1 DEC

Webb's Web

👤 Posted by Kerry Webb   💬 25 comments

A note on TinyURLs

I had a question recently about the shortened URLs that I include in this column, so a brief explanation is in order. In the ALIA blog and online versions of *INCITE*, these URLs are live hyperlinks on which you can click to go immediately to the page. On the printed page though, you'd have to type the addresses, so I try to make that easier by using the TinyURL service to reduce them to a more usable format. (There are several other services that can do this, but TinyURL serves the purpose well). It also prevents links from extending over several lines – which can look really tacky.

Could it be part of a new movement?

The Occupy protests in many parts of the world have been (not surprisingly) getting a fair bit of publicity – often for the wrong reasons. What's been less obvious has been the provision of library services to the protesters. There was a story about the Underground Library in Manhattan (**bxgossip.com/news/ underground-library**) and there were other sites in Dewey Square in Boston and near St Paul's Cathedral in London. *Librarything* (**www.librarything. com/**) is being used by some of them to do the collection management. There have also been a couple of suggestions that BookCrossing (**www. bookcrossing.com**) might be a better choice for the supporting technology. It's an interesting question, depending on whether the books are to be set free or not.

Decisions, decisions

I was away when the National Library opened its Treasures Gallery, and I haven't been to see it yet. I was interested in the time leading up to the opening to see that they had developed an iPhone app, and I wondered whether a comparable facility was being built for the NLA website. When I eventually saw the app, I realised that it was also built to function like an audio tour for when you visited the Gallery in person. But the emphasis was really on the smartphone experience (there's also an Android version), with no plans initially for a web-based virtual tour. This is a mistake, as I see it. Despite the take-up of smartphones, most people also have access to a desktop – and the images from the Gallery are going to look a whole lot better on the larger screen.

All this came to mind when reading an article from *Boagworld* by Rob Borley (**boagworld.com/mobile-web/ mobile-maze/**) that sets out what you should be thinking about when deciding how to address the mobile world. You may not agree with all of his observations but it's a good starting point.

The long road to 2.0

Nicholas Gruen has been an active player in various spheres for a while, but many people only came to know of him during the Commonwealth's Government 2.0 Taskforce, which he chaired. A couple of months ago he gave the 2011 Solomon Lecture, in which he considered the progress made by governments since the release of the Taskforce's report. It's fair to say that the report card is not one of which our public sector can be proud – especially in the area of the way they treat copyright. The main exception, which may come as a surprise to the casual observer, is the Queensland Police. The ABC, on the other hand, clings to some very outdated principles in preventing access to 'their' information. His whole speech is at **tinyurl.com/6hsh3n9**.

What is usability?

I liked the article by Tom Stewart at **tinyurl.com/3hlqtvw** in which he looks at some myths about usability. And with the first one he's nailed the most important aspect: usability isn't about making things easy, it's about ensuring that the user can get things done.

Not yet a real plus

I'm still watching with great interest just what's happening with Google+. In September they opened the service up to anyone who wanted to join (before then you needed to know someone to ask for an invitation) and traffic jumped. A short time later however, the overall level of usage dropped back to where it had been (**tinyurl.com/68qpj6t**). As Mike Dunn suggests in that article, it's possibly because Google+ doesn't offer anything that Facebook doesn't – and that's my impression too. Facebook activity among my friends is going strong, while those few who've dipped their toes in the Google+ water are doing their thing, but not really making any waves. It looks like the Big G is prepared to play a waiting game - but for how long, I wonder.

What was that again?

Dey Alexander reminds us that there's a lot about accessibility that's not so obvious: the use of jargon and local idioms can make it harder to get your message across (**tinyurl. com/3pc7ujv**). It's something that irks me when dealing with call centres for banks; how much more difficult is it on a website when you can't get an immediate translation?

All the news that's fit to sell

With News Ltd's announcement that premium content in *The Australian* will be put beyond a paywall, the Pew Report on tablet use offers little encouragement. They found that users of tablet devices are reading more news on them, but are still quite reluctant to pay for it. Read the report at **www.journalism.org/ analysis_report/tablet**.