Making a virtue out of Mondays

Belinda Weaver

weaver@alia.org.au

As Clifford Lynch, the author of *The battle to define the future of the book in the digital world*, states, e-books have had a lot of coverage in the news. However, Lynch believes the issues around e-books — and there are many — have not as yet been adequately addressed. Certainly, much of the coverage has been product-driven, as new technologies and players emerge in the marketplace. Lynch's article is quite long (forty-two pages) and deals in detail with three main issues — the role of books in the digital world as a form of communication; the question of who will control digital content in the future, and what this means for our cultural heritage and the intellectual record of our societies; and what kind of restructuring will inevitably happen in the economics of authorship and publishing. Anyone wanting to get to grips with e-book reality will find this extremely useful. The article appeared in *First Monday* and is freely available online at http://www.firstmonday.dk/issues/current_issue/lynch/index.html. *First Monday* is a free, peer-reviewed journal about the internet, and articles are often worth looking at. Many recent articles, such as 'Brave new universities' or 'Copyright and global libraries', will be of interest to librarians. [http://www.firstmonday.dk]

G'day Bruce
While we are on the topic of e-books, why not check out *Bruce's E-Book Newsletter*? Bruce Preston's site [http://www.e-book.com.au] will be developed into an e-book information site later on, but for now, there is just the free newsletter on offer. The content of all articles appears online, and you can look back at earlier newsletters. In addition to the articles, there are also good illustrations of e-books in use — even down to the fond father reading an e-book to toy-cuddling children. Much of the e-book news will be of interest to librarians, as it covers developments in the industry, software and hardware, formats, library applications and websites. The links within articles are active, so you can skip off to sites that interest you while you are reading.

For those who might have missed the announcement...
Canberra has obviously been busy lately with initiatives being announced left, right and centre. The Attorney-General has launched a new website aimed at making law more accessible to Australians. Australian Law Online [http://www.law.gov.au], as the new portal will be called, aims to give Australians access to government legal information and services available nationwide. It will be linked to a telephone hotline for queries. So far, the only active section is Family Law Online http://www.familylaw.gov.au. The site (and the accompanying hotline) will not provide direct advice, but rather will point people to services, such as mediation, that might help them reduce both the costs and the stress of family law proceedings. There are some useful links at the base of the family law page if you look carefully. Australian Law Online currently points to the family law site, and also to Windows on the Law, the existing gateway to the Australian legal system and to online legislation. This service is in the throes of rebadging to fit in with the Australian Law Online concept so will probably undergo a lot of redesign in coming months. Also on the horizon is a legal assistance line for rural Australians to get access to legal information and advice, and a new online directory of commonwealth, state and territory government legal information on the Net.

Busy town
Certainly politicians are courting the rural and regional vote with the launch of GrantsLINK [http://www.grantslink.gov.au]. GrantsLINK, launched in May this year, is a search tool to enable people to find suitable and relevant grants for their community projects from the many commonwealth grants available. GrantsLINK also helps users find the best source of funding and assists them to complete application forms. Use the e-mail GrantsASSIST enquiry form to ask for help.

Also just announced is the new Culture and Recreation Portal [http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au], which is a directory service to more than 800 000 pages of information about Australia's culture and recreation facilities. You can use the portal in three ways — by category, for example music, exhibitions or festivals and events; by location, for example Queensland; or by audience — children, tourists, researchers. You can also search for information using various limiting features.

Digital reference resources
Anyone running or contemplating starting up a virtual reference service will find heaps of

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tips at the Virtual Reference Desk site [http://vrd.org/index.shtml]. Among other things, the home page links to conference proceedings, publications, the DIG_REF e-mail list, and to the AskA+ Locator service and the AskA Consortium. One of the best items on the site is the sporadically updated *Digital Reference Bibliography* which cites articles about the implementation and effects of digital reference services. The bibliography contains approximately 165 citations, and was last updated on 4 April this year. Citations are grouped by topic, for example, special libraries, public libraries, and there are citations on real-time projects and technologies. Only a few of the citations are linked to the full text of articles. Also offered is a separate database of digital reference resources (which includes articles, books and websites), and Facets of Quality, a document on important characteristics and features of digital reference services. [http://vrd.org/pubinfo/proceedings99_bib.shtml] The conference proceedings on the site should also prove useful. The third conference, to be held in Orlando, Florida from 12–13 November this year, is entitled *Setting standards and keeping it real*. Papers will be made available after the conference. Proceedings of the 2000 conference (*Facets of digital reference*) and the 1999 conference (*Reference in the new millennium*) are available at the site. [http://vrd.org/conf-train.shtml]

Your daily search

Anyone seriously interested in web searching has probably seen Danny Sullivan's *Search Engine Watch* site [http://searchenginewatch.com]. The site is now offering a new, free newsletter by e-mail called SearchDay [http://searchenginewatch.com/searchday/]. The content is written by Chris Sherman, associate editor of *Search Engine Watch*, and the newsletter aims to offer breaking web search news, reviews of specialised search sites and tools, and tips and techniques for sharpening your web searching skills. The newsletter is published daily, with headlines only on Fridays. You can sign up at the site. The current newsletter is online as well as excerpts of past newsletters so you can have a good look before you commit yourself to signing up.

Bibliographic overload

Marion Dworaczek, compiler of the *Subject index to literature on electronic sources of*

information and the accompanying *Electronic sources of information: a bibliography* has taken on a herculean task. She is probably aware of it as one of her articles, cited on the website, is called *Creating a web index: a never-ending task*. Certainly this bibliography will grow and grow. The subject index deals with all aspects of electronic publishing and includes citations of print and non-print materials, periodical articles, monographs and individual chapters in collected works. This latest edition, July 2001, includes approximately 1400 references. Both the Index — which includes sample search and instructions — (http://library.usask.ca/~dworacze/SUBJIN_A.HTM) and the bibliography (http://library.usask.ca/~dworacze/BIBLIO.HTM) are continuously updated.

Medical breakthrough

The US National Library of Medicine (NLM) has just announced the online availability of its Classification [http://wwwcf.nlm.nih.gov/class/]. The online version is the fifth edition, 1994, revised in 1999, and it is still in beta test. The aim of the online version is to provide greater manoeuvrability through the schedules and index. You can search by term in the index or in the schedules, or search directly by class number. There is good online search help. A number of extra features, such as the Outline of the NLM Classification (Table of Contents access to the individual Schedules), the Index to the Classification, Classification Practices, the 19th Century Schedule and the list of Obsolete Class Numbers, round out the site. The library expects to have an updated version of the Classification available sometime in 2002. Since the online version is still under development, the NLM welcomes comments and suggestions to its e-mail address custserv@nlm.nih.gov.

Everybody's doing it

Also moving online is the *International standard bibliographic description for older monographic publications (antiquarian)* [http://www.ifla.org/VII/s13/pubs/isbda.htm], originally published in print by K G Saur in 1991 as the second revised edition. The electronic version has been published online by the IFLA Section on Cataloguing's International Standard Bibliographic Description Review Group. Comments on the site may be sent to John Byrum, chair of the ISBD Review Group, at jbyr@loc.gov. ∎

The subject index deals with all aspects of electronic publishing and includes citations of print and non-print materials, periodical articles, monographs and individual chapters in collected works...