

Connecting users to information resources

Tony Mays, deputy university librarian, University of Newcastle

The University of Newcastle recently introduced its latest technical innovation NEWLINK at a launch attended by the Vice-Chancellor and senior members of university staff. NEWLINK stands for Newcastle Link and is an ingenious amalgam of recently emerged technologies to form a seamless product which connects the library user to a wide range of information resources.

At the launch university librarian, Bill Linklater, said 'We have for the last several years been looking for a way to integrate all of our products. Our customers deserve a less confusing environment than we've been able to offer. Now at last the tools

have arrived to allow us to do the job'.

NEWLINK is a web interface making good use of graphic design tools for easy navigation. It also make use of Z39.50, a web version of its OPAC, in-house database servers and Internet connections to externally held databases.

The 'Library Information and Services' section is extremely comprehensive covering everything a customer could conceivably want to know about the library and its services, but broken into digestible units. In the database section connections are offered to either of the in-house database servers (Innovative Interfaces and Ovid) as well as to a range

of Internet-connectable services. In further developments planned for 1997, databases will be offered in both basic (Innovative) and advanced (Ovid) modes; and the in-house CD-ROM network will also be connected to NEWLINK.

The web version of the catalogue may at first seem only a cosmetic improvement — though this in itself is a boon to the user; but two brief examples may illustrate where the web catalogue is leading us:

- where the Library has access to electronic full-text data from a journal, the catalogue entry contains a 'connect to' address — click on this and you are reading the journal; and

- a catalogue item may be listed as being stored in a mysterious location, for example, Green Stack — click on this and you will be told what a Green Stack is, and exactly how to get to it.

The University of Newcastle Library has been fortunate to have retained a wealth of in-house expertise from its pioneering days in Internet training. Screens will continue to be improved with the help of graphic designers, but Charmian Mitchell and Helen Lloyd, in particular, have given the project a great head start.

NEWLINK can be reached on: <http://www.library.newcastle.edu.au>. ■

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