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Everything but the kitchen sink

Librarians, more than most people, stumble across snippets of useful information all the time. Where better to record them than in a web log (or blog for short)? Many librarians are giving in to the temptation of recording useful information in a blog, rather than file it away in a stack of rarely used browser bookmarks. And if you run out of ideas to post online, you can always use the blog as a quasi-web directory for useful information. David Bigwood, who works for a space research institute in the United States, has launched Catalogablog [<http://catalogablog.blogspot.com>] to share information on cataloguing and classification, metadata, and other online topics of relevance to library work. He has also provided a number of links to existing library blogs. You can find links to all sorts of schemes and standards, as well as advice on keeping up-to-date professionally. Postings are eclectic but all are linked by their relation to librarianship — and thus to an ever-expanding information universe.

On standards

The Library of Congress has officially released an online version of their Encoded Archival Description (EAD) [<http://www.loc.gov/ead/>], a standard for encoding archival finding aids using the Standard Generalised Markup Language. Developed in partnership with the Society of American Archivists, the EAD is a non-proprietary encoding standard for machine-readable finding aids such as inventories, registers, indexes, and other documents created by archives, libraries, museums, and manuscript repositories to support the use of their holdings. It was designed to provide information about holdings beyond that provided by traditional MARC records. The EAD allows users to include extensive descriptive information and preserve the hierarchical relationships between levels of description, and also supports element-specific indexing and retrieval.

While elsewhere...

The Library of Congress has also been busy in South Asia, creating an audio archive of South Asian authors reading their own works in the language of publication. The South Asian Literary Recordings Project [<http://www.loc.gov/acq/ovop/delhi/salrp/>] was launched in April 2000, and has now recorded eighty authors reading works in twenty-two different languages, including Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Nepali, and English. Recordings are also matched with a brief profile of individual authors. Works are

presented in different audio formats, such as MP3 and RealAudio.

Sounds exhausting

The Keeping Up Web Page [<http://staff.philau.edu/bells/keepup/>] may sound like a challenge, but it's simply another librarian's attempt to make the work of upskilling and staying sharp easier for others. The author, Steven Bell, believes librarians need a program of self-guided professional development. Though primarily designed for staff in higher education, the site could be used by any librarian who wants to stay in touch with developments in information science. Bell believes that librarians must look beyond librarianship alone if they want to stay on top of the profession. If you want to understand more of this approach, look at the site or see his article (linked from the site), 'To keep up, go beyond' in *College & Research Library News*, v61, n° 7, July–August, 2000.

Evidence-based librarianship in health

FreePint goes from strength to strength with useful information for librarians. The recent article, 'Health informatics on the web' [<http://www.freepint.com/issues/281102.htm> tips] by Catherine Ebenezer, will be helpful for librarians who need to advise health professionals about this burgeoning area of information online, particularly in the growth of sources of evidence-based medicine and patient data online. FreePint also has a useful article about becoming a systems librarian [<http://www.freepint.com/issues/281102.htm#feature>]. Far from being a job where you can get away from people, the author, Joe Tarrant, says the job involves constant interaction with people — 'negotiating with vendors, managing user demands, training staff, translating IT terminology to your colleagues, developing good relationships with your colleagues in IT and networking at user groups.' It covers everything from working with databases and UNIX to manual reading (compulsory) and a willingness to learn from your mistakes.

Selling the family silver

It may seem like selling your treasures, but many institutions are beginning to charge for digital resources, particularly for sales or varying forms of licensing of digitised images. Any organisation starting out in this area may need some guidance on how to do it — what to charge and how to manage a commercial operation — challenging if you have always been a non-profit organisation. 'Exploring charging

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models for digital cultural heritage' is a report that explores the changes that the move from print photographic collections to digital image databases has brought, and examines how universities and libraries in particular have had to rethink what they do [http://heds.herts.ac.uk/mellon/charging_models.html]. The report focuses a lot on pricing models, so there is a lot of guidance there. Other issues dealt with include assessing how marketable these new services will prove to be and whether they will continue to deliver income streams to their owners. The report is available in HTML or PDF.

Digital archive

The Digital Library of Information Science and Technology has recently launched as an online repository of electronic resources in the domains of library and information science [<http://dlist.sir.arizona.edu/>]. Produced by the School of Information Resources and Library Science and the Arizona Health Sciences Library at the University of Arizona, the site is using eprints software to provide the information it has gathered. You can search by subject or year or browse a list of subjects such as information literacy, cataloguing and indexing. Materials in the database include pathfinders, bibliographies, published articles, reports and data sets. You are welcome to deposit your own library materials in the repository.

Free-prints

With the launch of so many new ePrint and open archive projects, both within Australia and abroad, it is a good time to look at what software is around to facilitate setting them up. Many of the existing archives use the freely available eprints software developed at the University of Southampton [<http://www.eprints.org/>]. Eprints.org's software is based on free, open source software such as Linux, Apache, MySQL, and modPERL. The software can be customised to suit institutional look and feel. It is currently in use at CSIRO, ANU and the Universities of Melbourne and Queensland, all of which have set up ePrint archives. The software can be downloaded from <http://software.eprints.org/>. For those who would like something different, MIT's DSpace project has also released their software for anyone who wants to download it [<http://www.dspace.org/>]. It runs on a UNIX-like operating system and makes extensive use of Java. Users would need to download a number of Java libraries to make it work. The

choice is really up to each institution, depending on technical know how. Eprints.org does offer a range of e-mail lists to discuss implementation and solve problems, so that can make the job easier as you have experts to ask when things go wrong.

Cast of thousands

You can find more than 17 000 books online through the Online Books Page [<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/books/>]. In addition to finding freely readable books online, the site links you to further directories and archives of online texts, and to exhibits of particular types of e-books, such as banned books. Should you want to evangelise on behalf of free e-books, then there are pointers on that as well. You can search for books by author, title and Library of Congress Classification. There is a new books listing and information on archival projects, including book and journal archives, is also provided.

Facts on tap

School librarians are often bombarded with data about new wonder products for use in schools. To separate the hype from reality, *School Library Journal* has reviewed ten digital encyclopaedias from publishers such as Britannica and Grolier to help school librarians (and others) make a better informed choice. The reviews are quite thorough and the article also has a very useful comparison chart [<http://slj.reviewsnews.com/index.asp?layout=article&articleid=CA254381>].

Portal mania

If you aren't in the business of digital archives, what about getting into portals? There are a number of do-it-yourself portal kits around that simplify the job. PortalBytes [<http://www.bris.ac.uk/ISC/portal/>] is a site from UK higher education that covers portals and portal frameworks, and links you on to other resources and news. The Scout Portal Toolkit [<http://scout.cs.wisc.edu/research/SPT/index.html>] is a free resource that librarians can use to develop their own subject-based or institutional portals to web-based information. The product has been evaluated in a recent article in D-Lib magazine, called 'Software for building a full-featured discipline-based web portal: The Scout Portal Toolkit' [<http://www.dlib.org/dlib/november02/almas/11almas.html>]. The authors consider this solution cheap to run and maintain, and easy for non-technical staff to download, set up and use. ■

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[with URL links]
can be found at:**



<http://www.alia.org.au/incite>

Contributions and suggestions for this column are always welcome. Please contact Belinda Weaver via e-mail.

...the site links you to further directories and archives of online texts, and to exhibits of particular types of e-books, such as banned books...

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