The promise of digital libraries

Kerry Webb

There was a request on the DIGLIB list for examples of how digital and traditional library services have been merged in various institutions. This arose because the decision-makers at an institution had believed that because 'it was all on the internet' then the paper-based collections could be sidelined and the main access would be through computer labs.

A couple of people responded with useful examples of places where the two had been successfully integrated. One is the University of Iowa's Information Arcade which is described at http://www.lib.uiowa.edu/arcade/. The Arcade is part of the Information, Research, and Instructional Services unit which includes reference, media services and user education. Another example is Tilburg University Library in the Netherlands. Papers published by the Library (in English) are listed at http://cwis.kub.nl/~dbi/english/publicat/.

New Lawlink address
Lawlink, the website for the NSW Attorney-General's Department has a new address at http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/. Apart from being very well presented, it has a whole range of information about personal rights, doing business, dealing with lawyers, privacy and much more. Other states have similar sites, but this one looks the best.

Our own Government Locator Service
The Australian Government Locator Service was set up 'to improve the visibility, accessibility and interoperability of government information and services through the provision of standardised Web-based resource descriptions which enable users to locate the information or service that they require' according to Adrian Cunningham's paper at http://www.naa. gov.au/govserv/agls/Metadata_paper 2Sept98.htm. The AGLS metadata standard, based on the Dublin Core, is described at http:/ /www.naa.gov.au/govserv/agls/ together with links to the users manual which is available in both PDF and HTML formats.

International metadata working group
An international group (mainly from the United States of America and United Kingdom) has been working on the question of the metadata required in the digital environment to support unique identifiers, with specific attention to dealing in intellectual property. The work has focused on two key areas: describing the intellectual property itself, and then the rights which users may have or may wish to acquire, and the terms and conditions under which these rights are available. The group has now developed an underlying model for metadata which they are trying to refine.

The working papers of the group are at http://www.bic.org.uk/rights, including the

minutes and papers of a major workshop held in New York on 18–19 June. The workshop identified that the group needed more practical input from all the players in the information chain, particularly publishers and intermediaries (secondary publishers and librarians).

More standards
On 31 August, Education.Au Limited (the former Open Learning Technology Corporation Limited) released the revised EdNA Metadata Standard. This standard will be used to improve the search facility and to facilitate more automated ways of collecting links to educational material meeting the EdNA content standard. To see the document, go to the EdNA home page at http://www.edna.edu.au then go to 'About EdNA', then to 'Standards and Protocols', then to 'The EdNA Metadata Standard' and you are there. (A URL would be easier to quote, but the document is in one of those database 'thingies'.)

Information ecosystems
A recent issue of the journal *Cultural Resource Management* featured discussion on the 'information ecosystem' (an organisation's entire information environment), with particular attention to archival preservation. One article that caught my eye was 'Cultural records in question — information and its moral dilemmas' by Michael F Brown, which looked at the American Hopi Indians' move to prohibit access to their material in libraries and museums, unless the user had specific written permission from the tribe. It could be quite relevant here. See the issue at http://www.cr.nps.gov/crm/ crm_curr.htm.

Olympic information seminar
The National Sport Information Centre is conducting an Olympic Information Seminar in Canberra on 14 October, to provide information on locating Olympic resources held in Australia and overseas which are available on the internet. You can get details of the seminar by e-mailing nsic@ausport.gov.au.

International copyright review
Having reported in last month's column on the forum on Australian copyright matters, I see that there's a discussion on the relations between four copyright collectives — CCC (United States), CANCOPY (Canada), CLA (Great Britain) and Kopinor (Norway) — and libraries. It's heartening to see the comment from CLA: 'Most unlawful photocopying takes place outside the library', but it seems that most of them are slow to move on licensing electronic rights. See http://www.mcgrawhill. ca/copyrightlaw/collect.html.

Metaguide to internet resources
The New Athenaeum is a global depository for internet resource guides developed and maintained by librarians and libraries all over the

world. It was established in August and already has a sizeable collection, but its author, Robert Tiess, is asking for more guides to be submitted. See it at http://members.spree.com/athenaeum.

ISSN online
The ISSN Register has been available on CD-ROM for some time, but since August is now accessible on the Web. It offers a multilingual database with around 150 languages represented. Non-Latin scripts are transliterated into the Latin alphabet according to the corresponding ISO standards, and special characters and diacritics are rendered through Unicode characters and displayed on most available browsers.

The service is available to all internet users on a free one-month trial, during which up to forty search requests may be launched, 400 records visualised and ten records downloaded (in their original ISO 2709 exchange format). After that, you can use it on subscription basis, either yearly or monthly. Details are at http://www.issn.org but be warned — even for a bilingual site, it is very cluttered.

Letting your (typing) fingers do the walking
The Librarian's Yellow Pages (LYP) is another publication which has been around for a while (in this case, in print form), but now it's on the web at http://www.LibrariansYellowPages.com. You can search LYP by keyword or by vendor name, and the guide features a 'What's new' section for each category of product.

New address for Lists site
The highly respected *Library-Oriented Lists & Electronic Serials* is now at http://www.wrlc.org/liblists/. The document was originally created by Charles W Bailey, Jr at the University of Houston Libraries in 1990 and had moved to its new site at the Washington Research Library Consortium, a regional resource-sharing consortium in the Washington DC area.

New York Times online
For a while now, you've been able to read the *New York Times* on the web, but only if you were in the United States of America. At last they have changed, and anyone can register. The site has the daily contents of the paper, with updates throughout the day, and a 365-day archive that you can search for free, but if you want the 'Diversions' — the crossword, chess and bridge columns — you'll have to pay $9.95 a year. It's at http://www.nytimes.com/.

School links
Matthew Sosimenko, an ALIA member working for a Web developer, reports a site with extensive links to schools in Australian and New Zealand. It is at http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/links/linkschool.html and has

website addresses as well as e-mail contacts. The host site — the New South Wales Board of Studies at http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/ — is also worth looking at. It has syllabus material, past HSC papers, statistics, and a pretty good 'net resources page.

Matthew also pointed out a page written by Mark Gregory at Macquarie University with a basic HTML tutorial. See it at http://www.chepd.mq.edu.au/boomerang/teaching.www/.

More on metrics
Last month I reported on a meeting of the D-Lib Metrics Working Group. The Group is continuing its work and a draft paper has been prepared on the application of traditional library metrics. In summary, the paper identifies four areas to concentrate on: measurement of a collection (both quality and quantity), measurement of use of a collection, measurement of user satisfaction, and measurement of service (both quality and quantity). To read the paper and contribute to the work of the Group, all you have to do is join, at http://www.dlib.org/metrics/public/index.html.

More on filtering
An article in the *Chicago Tribune* at http://chicagotribune.com/textversion/article/0,1492,SAV-9809030094,00.htm looked at the experiences of librarians in handling potentially offensive material, in the context of American legislation which would require mandatory filtering. It points out that we were managing the problem long before the internet came along, and are coping quite well now. It is a good article — much better than the inadequate treatment given by the ABC's *7.30 Report* at the end of August when it looked at the issue.

Conference reports
This year's Advances in Digital Libraries conference, held 22–24 April in Santa Barbara, California, has moved beyond digital library technologies to an examination of the political, social, and psychological aspects of creating access to, and using electronic information. There's a brief report on it at http://www.infotoday.com/it/jun/article3.htm.

And the proceedings from the 1998 VALA Conference are now online at the VALA site http://home.vicnet.net.au/~vala/.

Kinetica news
The National Library has announced that the draft minutes of the Kinetica/ABN 1998 annual users meeting have been posted at http://www.nla.gov.au/abn/committees/annualu/98mins.html. The information there includes details of the new Search Service, Cataloguing Service and Document Delivery Service to be offered by Kinetica, as well as reporting the extensive 'question and answer' and discussion sessions held during the meeting. ∎