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Keeping a lid on

Despite the failure of any government anywhere to regulate the internet successfully, many are still trying, in some cases with an eye more to heavy-handed censorship of freedom of speech and dissent than the more acceptable goal of trying to protect their citizens from unwanted pornography or scams. A new report, *Silenced! an international report on censorship and control of the internet,* from Privacy International [http://www.privacyinternational.org/survey/censorship/], examines the regulatory situation worldwide. The twelve-month study, which involved more than fifty experts and advocates from around the world, found that 'censorship of the internet is commonplace in most regions of the world ... governments have become more secretive about their own activities, reducing information that was previously available and refusing to adhere to policies on freedom of information.'

Censorship antidote
If that news depresses you, give your spirits a lift by visiting the Beacon for Freedom of Expression [http://www.beaconforfreedom.org/], an international database produced by the Norwegian Forum for Freedom of Expression to cover news about censorship of books and newspapers. While it is sad that so many books have been banned or seized, the fact that so many people are campaigning against censorship is heartening. The site also includes items about freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

Diplomatically speaking
With so much happening politically around the world, it is great to see a site try to provide a clear pathway to the latest news and statements. The Diplomacy Monitor [http://www.diplomacymonitor.com/], compiled by the St Thomas University School of Law, announces the latest official statements, policy documents, speeches, and press briefings from governments and organisations such as the United Nations. The site is updated all through the day with new material, and full-text searching of every document archived within the database is available.

Preserving government
Many governments have embraced the internet eagerly as a way of pushing information out to voters and citizens. A recent study of UK government found approximately 2500 separate UK government websites, many of which might disappear altogether with a change of government or because of updates

and changes. Accordingly, the National Archives of the United Kingdom, as part of their developing strategy for Web archiving, arranged for the Internet Archive (http://web.archive.org/) to make a selective collection on their behalf. This will now become a permanent online archive. A representative sample of 51 websites has been chosen to provide a good overview of government. Sites archived thus far include government departments and agencies. The websites are continually re-harvested to reflect changing circumstances. [http://www.pro.gov.uk/webarchive/] There is also a FAQ about the project at http://www.pro.gov.uk/webarchive/faq.htm.

Passing on the baton
The training of future librarians is always a subject of debate, especially now that the roles of knowledge manager, researcher and information specialist have become so intertwined with traditional librarianship skills. The UK's Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals has an article in the October issue of its *Library + Information Update* [http://www.cilip.org.uk/update/issues/oct03/oct.html] entitled 'Whatever happened to the library schools'. In the piece, John Feather asks whether we need to re-engineer the relationship between LIS departments in tertiary institutions and the profession. He says a meaningful discussion is needed between employers' representatives, the professional bodies and education providers about what skills and qualities are needed by graduates entering the profession now and for the future. Also featured in the Update is the article, 'A new kind of worker', which looks at information literacy projects in the corporate world. According to that piece, the average person spends 150 hours per year looking for information, so information literacy is becoming ever more important.

Above and beyond
School and public librarians will probably enjoy passing on the link for Heavens-Above [http://www.heavens-above.com/] to their users. With all eyes recently turned to the night sky for sightings of Mars, this site has come along at just the right time, when people might start to wonder what else is out there. The site allows you either to specify your location in latitude/longitude or just to pick it out by name from a database. After that, you get a customised page that shows you what is currently overhead — everything from satellites, planets, constellations, comets, and so-

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lar flares to the International Space Station. The site has detailed star charts to help you track moving items such as satellites as they make their way through the heavens. Users can browse anonymously or register to have their details remembered for next time.

On trial
Users looking for medical information are generally interested in clinical trials, and the UK NHS Trusts have just made their Clinical Trials Register available through the Current Controlled Trials service [http://www.controlled-trials.com/information/nhs_launch.asp]. The NHS Trusts Clinical Trials Register can be accessed via the metaRegister of Controlled Trials [http://www.controlled-trials.com/mrct/]. Registration (free) is required. The register is restricted to randomised controlled trials carried out in England, and includes data for both complete and ongoing trials. One for a library's invisible web collection.

Research gateway
With so many different portals and gateways around, both institutional and subject-specific, the thought of one more is barely appealing, but the LMC Research Portal [http://www.leemizell.com/portal/] is surprisingly good, linking as it does to genuine research materials such as scholarly journals rather than just to a mass of random websites. It is a free service that aims to link users to good-quality research resources in ten key domains, including the arts, business, foreign affairs, government and health. The portal is produced by a research consulting firm that provides for-profit information services, but there is no reason not to browse it for free.

Accessible gateway
The Bobby Online Free Portal [http://bobby.watchfire.com/bobby/html/en/index.jsp] is another must-have destination, especially for libraries seeking to ensure their information is as widely accessible as possible. With web page testing tools such as Bobby's around, there is really no excuse for sites that do not work in different browsers or that confuse people with frames or images with no text equivalents. The site will advise you on how to spot and repair barriers to accessibility and how to comply with the World Wide Web Consortium's accessibility guidelines.

Armchair travel
The World Heritage Tour [http://www.world-heritage-tour.org/] is one you can take with a click of the mouse — no passport or tickets are required. The site has been put together by a not-for-profit organisation who wanted to create an image bank of panoramic pictures and virtual reality movies of all the more than 750 World Heritage sites registered by UNESCO. The tour is not yet complete. To date, apart from Egypt, it covers mostly Asian sites — China, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam. However, more are planned and you can sign up to be notified via e-mail when new movies become available.

Online reference shelf
Bartleby is becoming as stocked up with good reference material as an average library, and it is heartening to see new items being added to the database. The latest useful addition is the *American Heritage Book of English Usage* [http://www.bartleby.com/64/], which discusses problems and issues around such diverse topics as gender, style, choice of words, and scientific terms. There is also a section on e-mail. You can browse the book, chapter by chapter, or search within it for specific words.

License to deal
Almost all libraries are involved now in negotiations of one kind or another with publishers and vendors for access to material in electronic form, and may also be marketing their own intellectual property digitally. A new FreePint article, 'Tips on negotiating licences for electronic products', by Paul Pedley, has ten tips for people involved in drawing up these kinds of deals. It covers licenses and contracts, and also talks about the technological solutions needed to manage and protect content. The area is still a legal minefield, and the language and the number of options available can be bewildering. But even the incomprehensible must be mastered or deals can become a straitjacket that prevents the free use of material, especially after the license period ends. Are there any arrangements in place for perpetual access, Pedley asks? An excellent question. [http://www.freepint.com/issues/180903.htm/tips/]

Get the picture
The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art [http://www.picturebookart.org/] revived happy memories for me of children's books and is a delight for anyone who loves picture books as it aims to celebrate that art. Librarians can use it to find literature resources and subject bibliographies of children's books, or just to soak up the images. ∎

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