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There's a word for it

For me, the word taxonomy has always had a vaguely sinister ring to it, probably because it reminds me of taxidermy, an altogether different art form. Luckily, the Taxonomy Warehouse [http://www.taxonomywarehouse.com/] is an entirely different kettle of fish — not a stuffed animal in sight — and librarians can be grateful that someone thought of creating a place where people could get hold of existing taxonomies rather than create their own from scratch. The Warehouse is a free service for both taxonomy users and publishers, and it aims to provide a comprehensive directory of taxonomies, thesauri, classification schemes and other authority files from around the world, plus information about taxonomy references, resources and events. There are currently around two hundred vocabularies available from the site, but more will be added. You can browse taxonomies by topic or by publisher, and there are various options for getting hold of them, depending on what kind of ongoing support you will need to keep them up-to-date. Probably the easiest option is simply to download those vocabularies available online from the site itself.

Let someone else do the work
With so many reference works available online and in print, choosing the 'must-haves' gets harder every year. Take advantage of the New York Public library's selection, Best of Reference [http://www.nypl.org/branch/books/4_21_03.html], which is an annually updated list of the most useful and relevant books, websites, and electronic resources selected by librarians for local branch use. The materials are chosen according to specific selection criteria such as the style of presentation, and the authority of authors and editors of material on offer.

Hanging on to what we've got
What with weblogs, online discussions, websites and other more traditional forms of publishing such as online journals, Australian culture is well represented online. But with the web a transient form of publishing at best, preserving the best of Australian online material is a challenge. The National Library of Australia's PANDORA project set out to archive much of that material and Pandora staff are now revisiting their brief to see if they have got the balance right. The review, the full text of which can be found at

http://pandora.nla.gov.au/BSC49.doc, aims to review the success of the existing collecting objectives for Australian online publications and identify ways of creating access to a greater range of Australian materials. Should you wish to nominate material for inclusion in PANDORA, use the registration form at http://pandora.nla.gov.au/registration_form.html.

From the source
With digitisation such a huge issue for libraries, it is no surprise that OCLC has put up useful information on both digitisation and preservation in an online resource centre that anyone may use [http://digitalcooperative.oclc.org/]. The kinds of issues covered are copyright in the digital age, pathfinders and guides to good practice in digitisation, including newspaper digitisation, grant writing guides and tips, and a database of preservation issues. More general information on digital libraries and links to related organisations are also provided.

One size may not fit everybody
One of the intermittent Holy Grails of the online world is the idea of a one-stop-shop, a portal-to-everything. If you are considering an institutional portal, you have probably succumbed to the lure of a customised service that can be all things to all comers. Such projects, unless done well, can be disastrous, sucking in time, money and enthusiasm. With any such project, it is good to study the experiences of those who have gone before, and the report from United Kingdom higher education, *Stakeholder requirements for institutional portals* [http://www.fair-portal.hull.ac.uk/downloads/stakereq.pdf], is full of such experiences, both good and bad. Students who have grown up with Yahoo! and Google show more enthusiasm for one-stop-shops than academic staff who view them more as a department store, a place they would never choose to shop since it could not possibly cater for their boutique needs. More than 700 people contributed to this survey.

Blogs, blogs and more blogs
Many of the good things I have seen this month are weblogs, so it seems only fair to cover a few of the better finds here. The Site-Lines blog [http://www.workingfaster.com/sitelines/] is compiled by Rita Vine, a librarian and web search trainer, and is primarily

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concerned with Web searching news and techniques. It also provides handy links to relevant articles. Rather than scan it regularly, you could drop in now and then and use the excellent search facility to see if there is anything of interest to you. The (scitech) Library Question [http://www.podbaydoor.com/engine/] is a blog for librarians working in scientific and /or technical libraries and covers a diverse range of issues from a user-centred approach to digital libraries, to science reference books and teaching resources. Peter Scott, who maintains a number of very useful resources such as Libdex, Library Weblogs, Publishers' Catalogues and the Weblogs Compendium (find links to these at http://blog.xrefer.com/peter.html) also has a Library Blog [http://blog.xrefer.com/] to keep librarians up to date with the fast changing world of online services.

Getting what we pay for

For most librarians, the useful information we pass on to customers is not on the open web, but comes via the Net, that is, through the materials we access through paid subscriptions to online journals and information. Anything that makes those resources more seamless and easier to use is welcome. SocSciNet [http://www.socscinet.com/] is one such service, being Elsevier's gateway to what it offers to subscribers in the field of social and behavioural sciences. At the site, you can find journal abstracts, full-text journal articles and information, books, news articles and details of any special offers Elsevier Science will provide in this area throughout 2003. Also from Elsevier comes the Scirus Toolbar [http://www.scirus.com/toolbar/], a downloadable piece of software to help you locate scientific, technical and medical information online. For those not in the loop, Scirus is a science search engine that retrieves links to both freely available Web materials and for-fee journal articles from the more than 1800 titles published by Elsevier's Science Direct service. The toolbar, which bolts on to your browser, rather like the Internet Explorer or Google toolbars, offers a search of both Web and fee-based material or you can opt for one or the other. The Web Sources search covers more than 120 million STM-related sites, such as university webpages and preprint servers such as the physics preprints in ArXiv [http://arxiv.org/].

The ultimate in 'user pays'?

When the Oakland Public Library in California was faced with a new round of budget cuts that would reduce their book-buying power by a third, the librarians did not get mad, they got online, specifically to Amazon.com where they posted a wishlist of books they would buy if they could. Response was swift, and many local 'philanthropists' dug deep to supply the library with needed items. Books also came from Japan, Canada, Ireland when a local author urged her online fans to help the library out. While this seems a strategy designed to reassure governments that libraries can do without funds, libraries may often have no choice. Mitch Freedman, president of the American Library Association stated that free library access 'shouldn't be funded by gifts and donations' but also that 'standing on principle isn't going to help the situation.' See how Oakland did it at http://www.oaklandlibrary.org/buyabook.html.

Checking out the competition

If you would like to see an Oakland or other library service for yourself, have a look at the Exchanging Jobs service [http://www.exchangingjobs.org/] which offers a free matching service for people who work in libraries and the information field. Listings can be both browsed and searched, and include job swaps in the United States and other countries.

List of the missing

Many librarians will have felt distress at the looting from Iraqi museums and libraries of printed materials, statues and figurines, seals, and other cultural artifacts. The Lost Treasures from Iraq project [http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/] aims to build a searchable database of materials lost or destroyed during or after the war in April 2003.

Joining the dots

Sustainable development is a key issue in all countries, developed and under-developed. Good information is crucial to planning. The Humanity Libraries Project [http://www.humaninfo.org/] is gearing up to link 100 content provider partners together to provide access to sustainable development material generated by UN agencies, universities and non-government organisations, either freely or at low cost. The HumanInfo organisation is the driver for the project. ∎

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