

Government information on the net

Australian government organisations (with some outstanding exceptions) have been slow to mount information resources for Internet access. Of course, children of all ages from many countries have chuckled at the bird calls from the Australian Botanic Gardens Web server (<http://155.187.10.12:80/sounds>) and the Tasmanian Government has two Web servers operational, but there aren't many other organisations who've done anything.

This should change soon with the establishment of a Commonwealth/State Internet Working Party with the South Australian, Tasmanian, Northern Territorian, Queensland and Commonwealth Governments participating. The Working Party will work towards establishing recommended practices for the presentation of information services, by identifying good examples from overseas. The contact point for the Working Party is Ian Barndt from the Commonwealth Department of Finance

(Ian.Barndt@finance.ausgovfinance.telememo.au).

Fortunately, there are many good examples of government information services overseas. A recent issue of *Network news* (a listserv-based newsletter originating in Minnesota) summarised the information servers operated by US State governments. All of the links to the servers are available at <http://garnet.msen.com:70/0h/vendor/maven/inet1/nnews/states.html>

Thirty-one of the fifty States are included in the list, with significant contributions from California and Texas. The report refers to the 'citizen sugar-coating' found in many services and

makes some good suggestions — using sensible naming conventions (i.e. www.state.us or gopher.state.us); limiting images of State seals, department logos, governors; and (most importantly) including 'real' information along with the usual government manual and PR stuff.

Canada, too, has put an amount of government on the Net. The Canadian 'Open Government' server (<http://debra.dgbt.doc.ca:80/opengov>) contains pointers to a number of federal government departmental and provincial government services, as well as significant government documents and treaties (GATT, NATO, NAFTA).

In the broader context of government information, a moderated list has been established to discuss the US Government Information Locator service (GILS). GILS is a federal initiative to enable users to locate, access and acquire publicly-available federal information resources. The service uses the Z39.50 and other relevant standards to support the deployment of Internet-accessible information locators.

While its initial thrust is within the US government, this will clearly be a development that will be picked up throughout the world, and the list (known as the GILS Forum) will be of interest to a range of agencies, librarians, systems vendors and the general public. To join the Forum, send the following message to: LISTPROC@CNI.ORG, SUBSCRIBE GILS <your name>.

Internet Room at Information Online and On Disc 95

Unfortunately for those who kept checking the Internet Room at the

NZLIA/ALIA Conference, it never got working. But the good news is that there will be one at the Online Conference, and it will be operating. So the advice that we gave in August still applies — you'll have to telnet to your host computer (the one that runs your post office) to read your mail, so be sure that you know the address of that computer, your sign on and password, and how to read your mail on it.

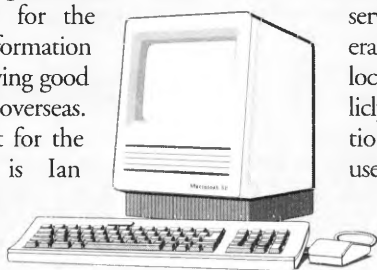
Cooperative developments on the Net

The Internet is not just about providing information services for global access. One of its greatest contributions has been in bringing groups of people together from many places to work on a project — people who may never meet in person. Thus software such as Mosaic can be developed at one site, distributed to many others quickly and cheaply, improved as a result of massive feedback and finally released in a useable state to the world.

Another recent example in co-operation appeared on a list dealing with American civil war history. A contributor idly wondered whether it would be possible to have tables of contents for relevant journals posted to the list. Within a couple of weeks (and following some hectoring from the list owner) volunteers had been found to provide this information, and now this information for a couple of dozen journals appears regularly and is archived at the list host site. No doubt similar activities are occurring in other fields of interest.

LISTSERV information on the Web

In a previous column, we talked about how to find out about what lists were available for subscription. It has been



New IFLA Internet connection

IFLA (the International Federation of Library Associations) has announced a list on the Internet that will facilitate an electronic exchange of information between IFLA and its members. Robert Wedgworth, IFLA President, noted that 'IFLA's objective is to liberate its member communications from the barriers of time and place.'

SilverPlatter is supporting IFLA in establishing this LISERV by

providing technical support and computer space in its US office. Gerry Hurley, Director of Educational Services at SilverPlatter, assures participants that '...as the host of this Internet connection, we have no other role than to help with the technical implementation and maintenance.'

In addition to IFLA-L, IFLA conference papers, newsletters, and

other material will be accessible through SilverPlatter's WWW page. These documents will also be available on SilverPlatter's FTP server and via e-mail.

To subscribe to IFLA's electronic conference, Internet users should send the following message to: LISTSERV@SILVERPLATTER.COM, subscribe IFLA-L <your first and last names>.

made a little easier now that John Buckman of the Walter Shelby Group has set up a Web page for LISTSERV lists at <http://www.clark.net/pub/listserv/listserv.html>

Each entry provides a description of the subject matter, number of members, services (such as archiving), eligibility to join, and addresses for the list and the list manager. The topics cover a wide range, and yes, libraries are included (although you have to look under COMPUTERS to find PACS-L).

Online news briefs

Learned Information, the publisher and organiser of the International Online Meeting has published its *NewsWire* for free browsing on the Internet. One of the top stories in the latest edition is a look at UMI's new online service, which will be featured at the Electronic Document Delivery seminar to be held in conjunction with the Information Online and On Disc 95 Conference. Other items concern the European Union's recommendations on an 'Information highway' and new ATM trials.

NewsWire may be accessed at <http://info.learned.co.uk> and gopher users can access the journal via info.learned.co.uk.

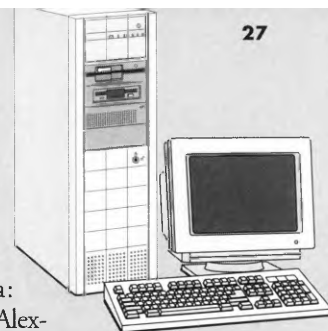
Digital libraries projects awards

Six research projects developing new technologies for digital libraries — storehouses of information available through the Internet — have been funded through a joint initiative of the US National Science Foundation (NSF), the Department of Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

They are:

- Carnegie Mellon University: the Informedia interactive on-line digital video library system will enable users to access, explore and retrieve science and mathematics materials from video archives;
- University of California, Berkeley: this project will produce a prototype digital library with a focus on environmental information;
- University of Michigan: this project will conduct coordinated research and development to create, operate, use and evaluate a testbed of a large-scale, continually-evolving multimedia digital library, focussing on earth and space sciences;

- University of California, Santa Barbara: Project Alexandria will develop a digital library providing easy access to large and diverse collections of maps, images and pictorial materials as well as a full range of new electronic library services;
- Stanford University: the Stanford Integrated Digital Library Project will develop the enabling technologies for a single, integrated 'virtual' library that will provide uniform access to the large number of emerging networked information sources and collections;
- University of Illinois: this project is based on the new Grainger Engineering Library Information Center at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign and will be centred around journals and maganla.gov engineering and science literature.



Contributions and suggestions for this column are always welcome.

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