Digital dancing — new steps, new partners

Information Online Conference and Exhibition 2001

Neil McLean, in his now traditional summation session, this time in a new format involving all the keynote speakers, sensed change in a number of areas since the last conference in 1999. We are more comfortable with uncertainty. We are exploring new tools, techniques and relationships. However, a long list of questions and issues form the agenda for information professionals.

Under the main conference theme of 'Digital dancing', these issues fell under four headings:

- **Enterprise information portals.** They are now the principal showpiece of the digital dance. How important is the distinction between give-away and non-give-away information in creating a knowledge environment? Is it to be a local or collaborative activity? How much content is to be harnessed and how? How much reliance can be placed on search engines? How much can we rely on commercial aggregators? How do we ensure sustainability?

- **Technical issues.** Hiding within portal development are significant technical challenges remaining to be resolved: metadata, digital rights management, individual identification of digital objects and e-payment. Authentication and access management solutions are linchpins for the successful development of seamless access to information resources.

- **Trends in the business and education sectors.** To counteract continued scepticism about knowledge management, excellent papers were presented on best business practice, particularly from Clare Hart on how knowledge management techniques can help to connect business strategies, knowledge strategies and organisational strategies in the use of internal and external information. Notable also was the attention paid to training matters, particularly information literacy and technical literacy, and to performance enhancement, performance measurement and value-adding.

- **The role of the information professional.** Mary Ellen Bates and Richard Rowe, among others, explored the potential role of librarians and knowledge workers in moving from the 'cathedral to the bazaar'. Clare Hart, fresh from an international summit of chief knowledge officers, conveyed the summit's view of key competencies for the information age, all attitudinal: the ability to learn, to initiate, to be a team player, to become an intellectual linker and to possess humility.

Papers, including Neil McLean's summary, are available on the conference website at http://www.csu.edu.au/special/online2001/.

Exposure to ideas was complemented by the large exhibition of supplier wares, independent satellite events on topics like strategic planning, return on investment and super searching, and opportunities for networking within the conference centre and around the Darling Harbour precinct.

The ALIA Information Specialists Division (ISD) national committee is currently working with the 2001 Online Committee to develop plans for the next conference, which will take place in Sydney from 27 January 2003.

The ISD committee is also finalising its strategic plans for distribution to and comment by members in the near future.

To assist in developing its role and services, the ISD national committee is interested in receiving expressions of interest from readers of *inCite* who would like to become involved as a state representative or in forming a committee in states outside New South Wales.

To make member special interests and expertise more visible and useful, the committee would also like to hear from anyone with an interest and contacts in particular disciplines and issues — such as knowledge management, the information economy, digital libraries, web/intranet/portal management, e-commerce, records management, intellectual property, health, law, arts, public libraries, special libraries, educational libraries...

To make enquiries or send comments, please contact Paul Bentley at pbentley@idx.com.au.

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Paul Bentley ∎

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