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## A little bit of self-promotion is good

Maxine Armitage from Find It Information Management writes at <http://www.finditim.com.au/opinions/opinions.html> about the problem of lay people not quite understanding many basic librarianship terms and concepts. Sometimes it seems that it's sufficient to throw the phrase 'Dewey Decimal classification' into a presentation (together with a sneer or a pitying look) to ensure that the speaker is hip to the newest thing in information management. This article is a very good summary of some of the main points about taxonomy and classification, and I've already passed it on to a couple of presenters who've made right royal gooses of themselves.

## Free, but not as unfettered

Freebase <http://www.freebase.com> was the subject of a presentation by the Canberra Information Architecture group (which I couldn't get to, alas) so I've possibly missed some of the background to the product. Instead, I did what we all do: go to the website, look for the 'About us' page and try to interpret what they've written there. Sometimes this can be quite a challenge, but not in this case; the challenge comes later. The 'Introduction' is not bad, but a short jargon-free summary

*...to identify and embrace appropriate technologies and apply them to the daily work of libraries*

would be a little more helpful than what you'll find here. What they have

is a Wikipedia-like service, but with a little more structure (or semantics) than in that other place. Do a search on a person, for instance, and you'll be presented with an entry that sets out various facts (or assertions) about the person in a structured manner. You can enter, date of birth, gender, occupation, species(!) and lots of other stuff. And then you can do a search specifically on particular fields, so that Jack Aubrey the fictional sailor can be differentiated from John Aubrey the diarist. If you want to contribute just now, you'll

have to apply for an invitation (it's still an Alpha product), but it's worth a try. As to whether it will succeed, who knows? But it's a bold attempt.

## At the crossroads

Have a look at WebJunction at <http://webjunction.org>. It's new to me but it's been going for quite a while, after being starting by OCLC and a few other organisations with a little help from the Gates Foundation. Its mission is to identify and embrace appropriate technologies and apply them to the daily work of libraries. They have a few major projects (again supported by the Gates Foundation) looking at planning and management tools, support for small libraries and e-learning initiatives. It was this last topic that brought me to the site: the online courses include public computing support, Internet marketing, web development and networking — many of them free or at little cost. And they welcome participants from all countries.

## Deb's cornucopia

What can I say about Deb Lawson's Historical Research Page at <http://home.insightbb.com/~d.lawson/> and how does she find the time to maintain it? It appears to have a strong emphasis on the 17th – 19th century in Britain and then you look further and see that there's plenty of coverage of American social, political and military history, and architecture and religion and 'daily lives' going back many centuries. It's definitely one to bookmark for reference librarians and anybody who just likes to know things.

## It takes all types

By the time I came to study librarianship, the History of Printing and related matters had disappeared from the syllabus — which is a pity as it's one thing that I've always had a bit of an interest in. I recall that our Head of Publications used to doodle in arcane typefaces during tedious meetings and it was a treat to observe the skill that he brought to the task. Anyway, imagine my pleasure at discovering <http://ilovetypography.com>. It's a blog written by John Boardley and it's all about

type. It's only been going for a couple of months, but there's already a few posts and most importantly plenty of feedback. In a world where Web publishing has focussed more attention on style and choice, it's not surprising that people who have a feeling for letters in all their forms are taking more of an interest in what it's all about.

## True to type

And just in case you thought that type is type, and can't see what all the fuss is about, look at <http://psychology.wichita.edu/surl/usabilitynews/81/PersonalityofFonts.htm>. This was a recent study that investigated the uses and perceptions of various families of fonts in a range of circumstances and usage, with particular emphasis on websites. While it may be just a little too much to talk about the personality of a font, the study showed that there are distinct preferences for certain specific uses and audiences.

## e-Government league tables

Those of us working in e-Government have to take note of the various reports that come out from various consultant groups. I'm sure that the same applies to global reports about universities or public libraries and their efforts to provide online services, but government organisations seem to be perennial targets for such studies. They're not bad in themselves — they're often quite useful in many regards — but the problems start when they try to compare unlike examples. A recent major report from Accenture is guilty of this, rating Australia's e-Government activities against those of places like Singapore, despite the considerable disparity in the operations and complexity of the different examples. The other thing that irked me about this report is that while it's available for download from their website, what you get is a PDF version of a print document, full of pretty full-page illustrations and much too much white space. And at 11MB that's a waste of bandwidth, time and paper if you decide to print it. Judge for yourself at [http://nstore.accenture.com/acn\\_com/PDF/2007LCSDelivPromiseFinal.pdf](http://nstore.accenture.com/acn_com/PDF/2007LCSDelivPromiseFinal.pdf).

# Webb's web

## More international comparisons

The Accenture report concentrated on a handful of major countries – not so Darrell M. West at Brown University's Center for Public Policy. He surveyed 1687 sites in 198 countries, and while this clearly only scratches the surface there are quite a few findings to take away from the report – one of which is that many smaller countries are struggling to provide even the most basic only information services. It's at <http://www.insidepolitics.org/egovt07int.pdf>.

## The Realm of the Coyne

You might be struggling to work out how scholarship in its traditional sense may be changing to cope with the current world in which participation is given so much more emphasis. In that case, you'll find Paul Coyne's paper at <http://intouch.emeraldinsight.com/paulcoyne/>

[weblog/1770.html](http://weblog/1770.html) in which he looks at how the less formal review in the commons can co-exist with the more established peer review model. It's well worth a read.

## Seeing how it looks

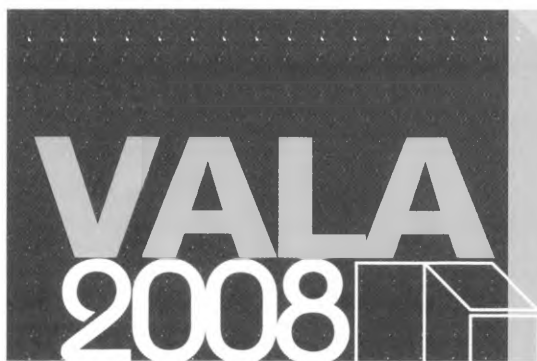
One problem that many Web developers have is how to see what their creation looks like on all of the different browsers that their user community may be using. Most developers don't have access to a range of browsers on a range of operating systems (Windows, Unix, Mac OS) so they have to rely on some form of emulation. The one that I usually rely on is AnyBrowser <http://www.anybrowser.com>, which does a pretty good job. I was happy to see it included in the list at <http://www.vandelaydesign.com/blog/design/effectively-testing-your-website-in-multiple-browsers/> but there are quite a few there that you can choose from.

## Conference papers online

Some papers from the Association of Parliamentary Libraries of Australasia Conference in July are now available at <http://143.119.255.87/APLA/events/canberra2007/Canberra2007.pdf>.

## More digital standards

In a move that will benefit all of us eventually, the Library of Congress has announced eight partnerships with other organisations to establish digital format standards for photos, films, music and video games. The new project, the Preserving Creative America initiative, part of the library's National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program, is an opportunity for industry and libraries to develop the needed standards for preservation and cataloguing. More information is at <http://www.loc.gov/today/pr/2007/07-156.html>.



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