

Webb's web

What does "display" mean?

When it was launched a couple of months ago, the Woolworths grocery price check site had a quaint instruction on it: "The site's URL may not be displayed on any website without Woolworths' written permission." So of course I couldn't tell you where it is (but it's not too hard to find with a search). And when I got there, it wouldn't let me enter my postcode or suburb name. This has now been fixed (apparently), but it wasn't a good start. The strange thing about this though was the wording of the admonition. Who asks permission these days before putting a link on a site? And then there's the word "display". Is it OK to have a hyperlink as long as the text shows "Woolies' prices" instead of ...

The complicated world of e-books

Amazon took a few missteps at the end of January in dropping all McMillan e-books from its catalogue – without warning or explanation. When they did try to explain what was happening, they didn't do that too well either. The whole story (or at least the greater part of the story) is set out in a blog post by author John Scalzi (<http://tinyurl.com/yapwvwe>). Now, alert readers will know that I'm not a particular fan of e-books, but I take no delight in this debacle. It shows that for all the excitement of new technology and new operating models, there are old-fashioned human beings and egos behind the decisions. The best example of this is that the people at Amazon prefer to think of themselves as "partners" rather than customers of publishers. It's just another example of the user not being considered in the whole equation.

Is recitation the sincerest form of flattery?

It started with a post in James Dellow's Blog (<http://chieftech.com.au/digital-curation-data-with-a-touch-of-trust>) about data curators (and these are probably not what you'd imagine them to be). He then introduced me to the concept of "churnalism", which is something that many of us (especially bloggers) have been doing without realising that someone has coined a name for it. But it made me think about blogging and retweeting and all that. Are we adding value (a term that itself can be said to add little value) or just parroting some cute thing that we saw elsewhere? I'm not sure, but I like the word. Churnalism. Churnalism. Churnalism.

UK Web Archive

The British Library has formally launched its Web Archive at <http://www.webarchive.org.uk/ukwa/> (it seems they've been harvesting sites since 2004) and has announced plans to greatly increase the number of websites it collects – assuming that favourable legal deposit legislation can be passed by Parliament.

A few thoughts on Enterprise 2.0

Some people are no doubt becoming heartily sick of all the 2.0 things that are being thrown at us, but to ignore the phenomena would be unwise. I see the current groundswell to be as significant in its way as the introduction of the internet itself. The challenge is though to avoid the hype and look for sensible commentary. One blogger worth reading is Andrew McAfee from the MIT Sloan School of Management (<http://andrewmcafee.org/blog/>); he offers some general thoughts and gives useful examples of organisations implementing the concepts. But, it won't happen overnight. As he says: "Companies will be transformed. It will be a quiet, subtle transformation, though."

And while we're on the topic, I do wonder just how much the '2.0' thing really means to the community, outside the tight little group of social media enthusiasts. That was my reaction when I saw an observation by one of the in-group that the participants at a Social Media Summit seemed unfamiliar with the concept of "Enterprise 2.0." It's a little puzzling, as you'd think that people attending a function like that would have reflected on what it was all about – but then I suspect we've all been to a few presentations where we only had a vague idea of what they might be about before we got there.

Let's be real careful out there

Another of the many bees in my bonnet is that while I see some real benefits in using Social Media, I don't want to go overboard about it. I'm writing this because of a Twitter enthusiast who derided a politician who couldn't see the point in using Twitter. This evangelist expressed surprise that the MP could not appreciate the value of communicating with millions of Australians. Now let's see if we can spot all the errors in that observation. First, there aren't millions of Australians interested in hearing from their MPs via Twitter. Second, the MP probably already has some very good ways of getting his message out to his constituents. And then there's the quality of the tweets going out now from politicians – thankfully most can haz no lolcat speak. It's time for cool heads, people.

News for sale

I'd like to say that the report from the Pew Research Center at http://www.stateofthedia.org/2010/online_economic_attitudes.php clarifies the issue of the news corporations making money from the Internet – it doesn't. But it should make sobering reading for Rupert Murdoch (who announced at the end of March that the *Times* and the *Sunday Times* would soon be behind paywalls). The report sets out the overall situation and explains the various cost-recovery models being proposed, but it concludes that no particular method looks to be a winner – although the *Wall Street Journal* isn't doing too badly so far. And their survey about the efficacy of online ads isn't too encouraging either. Most people ignore them.

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