retailers were one of the biggest drivers of Washington area job creation, adding 3.3 percent for the year ended in June, compared with 2.7 percent for other sectors.

This year retailers are adding jobs at the same pace — 3.2 percent for the year ended in June. What's changed is that other sectors are catching up. With local hiring overall up 3 percent in that span, retailers are no longer alone in their urge to

expand. The pace isn't uniform across different parts of the retail landscape, however. Major retailers are doing the best of the best in the oil sectors, adding jobs at a 10.9 percent pace for the year ended in June. This doesn't necessarily mean that major department stores have stopped hiring; the category also includes big-box stores such as Wal-Mart and Target.) Major sellers of building materials are adding 10 more jobs, a 7.1 percent increase, which makes sense given the boom in construction and home improvement. On the negative side of the ledger, food and drug stores have cut 1,100 jobs, a 3 percent drop. It could reflect grocers trying to become more efficient, or perhaps area

## MONDAY MORNING

# Biotech Pioneer Assembling Genetic Archives

In a frenzied period of scientific research that ran from the early 1950s to the late 1960s, a small group of biologists on both sides of the Atlantic unraveled the fundamental secret of life on Earth. Now, a treasure trove of 50 boxes of documents and artifacts from that era is about to find a permanent home in Rockville.

Rockville?

The city is a powerhouse in biological research, but until now it hadn't been known as a repository of valuable scholarly archives. That could change soon.

The latest development is the handiwork of J. Craig Venter, the molecular biologist who pioneered numerous ideas in genetic research, cutting a large figure across the scientific landscape but sometimes drawing the ire of rivals. Venter, worth tens of millions from his past association with two biotechnology companies, has endowed a Rockville research institute. And the J. Craig Venter Institute just spent "precisely \$2 million," Venter said, to buy a huge archive assembled by two California collectors.

It has letters to, from and about James D. Watson and Francis H.C. Crick, the scientists who unraveled the structure of deoxyribonucleic acid, or DNA, in 1953. They showed that DNA contains two copies of an organism's genetic information coiled into a helix, and their work led to the discovery that each strand of information could serve as a template for making a new DNA molecule. Such duplication is the means by which every living organism on the planet has been created.

The archive contains documents and a famous X-ray photograph of DNA from the laboratory of Rosalind Franklin, a scientist who played a key role in



BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

1962 Nobel winners Francis Crick, from left, Maurice Wilkins, John Steinbeck, James Watson, Max Perutz and John Kendrew.

the DNA discovery but died before the Nobel Prize for it was awarded. Also included are papers, laboratory notebooks and artifacts from other scientific pioneers, covering a period now known as the classical era of molecular biology.

"All these names are bigger-than-life names," Venter said Saturday by satellite phone as his yacht, the Sorcerer II, cruised the Indian Ocean on a voyage to collect samples of marine microbes. "When you see their actual letters and their notebooks, it puts a real stamp of humanity on these people."

The archive was the subject of a legal tussle between the two California collec-

tors, partly over the possibility it would be sold piecemeal. Venter's purchase ensures the material will be kept together.

Venter is planning a professionally run library where the material can be consulted by scholars. Important documents will be placed on the Internet. And Venter aims to add his own and other papers, perhaps buying more private archives.

So the Venter Institute and laboratories, home to a slew of research projects, may also become an essential stop for scholars trying to understand the early history of the genetic age.

— Justin Gillis