Webb's web

Tom's world

Kerry Webb

Tom Worthington is employed by the Department of Defence as a Web administrator, but most people probably know him better as the current president of the Australian Computer Society (ACS), where he has gained a degree of fame by promoting the IFIP computer conference with such initiatives as flying over Canberra in a hot-air balloon with ACT Senator Kate Lundy, taking photographs with a digital camera and loading them to the Internet through a mobile phone.

In his ACS role he has a hectic speaking schedule and on a recent trip to Western Australia was convinced by ALIA vice-president Kerry Smith to join ALIA. Closer to home, he spoke to the 1996 Oracle User Group ACT Conference on the topic 'Databases, the Internet and society, or The Web: public good and potential disaster'. The paper is at http://www.peg.apc.org/~tomw/twadd20.htm and is worth reading.

And a couple of words from Brewster

Brewster Kahle became famous as the developer of Wide Area Information Server (WAIS) systems, which most people regarded as pretty neat until the Web blossomed a couple of years ago. He has taken a lower profile recently, but his name popped up in two new projects in the past few months. The first is the Digital Archives Discussion List which covers things relating to the social, technical, and legal issues in doing large scale digital archiving. To subscribe, send the following command to archivists-request@archive.org in the BODY of e-mail: SUBSCRIBE archivists your-address.

In a posting to the list in August, Brewster talked about the Internet Archive. Its mission is to gather, store and provide access to public materials on the Internet such as the World Wide Web, news and software archives. He says that everything donated to the archive will be migrated to new storage media every ten years, so that it will always be accessible. The Archive is looking for donations of data, equipment, and technical and legal help. So far, they have 227 Gigabytes of data and are planning to expand to 10 Terabytes. To find out more, visit them at http://www.archive.org.

... and also from Gerry

Gerry McKiernan, the Curator of CyberStacks at Iowa State University has also been active in the past couple of months. He's announced the establishment of Project Aristotle, a clearinghouse of projects and research devoted to the automated categorisation of Web resources, at http://www.public.iastate.edu/~CYBERSTACKS/Aristotle.htm.

It lists names and descriptions of projects, with hotlinks to demonstrations and prototypes where available. The initial emphasis is on projects and prototypes that have applied filtering systems, text extraction and/or categorisation, or agents, robots or machine learning to the categorisation of Web resources. Already there are over thirty entries from organisations around the world. If you have any more to add, let him know. He's also looking for examples of the application in libraries of Intelligent Software Agents. There are references on the Project Aristotle site, and also at http://www.sics.se/isl/abc/survey.html at the site maintained by Sverker Janson.

New from HotWired

It's been a while since I visited HotWired — so long in fact that I've forgotten my username and password, and I'm finding this is a real problem. You move around the Net, seeing interesting sites and registering, and not recording the information that you give them. I'm trying to stay organised by saving these details on a file on my computer, but this gets difficult if you use one at work and another at home. Any suggestions on how to handle this will be gratefully received. But back to HotWired. If you've forgotten your username, it's easy enough to join again (under a different name) and it's free. There are a number of new services, among them Webmonkey, 'the first all-service tune-up station for the wired world'.

It offers complete HTML tutorials, critiques of the latest browsers and plug-ins, a weekly demo of new technologies, and Geek Talk — an interactive advice column. See it at http://www.webmonkey.com.

They've also improved their HotBot search engine quite a bit. It uses Inktomi and indexes 54 million documents pages. It claims to be the only search engine indexing the entire Web, and the only one updated daily. The latter may be true, but 'the entire Web'? I don't think so. But it is good, and fast. And there's another intriguing feature — it displays advertisements at the top of each page, but when I was searching they were all for an Australian advertiser. Now, that's focused advertising.

InfoAlert

The Open Learning Technology Corporation Limited (OLTC) has announced its InfoAlert service. It presents current awareness information in the areas of open learning, flexible delivery and educational technology. Check it out at http://www.oltc.edu.au/infopack/infointr.htm. I particularly liked their listing of conferences, with icons which indicated if each was an Australian or international event. Neat.

More on the Global Digital Library

In December 1995, the Library of Congress held a conference on organising the global digital library. There were many representatives of

US libraries and related organisations, and also two people from the British Library and the National Library of Canada, whose role apparently was to provide an international perspective. Having thus taken into account the ideas of the rest of the world, the organisers seem to feel that it wasn't necessary to invite any outsiders for the follow-up meeting in May 1996. So much for the global digital library. The proceedings for the May meeting are at gopher://marvel.loc.gov/00/loc/conf.meet/ogdl2.

Project X

It sounds exciting and mysterious and it is. I'm not sure how it will develop, but it's an intriguing idea. Apple Computer has produced ProjectX, a technology demonstration based on MCF (Meta Content Format), which they say is a new approach to representing meta information about content in any information space.

With an appropriate plugin for your browser (available free from the ProjectX site) you can fly through a 3-D representation of information and link to the resources that you find there. There are many examples of the technology that you can access, including a version of Yahoo! and a lots of information from the Australasian Legal Information Insti-

tute. When you go to a site using ProjectX, you'll see a cluster of icons representing the main entry point, folders and documents. As you hold the mouse button down, the cluster moves towards you and the components separate. Then you can click on the one that you want.

All the information that you need is at http://www.atg.apple.com/go/ProjectX/.

Online biographies

For lovers of trivia and for those of us required to supply information at short notice for homework assignments, here's another little treasure on the Net. At http://www.biography.com/ you'll find a searchable online database of 15 000 famous people, based on the Cambridge Biographical Encyclopedia. Using this terrific resource, you can verify that Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday really were youngsters when they tamed Tombstone. And the coverage is extensive — in the index, Bill Lawry is followed by Henry and Louisa Lawson.

For a more comprehensive listing of Webb's Web, jump onto ALIAnet and search http://www.alia.org.au/alia/incite/wwww/index.html. ∎

The ALIA home pages and the ALIA web service, ALIAnet, can be found at the following URL: http://www.alia.org.au/

SAVE YOURSELF THE TROUBLE OF TYPING THESE URLS!

A much more comprehensive version of this column (with associated hyperlinks) is on ALIAnet, and has the URL of http://www.alia.org.au/alia/incite/wwww/index.html

[Please note that full-stops at the end of any URL or e-mail addresses, or underlines, appearing in inCite should NOT be used]

Contributions and suggestions for this column are always welcome. Please e-mail Kerry Webb at kerry.webb@alianet.alia.org.au or via the ALIA National Office, incite@alia.org.au