Good design recognised

Kerry Webb

The Australian Design Cafe is a site which features articles on design, reviews of software tools, and a series of awards for good design (hurrah!). It has been going only since last August, but already has established itself as a site to watch. A recent feature was an article covering six steps to website design, written clearly and sensibly. See it at http://www.designcafe.com.au/article/.

It was a dark and stormy night
The English Department at San Jose State University has for some years sponsored the Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest, a tongue-in-cheek literary competition that challenges entrants to compose the opening sentence to the worst of all possible novels. Have a look at http://www.bulwer-lytton.com/ if you dare.

From print to web to print...

Diaz, Karen, ed. *Reference sources on the Internet: off the shelf and onto the web.* New York: The Haworth Press, 1997. 266p with index US$60 hard ISBN 0789003589

One feature of the growth of the Internet has been a rash of magazines offering huge lists of URLs on a variety of topics. I have tried a few but found them generally unreliable, with many of the sites having disappeared between the time that they were discovered by the reporter and the publication of the magazine. And there is something incongruous about a print publication listing online resources in such a volatile environment. Which is why I approached this book with some caution.

I need not have worried. This book is a very good publication, and covers a broad range of subjects (business and social sciences, humanities, leisure studies and sciences), but more importantly the sites which it lists have been established for some time, have considerable authority, and are unlikely to disappear in a hurry. To take United States history as an example, the sites listed are Georgetown and Rutgers universities and the US Army Center for Military History.

The first section includes an article on search tools — covering search engines, subject directories and reviewing services — and although this information will inevitably change as new services or features are introduced, it does give an overall assessment of the functions of these facilities. Later sections covering broad subjects are subdivided (for example, international trade, performing arts, health and medicine) with a brief description of the content and ownership of each site. Finally, there is a comprehensive index which also includes each URL, indexed under http://. but I am really not sure how useful that is. The Internet provides most of its information in a small number of fields, such as popular culture and computing. You will not find these here, and maybe that reflects a more traditional sense of the reference librarian's duties. But within this traditional arena, it is is a highly recommended resource. ∎

Global digital library conference
Beyond the beginning: the global digital library was an international conference organised by the UK Office of Library Networking in June 1997. At the conference, speakers from around the world (including several from Australia) gave presentations on topics concerning the global digital library, scholarship, and higher education. A report of the presentations given is now available at http://www.anu.edu.au/caul/mirror/global/content/.

Code of conduct for ISPs
The Australian Internet Industry Association has released for comment a draft *Code of practice for Internet service providers* at http://www.iia.net.au/news/code3.html. While few libraries will be members of the AIIA, many will be in the position of offering Internet services and should therefore pay close attention to what the community is coming to expect of this industry.

The EULER project
EULER (European Libraries and Electronic Resources in Mathematical Sciences) is a project being co-funded by the European Commission in the Telematics for Libraries sector. It will provide network based access to mathematical publications, integrating bibliographic databases, library OPACs, electronic journals from academic publishers, online archives of preprints and grey literature, and indexes of mathematical Internet resources. A common user interface — the EULER Engine — will assist the user in searching for relevant topics in all sources at once. For more information, see http://www.emis.de/projects/EULER/.

Alertbox
Alertbox is a column published every fortnight by web useability expert, Jakob Nielsen, of Sun Microsystems. Recent notable columns include the October 1997 *Reading on the web* (apparently we don't read — we scan) and *The case for micropayments* in January 1998. He knows what he's talking about and he writes well. It should be noted that his advice was taken in the formative design of ALIAnet, and links from the ALIAnet technical notes page (http://www.alia.org.au/technical.notes.html) refer to Jakobs work. See the column at http://www.useit.com/alertbox/.

ABA Task Force activity
Derek Whitehead from the State Library of Victoria has been appointed to the Australian Broadcasting Authority's Task Force on Children and Content Online, and has reported on the Task Force's early work. The sort of issues that they are looking at include

ratings systems, filtering, hotlines for reporting possible illegal content on websites, education campaigns, and industry codes. The work of the Task Force will be completed in June.

DigiNews

RLG's *DigiNews*, the web-based quarterly newsletter, enters its second year of publication with a new format — both in publishing and appearance. It will be published six times each year. The latest issue contains a feature article by Michael Lesk on current research into the indexing of images through mechanised image analysis, and a more technical article by Don Williams of Eastman Kodak Company on modulation transfer function (MTF), which he claims is a superior way to specify spatial resolution compared to other methods such as dots-per-inch or visual bar target readings. It also has a current calendar of events, project announcements, relevant web sites and Part II of a FAQ about free digital preservation newsletters and journals. See it at http://www.rlg.org/preserv/diginews/.

QLS on the web

The QLS Group of library suppliers, with member organisations in Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory, has a new website at http://www.qls.net.au. I particularly liked their use of the signpost for navigating around the pages.

LIBRES

It has been a while since I looked LIBRES, an electronic, peer-reviewed, international scholarly journal devoted to library and information science research. My recent interest was sparked by a note from Kerry Smith, past ALIA president and now the journal's editor-in-chief. It currently appears twice a year and each issue covers topics such as: research and applications; news, meetings, essays and opinions; reviews of print and electronic resources; and pre-print and abstracts distribution. It can be found at http://www.curtin.edu.au/curtin/dept/sils/libres/.

Academic authors' draft declaration

The UK Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society has taken a stand on the issues relating to the creation, distribution, ownership and economics of scholarly information. Their declaration at http://www.alcs.co.uk/declaration.htm was initiated at a special meeting last November. An example of their attitude is: 'Academic authors should not assign copyright in either print or electronic versions of their work to publishers. Instead of assigning copyright they should license the use of their works "narrowly". Every right should be specified and licensed individually over a fixed term and in defined formats.'

If you take into account recent action by Dutch and German libraries and the ARL, there is a lot about to happen in academic publishing.

Latest on metadata

In December 1997, a metadata workshop organised by the European Commission DGXIII/E4 took place in Luxembourg. It consisted of a tutorial led by the UK Office for Library and Information Networking, presentations of current projects in Scandinavia and the UK, and three breakout sessions on metadata creation, harvesting, and retrieval. The report of the workshop, together with slides and project presentations can be seen at http://hosted.ukoln.ac.uk/ec/metadata-1997/.

Chinese library information processing

Arising from the Seminar on Chinese Information Processing in Libraries (http://library.ust.hk/scip98/) held at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology in January, a list (LIB-CHINESE) has been established to discuss the topic. To subscribe, send a message to listserv@scip.ust.hk with SUBSCRIBE LIB-CHINESE as the message.

Computing and the humanities roundtable

The American Council of Learned Societies has released as an occasional paper, a report of 'Computing and the humanities: promise and prospects', a meeting held in March 1997. It concentrated on the interests and methodologies of computer scientists and humanists, looked at factors that shape how the different communities pursue their interests, and finished with a discussion on how to achieve additional better interaction among the groups. Having seen at the 1996 ACM Digital Libraries conference how far apart these communities could be, I congratulate the organisers on this endeavour. The paper is at http://www.acls.org/op41-i.htm

Virtual library instruction

A recent posting to a list enquired about 'virtual reference and instructional services'. One of the responses pointed to http://dibner.poly.edu the Dibner Library of Science of Technology at Polytechnic University in New York. Their Information Literacy Center features (among other things) an online primer on how to do basic research with hints on dos and don'ts and a guide to the library's resources, both on paper and on CD-ROM. ∎

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