

# Webb's webb

## Computing under a cloud

Another warning about putting your faith in cloud computing comes from a story on ZDNet at <http://blogs.zdnet.com/digitalcameras/?p=362>. The Digital Railroad photo archiving site went bust a couple of months ago, with little warning to its users – certainly not enough warning for most people to retrieve their valuable photos and find an alternative host. And while a similar operator offered the former Digital Railroad users some alternative arrangements after the event, that's not much use if your data has already gone to the big bit bucket in the sky.

## In memoriam

Well, here's a cheery topic so early in the year: websites that are no longer with us. It Died (<http://itdied.com/>) catalogues sites that have been taken down or have just disappeared, as well as features that have been dropped from those that are still around. So next time you find something gone, try this – it just might explain things. Of course, one day this particular one might not be here – and then how will we know about it?

## Everybody's doing it ... aren't they?

It's not what you'd call a comprehensive survey, but Roger Hudson's post at [http://www.usability.com.au/resources/web2\\_tools.cfm](http://www.usability.com.au/resources/web2_tools.cfm) bears out what a few of us have suspected: that the usage of Web 2.0 is nowhere near ubiquitous, and is really quite variable. What he did was ask a few groups of people about their usage of blogs, tagging, photo-sharing and the like, and did a rough analysis of their responses. Those 30 or younger were much more likely to be participants in Web 2.0, and the same goes for Web evangelists compared to those who just worked on Web tasks. As for the rest, not as many as some might expect.

## Thoughts on WCAG 2.0

Last December, the World Wide Web Consortium (also known as W3C) announced the new "standard" for Web Accessibility, WCAG 2.0: the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, Version 2.0 (<http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag.php>). At the outset, I should say that the 2.0 can be a little misleading as it has nothing to do with Web 2.0, Library 2.0 and so on.

WCAG 2.0 is a long-awaited replacement for the 1.0 version (released ten years ago) and naturally has the same broad aim: to make websites accessible to the greatest range of users, whatever their personal capabilities or the equipment that they may be using. Beyond the broad aim though, comes the detail – and what detail 2.0 has! 1.0 was quite simple and easy to understand, and still we had trouble getting people to follow its requirements. In 2.0 the authors have recast the layout of the guidelines and have put a lot more information in, with a promise of more to follow.

The result, I'm sorry to say, is quite daunting. Once you've spent a couple of hours going through it, it makes a lot of sense, but my guess is that it's going to turn a lot of people off the whole subject. Which is a pity, because it's as important as it ever was.

## The message of the media

Hot on the heels of Rupert Murdoch's Boyer Lecture on the future of newspapers (in which he lauds the bond between a newspaper and its readers and what that will mean in the Internet Age) comes the latest report by the Bivings Group from its annual survey of the Web features of America's largest newspapers (<http://tinyurl.com/44bjwp>). While the use of user-generated comment (which Rupert would certainly endorse, as it contributes significantly to cutting his costs) is on the increase, the report suggests that any changes in the way they operate are only marginal and we are yet to see the reinvention that is surely needed if newspapers are to survive in any recognisable way.

## How do you read?

Joe Clark is best known for his writings on accessibility, but his latest contribution at <http://scrollmagazine.com/number-1/unreadable> is a somewhat tongue-in-cheek analysis of the reading styles of Web users, and rather than place the blame on the teaching profession or the inevitable ageing of the user population, he attributes our changing habits to the nature of the Web itself. A few people who've commented on the article have pointed out that they chose to print it rather than read it online, which reinforces one of his many points.

## Proceed with caution

In an article on the CMS Watch site at <http://www.cmswatch.com/Feature/190-Wiki-Myths?source=RSS>, Dorthe Jespersen has some useful advice on using Wikis - particularly those within organisations. She talks about three myths: "build it and they will contribute", "the interface is so intuitive that no training is necessary for anyone" and "it will make it easier for everyone to keep track of all information". Now I've had some experience in trying to get a Wiki going in my office, and what she says rings true. Those of us who are really into this sort of thing can easily get carried away, but if you don't do your homework and figure out how to best get your co-workers involved and trained, you won't succeed. I can recommend the article to anyone attempting to pursue any of the Web 2.0 concepts.

Don't forget to visit my blog  
<http://www.alia.org.au/webbsblog>



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