

On distance learning



Kerry Webb

Given that 'distance learning' in North America does not quite mean what we understand by the term — they mean by it the use of computers and communications — the article at <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/faculty/feenberg/TELE3.HTM> titled 'Distance learning: promise or threat?' is a thoughtful discussion of a subject which many decision-makers have trouble understanding. One conclusion is that 'the educational technologists themselves need to continue to work creatively with faculty and students to devise truly viable applications that fulfil real needs. There are good reasons for sticking with interactive text based systems and supplementing them with visual and other online resources, rather than attempting to duplicate face-to-face education online. The design challenge of improving the original text based systems is well worth pursuing.'

More Online online

This may be the way of the future, as far as conference proceedings are concerned. Turtle Lane Studios and Cadre, two Sydney-based multimedia companies have produced a text, video and audio version of one of the sessions at *Online and On Disc 99*. You can see it at <http://bigbang.cadre.com.au/onlineondisk99/>. To view it you will need to download a Real Video player (it is free) and then you will be able to view the video and read the transcript at the same time. It certainly adds another dimension to the 'proceedings' experience, and provides an indication of how distance learning in the previous item may be handled.

A change of lists

In April the National Library closed its NIACL list for the dissemination of information and discussion of issues relating to co-operative library developments in Australia. When the list started some time ago, there was a definite need for it, but they have decided that Tony Barry's 'ozlib-announce' announcement service is better placed to do the job now. For information on Australian library-related discussion lists (including 'ozlib-announce'), see the section of the Australian Libraries Gateway at <http://www.nla.gov.au/libraries/resource/lists.html>.

One thing leads to another

The April issue of the AusSI newsletter is on the Web at <http://www.zeta.org.au/~aussi/an/9903apr/index.htm>. One of the links is to the Indexer's WebRing at <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/4537/indxr.html> which further led me to RolyBear's Online Resources for Indexers at <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/4537/isigrsc.html>. There is a lot of good stuff there.

More on how we got here

Regular readers will realise that I have an interest in all sorts of history, especially of the Net. An article at <http://www.ietf.org/rfc/rfc2555.txt> (despite being in a clunky text format) com-

memorates thirty years of RFCs (Internet standards), with an historical overview and notes from some of the important people who made it all happen.

Kinetica, at last

Well, the National Library's gone live with Kinetica, and cataloguing on ABN has ceased. Going by the messages on kinetica-l, the first couple of weeks of the new system were fairly hectic, but things have quietened down and Andrew Wells and his team can take a deep breath (and a bow). Compared to the introduction of ABN all those years ago, this has been quite a public exercise, with all sorts of strange messages on the list during the cut-over period. The Kinetica home page at <http://www.nla.gov.au/kinetica/> includes descriptions of all services and products, a tool to help you determine the internet response time from your site to the National Library, information about the databases which can be searched, manuals which can be downloaded, and what training courses are being run.

Free Pint fosters discussion on the larger issues

Jeff Evans of Small Business Victoria has alerted me to *Free Pint*, a fortnightly e-mail newsletter service at <http://www.freepint.co.uk>. It provides tips, tricks and articles on all sorts of Web-related matters and the site includes an indexed archive of all issues. One useful feature is a column where readers can pose questions and others respond in later issues of the newsletter.

...and something similar

A comparable service is ResearchBuzz at <http://www.researchbuzz.com/news/>. It's maintained by Tara Calishain, co-author of 'the official Netscape guide to internet research'. The site has a selection of internet resources on a variety of topics, with a primary focus on tools for research and more efficient searching online. It is updated several times a week, and has a weekly e-mail newsletter.

Preservation manual online

The Northeast Document Conservation Center is a regional conservation centre specialising in the preservation and conservation treatment of paper-based materials. With United States government assistance it has produced the third edition of 'Preservation of library and archival materials: a manual' and it is online at <http://www.nedcc.org/manhome.htm>. This latest edition includes revised technical data on conservation.

What plant is that?

I was looking at Botany.com (<http://www.botany.com/>), an online encyclopaedia of plants which is browsable by common or botanical name and category, and was very impressed. It gives you a general description, cultivation and propagation instructions, and information on the different varieties and hybrids. More pictures would be useful, but we

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can't have everything — yet. One omission is that there is not anything on Australian native plants, and for those you could go to the Centre for Plant Biodiversity Research at <http://www.anbg.gov.au/cpbr/australian-plants/australian-plants.html>. It has a great collection of images and information on many of our native species.

Government

electronic publishing guidelines

The *Guidelines for commonwealth information published in electronic formats* have been published with the unqualified support of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Publications. While the guidelines do not impose any rules on the content of documents (that will continue to be the responsibility of each Department and Agency) they will encourage all government organisations to produce the most consistent and readable documents while providing access for all readers. The guidelines are on the Ausinfo website at <http://www.ausinfo.gov.au/guidelines/index.html>.

IFLA registration date extended

The 65th IFLA Council and General Conference 1999 will be held in Bangkok from 20–28 August. The conference page is at <http://www.ifla99.th.com/> and there is an announcement that the early bird registration deadline has been extended to 15 May. ALIA will be represented at the exhibition with a stand publicising the ALIA2000 conference. If you're going to IFLA, drop by and say hello to Katrina Chirgwin who will be waving the ALIA 2000 banner.

Another view

on Scholarly Communication

Gerry McKiernan for Iowa State University has prepared a working essay on scholarly communication in the next millennium and is looking for feedback. He provides an overview of information services and techniques (particularly on the internet) and considers a range of new facilities such as haptic devices and virtual environments. I think the presentation is spoiled because the text is hard to read against the background image, and also because of the large number of hypertext links in the text. See it at <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~CYBERSTACKS/Morning.htm>.

The AV-CC and the Digital Copyright Bill

A joint submission by peak organisations representing schools and universities has endorsed the thrust of the Government's new digital agenda copyright legislation. The Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, as one of the contributing organisations, is strongly urging the Government to introduce the Bill soon to provide the ground rules for the owners and users of copyright. The AV-CC's press release is at <http://www.avcc.edu.au/avcc/mediarel/1999/99mr10.htm>.

Music archive

The South West Music Archive (<http://www.swtafe.vic.edu.au/lrc/music/music.htm>) is a collection of material relating to music in South West Victoria and has been compiled by the Learning Resource Centre at South West TAFE. It includes recorded material by performers in the South West Region of Victoria, a collection of electronic files including newspaper articles relating to the region's music, links to performer's web sites and electronic files of locally produced music (in .wav or MP3 format).

Indexing list

ALIAINDEXERS is an Australian list about all kinds of indexing, supported by the Australian Society of Indexers and ALIA. To join, send a message to listproc@alia.org.au with subscribe *aliaindexers* *your-name* in the message.

International digitisation survey

Two IFLA Core Programmes, PAC and UAP are working together on behalf of UNESCO to undertake a survey of digitisation programs in major cultural institutions, in order to establish a 'virtual library' of digitised collections worldwide. The directory of digitised documents will take the form of a freely accessible database on the UNESCO website. The project began last year with the distribution of questionnaires to national libraries to gather information on their digitisation programs, and information is also being collected on the preservation issues surrounding the digitisation of materials. An article on the project is at <http://www.ifla.org/V1/2/p1/desc.htm> with details on how to get more information.

AFTRS catalogue online

Online access to the catalogue of the Jerzy Toeplitz Library, AFTRS is now available through the Web at <http://library.aftrs.edu.au>. They say that it is a work in progress but it looks pretty good so far.

Grants for e-journal development

SPARC (the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition) has inaugurated its Scientific Communities Initiative (SCI) program, which offers a total of US\$500 000 in grants to projects that will stimulate and accelerate creation of new university-based information communities serving users in key fields of science, technology and medicine. Full details are at <http://www.arl.org/sparc/scipr.html>.

Encoding DC Metadata in HTML

A first draft of 'Encoding Dublin Core Metadata in HTML' is now online as an informational internet draft. It was developed to meet the need to document what is currently happening while work continues on data models and XML/RDF encoding. The draft has been the subject of several rounds of review in the Dublin Core Technical Advisory Committee. It is at <http://www.ietf.org/internet-drafts/draft-kunze-dchtml-00.txt> and comments are welcome. ■

The ALIA home pages and the ALIA web service, ALIANet, can be found at the following URL:
<http://www.alia.org.au/>

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