

Interview with the father of the Internet



Kerry Webb

Vint Cerf, vice-president of US communications giant MCI, has been called the 'Father of the Internet' because of his early work on the TCP/IP protocols upon which the Internet is based. He was interviewed by Dan Tebbutt of *Australian Personal Computer*, and an abbreviated version appears in the January 1997 edition. The full transcript of the interview is at http://apcmag.com/profiles/213a_1ce.htm.

He knows what he's talking about and expresses himself very well. I was particularly taken with his answer to a question about whether artificial intelligence has a role to play in finding information better:

'I think it does, but right now I am relying on the librarians and their 2000 years or more of experience trying to organise information. They all were worried that they would have no jobs to do because computers would take over: I beg to differ, I think we need them now more than we ever did because of the vast quantity of material that needs to be more thoughtfully organised.'

We know that, but it's good to have it confirmed from such a source.

The news from the Shetlands

There's an interesting little dispute that's been developing in the Shetland Islands which may have implications for Internet site managers around the world. One side of the story can be found at <http://www.shetland-news.co.uk/appeal.html> and the other from <http://www.shetland-times.co.uk/st/index.htm> but here's a summary (from a layman).

Both the *Shetland Times* and the *Shetland News* operate on-line news services on the Internet, and the trouble commenced when the *News* started putting links to stories on the *Times* site, quoting the headlines from the *Times* stories for the links. The *Times* objected to this, apparently because they wanted users to come to their site through their home page and read the advertising material there. It also appears that they felt that readers may get the impression that the news items had been gathered by the *News*, and there is also a suggestion that the quoting of the text of the headlines is a copyright infringement.

A Scottish judge has imposed a temporary legal ban on the *News* having links from their site to items on the *Times* site, and a full hearing of the case is expected early in 1997.

It's difficult to comment fully on this case, partly because few of us have the necessary legal qualifications and partly because of some of the quirky elements in the case (for example the editor of the *News* is a former employee of the *Times*). But there are a few things that can be said. The Web has been developed around the widespread use of hyperlinks, and while it is ac-

knowledged to be good manners to ask permission (or at least notify the other party) when you want to include a link on your page, it isn't done very often and if it had to be done every time it would slow down the expansion of the Web considerably. Then there's the issue of competition. When a private individual puts a link to a commercial page then that may be acceptable, but if a competitor does the same thing it's another matter.

Whatever the outcome of the court case (and possible appeals) it won't have immediate application outside Scotland, but we're bound to hear a lot more about this issue.

FLIN submissions

The Federal Libraries Information Network (FLIN) represents the interests of libraries and information services within federal agencies. It is an active group and has on its site at <http://www.nla.gov.au/flin/> copies of submissions to a number of recent enquiries, including the *Information Management Steering Committee's report: Management of government information as a national strategic resource*, and the *Parliamentary Joint Committee's inquiry on publications* (concerning the proposed discontinuation of the *Parliamentary Paper* series). There's also a response to the National Library's position paper on the *National strategy for provision of access to Australian electronic publications*.

Copyright

— the debate continues

The American Library Association has announced in its ALA Washington On-line Newsline (ALAWON) that after extensive discussions in forums such as the 'Consortium of college and university media centers' and the 'Conference on fair use', it has concluded that it is premature to formalise guidelines for the fair use of copyrighted materials in a digital information environment.

ALA says that 'because information and communication technologies are continuing rapidly to evolve, and because of the degree to which healthy experimentation is under way, ALA does not recommend formal guidelines for fair use in a digital information environment at this time'. ALAWON (with information on how to subscribe) can be found at <http://www.ala.org/washoff/alawon/index.html>.

LC Web catalogue

The Library of Congress has set up an experimental OPAC with a Web interface, which is very good news for those of us who have tried to use the old LOCIS system.

It provides access to more than 4.8 million records (out of 27 million) and allows users to search by keyword, author, title, ISBN, and LC class searches, as well as limit by format, date, publisher, and language.

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Individual records are displayed in hypertext format, making it possible to jump to other works on the same subject, call number, or by same author, as well as to link to on-line texts and images, and view the MARC formats of any record. You can see it at <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/catalog/>.

New version of the *Scholarly electronic publishing biography*

Version three of the *Scholarly electronic publishing bibliography* is now available at <http://info.lib.uh.edu/sep/sep.html> with Acrobat and Microsoft Word versions also. The document is searchable, with links to sources on the Internet. It covers legal and economic matters, electronic books and texts, electronic serials, and various issues of interest to libraries.

Also at the University of Houston is *Library-oriented lists & electronic serials*, a compilation of electronic discussion lists, distribution lists, and serials which are of interest to library professionals, staff, and others. There's a new version of the document at <http://info.lib.uh.edu/liblists/liblists.htm> incorporating frames (there's also a no-frames version) and a sophisticated searching capability.

And more on electronic serials

Index Morganagus is a free text and field searchable, full-text index of thirty-four library-related electronic serials (including D-LIB, TER, Ariadne and Current Cites) at <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/~emorgan/morganagus/>.

It appears that one of the reasons that electronic serials are not more popular is that they are not indexed and easily accessible. Index Morganagus is an attempt to address this.

Opening of the BNF

The first buildings of the new Bibliotheque Nationale de France were opened in December. A background story (in French) from *Le Monde* is available at <http://www.lemonde.fr/dossiers/BFM/index.html>. The BNF itself has a new Home Page at <http://www.bnf.fr/> with a version incorporating English text under development.

California heritage digital image access project

The Library at the University of California, Berkeley and the Bancroft Library (manuscripts, archives and special collections) have announced the availability of a demonstration database of the California Heritage Digital Image Access Project demonstration database.

The collection is a digital archive containing photographs, pictures, and manuscripts from the collections of the Bancroft Library. It offers to the public direct access to unique, primary source materials documenting California's rich history 'in their original archival context.' It does this by embedding digital representations of the primary

sources directly within the documents — archival finding aids — created by the curators and archivists to describe the collections. One good feature of the site is a 'known hazards' section where there are warnings about how some browsers may have trouble displaying some of the data. The database is at <http://sunsite.Berkeley.EDU/CalHeritage/>.

A new list — but is it needed?

DigLibns, a electronic discussion for digital librarians was announced in December, and immediately generated a lot of discussion, especially on DIGLIBS, the Digital Libraries Research mailing list. The question was whether another list was needed, with DIGLIBS being a very useful forum for general discussions on these issues. The initiator of DigLibns made a strong case for the new list — the different needs of researchers and practitioners — but many people weren't convinced.

To try it out, subscribe by sending the message `subscribe diglibns <your name>` to listserv@sunsite.berkeley.edu. If you want to find out more about this electronic list, see <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/DigLibns/>.

WIPO deliberations

In late 1996, there was a lot of discussion about a number of issues to be considered at the convention of the World Intellectual Property Organisation held in Geneva in December. The one that generated most heat was Treaty III, the so-called *sui generis* database treaty, would have allowed owners of databases, including those hosting research and sports scores, to protect the information contained within the database. The provision would have allowed facts to be copyrighted, a practice that runs contrary to hundreds of years of copyright laws and practices.

As it happened, the proposal was abandoned, apparently because it was opposed by a wide range of groups, including the computer industry, library, and consumer advocacy groups. Opponents said the treaty would have granted very broad rights to database creators, stifling the free flow of information.

As we live in a country where sporting organisations can prohibit posting of schedules of football games this is a step in the right direction, but don't be surprised if the supporters of the proposal raise it again in some other form.

Medical discussions site

The Medi-Net Web site at <http://www.askmedi.com> has just introduced a special area for interactive discussion forums specifically for the discussion of controversial issues pertaining to consumer health and activism. Some of the topics include asthma, diabetes, attention deficit disorder and doctor/patient relationships. The discussions are moderated and all correspondence is kept confidential. ■

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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!**

This column (with associated hyperlinks) is on ALIANet, and has the URL of <http://www.alia.org.au/incite/www/>

[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