

# Dublin Core debate



Kerry Webb

On 12 November, the Australian National University featured a debate between Roger Clarke and Bimal Rajapatirana on the subject 'Should web developers use the Dublin Core?' It was a spirited affair, with Roger using his considerable mental agility to object to the rush towards the Dublin Core before considering its drawbacks, and Bimal calmly and rationally pointing out that the developers are conscious of these drawbacks, and are addressing them while trying to compile a useful body of metadata that adheres to some recognisable standard. (Readers who detect a degree of partiality in my report are to be congratulated).

The details of what happened, including how to listen to the recording of the debate, are set out at <http://www.anu.edu.au/web/authors/seminars/dc/>.

### Libraries use their purchasing clout

Libraries (especially university libraries) have long been concerned about escalating costs of access to publications. Now they're really starting to do something about it. The UKB Consortium of the Dutch university libraries, the library of the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences and the Royal Library, and university libraries in a large number of German Federal States have developed 'Licencing Principles' (at <http://cwis.kub.nl/~dbi/cwis/licprinc.htm>) that they will use as guidelines in their negotiations with publishers.

The guidelines cover the need to provide access to electronic information to students and scientists independent of their location, denial of access to unauthorised persons, the rejection of publishers' demands that prevent libraries from cancelling subscriptions in order to be able to obtain electronic journals on fair conditions, and the requirement that an electronic journal should be made available much cheaper than the printed journal, if a library wants to subscribe exclusively to the electronic version.

In a similar vein, the Association of Research Libraries has formed the Scholarly Publishing & Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), whose mission is to be a catalyst for change through the creation of a more competitive marketplace for research information. SPARC will operate as a project of the ARL Office of Scholarly Communication and will seek partnerships with member libraries and institutions, scholarly societies, university presses, and other organisations, including publishers, that share a common set of academic values and are interested in developing new strategies for controlling costs and improving access to research information.

For more information about SPARC, see <http://www.arl.org/sparc/index.html>

### Australian Book Web

Have a look at the Australian Book Web (<http://www.books.aus.net>) which has been compiled by Peter Smith from Bookshop Computer Services. It has a comprehensive listing (with links) of Australian booksellers, as well as Australian and overseas publishers.

The site also features the Australian Book WebRing at <http://www.books.aus.net/webring/>. I wasn't familiar with the concept of Webrings, but this one operates quite simply. All you have to do is nominate your site (it must be Australian and it must be predominantly about books) to the Ringmaster(!) for it to be considered for addition. The service is free.

### All quiet on the Shetland front

I wrote some time ago about the dispute in the Shetland Islands where two online newspapers were arguing about copyright and linking without permission. Well, it seems to have been settled without setting any legal precedents, although there were difficulties in cabling the Edinburgh courtroom where an online demonstration was planned as part of the hearing. The settlement statement is at <http://www.shetland-news.co.uk/headline/97nov/settled/settled.html>.

### More on agriculture

In the last couple of columns, I've featured the AgriWeb site. This time, it's the turn of the NSW Department of Agriculture at <http://www.agric.nsw.gov.au>. While not as flashy (distracting) as its neighbour, it is very informative with a wide range of fact sheets about animals, crops and weeds, as well as the services offered by the department. And referring to the home page as the Front Gate is a nice touch. The only trouble is, I kept trying to close it behind me. (Thanks to Jennifer Kirton for telling me about it).

### Criminal justice information

The US National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) Abstracts Database is now on the web at <http://www.ncjrs.org/database.htm>. This service will be free to all until February 1998, after which fees may apply for some users. The database provides 100-200 word abstracts for more than 145 000 criminal justice publications, covering United States federal, state, and local government documents; books; journals; unpublished research reports; and program descriptions and evaluations; from the early 1970s up to the present.

### Archaeology e-journal

For a good example of how an e-journal can be put together, see *Internet archaeology* at <http://intarch.ac.uk>. You can browse the tables of contents and read abstracts of articles in the four issues currently online, but to read the articles in full, you'll have to register. But that's not much of a problem, as registration is free.

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### COM conservation report

The Department of Preservation and Conservation at Cornell University undertook a two and a half year demonstration project to test and evaluate the use of high resolution bitonal imaging to produce computer output microfilm (COM) which would meet national preservation standards for quality and permanence. The project led to an assessment of quality, process, and costs, and to the development of recommendations for the creation and inspection of preservation microfilm produced from digital imagery. A web-based version of the report is available via <http://www.library.cornell.edu/preservation/pub.htm> and there is also information on how to order the print version.

### CD storage standard

The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) has just approved a standard on the storage of optical discs, including CD and CD-ROM, as well as CD-R and CD-MO. The official title of the standard is ANSI/NAPM IT9.25-1997 (Storage — Optical Disc Media). It provides recommendation on environment, packaging, labelling, shelving, and cleaning. Another standard, currently in preparation, covers handling and use of optical discs. Information on how to order this document can be found at <http://web.ansi.org/public/catalog/order.html>.

### For all the web tools (including monkey wrenches)

Hotwired has redesigned its Webmonkey site at <http://go.hotwired.com/webmonkey/>. They say that it's the comprehensive resource for web developers, whether first-time page builders or a big-shot webmaster. It has nearly 200 Webmonkey tutorials, recommended tools and books, and links to other developer resources. It's well organised with category listings for web design, HTML, dynamic HTML, stylesheets, graphics and fonts, multimedia, browsers, Java, JavaScript, Perl, and Backend.

### ACN site

It started two years ago (under a different name) in the previous federal government, and has just emerged as 'Australia's Cultural Network'. It's an initiative of the Department of Communications and the Arts and you'll find it at <http://www.acn.net.au> and features a whole heap of information — links to cultural web sites with a search facility, collaborative projects funded under the ACN program, and development guides and information on copyright, metadata and other useful topics.

It's understood that the development of this web site soaked up a good deal of the funds in the program. If that's the case, they've been spent wisely. It's an attractive and well-designed site.

### Library promotion

Sue Hutley from the Queensland Audit Office has pointed out The Library Promotion site at <http://www.ssdesign.com/prtalkshop/>. It has information on a number of ALA programs, including how to subscribe to their PRTalk list. With Australian Library Week '98 just around the corner (were those cheers or groans that I just heard?) it might be the place to get some good ideas.

### Ongoing philosophy encyclopedia

The Chronicle of Higher Education reports that philosophy professors at Stanford University are developing *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (<http://plato.stanford.edu>), which is designed so that the authors of articles contained in the compendium can update their subject matter as needed. The system then automatically alerts the editors, via e-mail, that new material has arrived, to be reviewed and made available to readers. Twelve editors and 120 scholars thus far have contributed to the encyclopedia, and the project's leader expects to have most entries completed within five years. (Mind you, philosophers are still debating the meaning of 'completed' in this context).

### Electronic records projects

The US National Historical Publications and Records Commission has recommended funding for five electronic records projects, including a pilot workshop to be conducted by the Association of Research Libraries and the Coalition for Networked Information to bring together teams of archivists and information technologists to explore electronic records issues, a project to develop guidelines to support and promote long-term preservation of and access to public electronic records of value to secondary users, including historians and other researchers, and a project to study the types of archival electronic records produced on the college level within a large university.

### New in Ariadne

In the November 1997 issue of *Ariadne* (<http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue12/>) apart from the usual list of useful features, there was a review by Lorcan Dempsey of '*New library: the people's network*', the report prepared by the Library and Information Commission for the United Kingdom Department of Culture, Media and Sport (there's a link to electronic version of the report). It outlines in considerable detail the public library services required by the United Kingdom in the future. While wishing it well, Dempsey notes 'The public library system that delivers these services will have to be designed, built and paid for. If it is to be achieved, this will be a major development exercise, involving unprecedented collaboration, investment and planning'. ■

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<http://www.alia.org.au/>

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