

AUSSI Web Indexing Prize



Kerry Webb

Dwight Walker from the Australian Society of Indexers runs a competition each year to find good examples of Web indexing. I was one of the judges this year and it was interesting to see the way that different people went about providing indexes, in all their varied glory. The clear winner was Tasmania Online at <http://www.tas.gov.au> This is an outstanding site (take a bow, State Library of Tasmania) that is both attractive and useful, offering a search engine, an alphabetical listing of Tasmanian Web sites, and a good subject index. Add to this good metadata, facilities for feedback and online submission of URLs and you have an intelligent use of the Web for providing information and promoting your community. The full report on the competition is at <http://www.zeta.org.au/~aussi/prizes/webindresults98.htm>

In future columns I will review some of the other entries.

Family history

One area that was well represented in the entries was family history, which will come as no surprise to people working in libraries. There is now a new online resource, the Internet Family History Association of Australia (IFHAA) at <http://members.graffiti.net/~ifhaa> It is designed to be a central reference library where researchers of Australian Family History and Genealogy can find records, biographies and histories as well as lodging the results of their own efforts. Membership is free of charge and access to the collection is free. It provides message boards, IRC channels, mailing lists and resources such as cemetery transcripts.

Product watch

I have said before that the Net is littered with predictions of the next killer product that didn't quite make it. But once in a while something comes along that is so important that you should not ignore it. This one is the MP3 music player from Diamond, but other companies are also developing similar products. It fits in the palm of your hand, costs less than US\$200, stores up to sixty minutes of CD-quality sound on a 32 MB card and has no moving parts. You can connect it to your PC to download music from the Net and then take it with you. The major music corporations are concerned about developments like this because they no longer have a monopoly on processing and distribution of quality product. Not only that, but it could make us rethink what music we buy — only those tracks from an album that are worth buying, your very own selection of 'The best of...', or a choice of different mixes of a song. More information is at <http://www.diamondmm.com/products/current/rio.cfm>

American sheet music

The Digital Scriptorium at Duke University has released the Historic American Sheet Music web site. The site includes digital images of

over 16 000 pages of sheet music from 3042 pieces published in the United States between 1850 and 1920, and represents a wide variety of music types including bel canto, minstrel songs, sentimental songs, plantation songs, Civil War songs (hurrah!), spirituals, dance music, songs from vaudeville and musicals, and songs from World War I. Also included are piano music of marches, variations, opera excerpts, and dance music. A rich Encoded Archival Description (EAD) database of information about the music is searchable and browsable, and the site includes background information about the music itself as well as the social, cultural, and political events that shaped the songs and that are depicted in the pieces. There is also technical information helpful to those considering or planning digital imaging projects. It is at <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/sheetmusic/>

Now take your partners

A multimedia collection of dance materials covering more than 400 years is now on-line at the Library of Congress' American Memory Web site (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/dihome.html>). 'An American Ballroom Companion: Dance Instruction Manuals, ca. 1490 - 1920' is the most recent performing arts collection to be released by the Library.

Although the collection features more than 200 books relating to instruction of social dance during the 400 years that are represented in the collection and provides both page images and searchable text, the most striking feature is the addition of 75 video demonstrations (some filmed in the Great Hall of the Library of Congress) of many of the dances. The videos are provided in MPEG, QuickTime and RealMedia formats.

Library lists, again

Following my note in the December column about library lists, Cliff Law from the National Library has pointed out that under 'For Libraries' in the Australian Libraries Gateway, there is a list of Australian library-related discussion lists (with links to sites which maintain international lists also). See www.nla.gov.au/libraries/resource/lists.html A similar service called Ozlists used to be offered by Griffith University, but has not been available for a while.

and on the subject...

Marian Dworaczek of the University of Saskatchewan maintains a few resources that are worth noting. There is the 'Subject Index to Literature on Electronic Sources of Information' and the accompanying 'Electronic Sources of Information: A Bibliography' which deal with all aspects of electronic publishing and include print and non-print materials, periodical articles, monographs and individual chapters in collected works. Both the Index and the Bibliography are continuously updated. Then there is a bibliography on electronic journals and

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related topics (also frequently updated) and the 'Electronic publishing reference resources on the internet'. There are links to all of them at <http://library.usask.ca/~dworacze/>

Kinetica — the answers

Following the Kinetica presentations in cities and towns around Australia last year, the National Library received many questions from users. The questions and answers have been placed on the web at: <http://www.nla.gov.au/kinetica/questions.html>

Torres Strait Art website

To celebrate the exhibition *Ilan Pasin: Torres Strait Art* the Cairns Regional Gallery has developed a website with information about the exhibition, the Torres Strait Islands and indigenous artworks from the region at <http://www.cairnsregionalgallery.com.au/ilanpasin/> The website also includes book, poster and postcard orders and an online Education Kit for primary and secondary students will be uploaded in the future.

Information retrieval and extraction

At http://www.mri.mq.edu.au/~eina1/web_ir/ you can find a collection of online resources for research in the field of information retrieval and information extraction from the Web. It covers materials that are related to the state of the art IR and IE techniques which use hypertext structure and meta-data, the structure and nature of the Web, observed human behaviour on the web, and a variety of search engines. The author of the site has concentrated on research and consequently does not pay much attention to what libraries have achieved, but it will give you a good idea there of some of the work that is proceeding in this area.

Hybrids and clumps

There is a good article by Stephen Pinfield in the December issue of *Ariadne* (<http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue18/>) on Hybrids and Clumps. A hybrid is a mix of a traditional (paper-based) library and a virtual (digital) library which 'brings together a range of different information sources, printed and electronic, local and remote, in a seamless way.' A clump is an aggregation of catalogues or databases, which can either be physical (for example, a union catalogue such as ABN) or virtual in which case the components are aggregated for the purposes of a search such as you might do using Z39.50 technology. The article discusses how these are progressing in the eLib program and summarises the projects involved.

Raising the standard

Standards Australia is now offering free downloads of its draft standards at <http://secure.standards.com.au/Catalogue/Script/Draft.asp> They deserve to be congratulated for this, especially as the world's standards authorities appeared to be opposed to anything about the internet.

News from EdNA

Education Network Australia (EdNA) at <http://www.edna.edu.au/EdNA/> continues to provide

a valuable service for any interested in education in this country. They offer a 'What's new email alert' service with a selection of material that has been recently added into EdNA Online. To subscribe to the service send a message to majordomo@edna.edu.au with `subscribe whatsnew` in the body of the message.

New from the Mitchell

It is almost as hard to come up with new system names as it is to develop the systems themselves. Fortunately, the meaning of PICMAN, the Mitchell Library's database of its pictures and manuscript collections is pretty obvious. The database contains catalogue records of material in the pictures and manuscripts collections of the Mitchell Library, Dixon Library and Dixon Galleries which have been catalogued since 1992, and includes records of personal papers and private archives, paintings, drawings, photographs, objects, posters, architectural plans as well as six digitised photographic collections. The digitised photographic collections range from the 1870s to the 1980's and include photographs of regional New South Wales and Sydney, Antarctic Expedition photographs and commercial work from the 30s to the 80s. PICMAN is at: <http://www.slnsw.gov.au/picman/picman.htm>

This government means business

The Commonwealth government's Business Entry Point initiative site (<http://www.business.gov.au>) has been going for some time, and is now joined by a site which explains what it is all about. It sounds a bit weird but I think it works well. About Business (<http://about.business.gov.au>) provides an introduction to the BEP for users from government, business and the general community. One aspect which I (as an old techie) liked was a short series of pages which described information discovery, technical information and the structure of the BEP site, just to show how it works.

Digital archiving

In the latest edition of RLG *DigiNews*, there is a feature article on 'digital archiving: approaches for statistical files, moving images, and audio recordings' with contributions from experts in each field, plus a guide to the selection of digital cameras and scanners. See it at <http://www.rlg.org/preserv/diginews/diginews2-6.html>

Government On-Line

There is a new report by Olov Östberg and Steven Clift called 'Democracy and government on-line services' (<http://www.statskontoret.se/gol-democracy/>) which looks at examples of online activities in local, state and national governments around the world. Chapter 10 is 'The impact of government online initiatives on democratic participation in the state of Victoria, Australia' by Bridget Bainbridge and Martin Doddrell from Multimedia Victoria. The report emphasises that provision of government information is only the start of the process — online interaction with the government and discussion with other citizens is equally important. ■

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online resources for
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structure and nature
of the Web, observed
human behaviour on
the web...*

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