Vala and Online

Kerry Webb

A t the start of each year, there is a notable Australian conference dealing with information processing — VALA in Melbourne or Online in Sydney. The papers from *VALA98* will soon appear through the VALA homepage at http://home.vicnet.net.au/~vala/. Meanwhile, the call for papers for *Online 99* has been posted at http://www.acms.com.au/Online99CP.html.

Persistence pays off
The National Library of Australia has announced the Australian PURL Resolver Service, using software developed by OCLC. The service is available to any Australian organisation which adds content to the Internet, and allows users to register themselves, create PURLs and modify them, as the resource location changes. More information is available from http://purl.nla.gov.au/.

E-text archives
The IFLA site at http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/ifla/II/etext.htm has a useful collection of links to indexes and texts of electronic journal and text archives. The text archives listing has all of the listings you would expect plus a few lesser-known collections. There are also examples of refereed electronic publications and preprint archives.

Digital library metrics
From the D-lib program (famous for its D-Lib journal) comes the Working Group on Digital Library Metrics, which is open to anyone interested in the topics covered by its charter, which says: 'This Working Group is to develop a consensus on an appropriate set of metrics to evaluate and compare the effectiveness of digital libraries and component technologies in a distributed environment. Initial emphasis will be on a) information discovery with a human in the loop, and b) retrieval in a heterogeneous world.' It can be found at http://sunsite.anu.edu.au/mirrors/dlib/metrics/public/metrics-home.html

The winds of change
James Rettig has moved his reference reviewing activities from Wilson to Gale Research, where you can find his 'Rettig on Reference' column at http://www.gale.com/gale/rettig/rettig.html. At this new address, he is continuing to provide his book reviews, but is giving more attention electronic works than he did before.

Net.wars online
New York University Press has published simultaneously a print and online edition of Wendy Grossman's book *Net.wars*, a series of essays on Internet matters. The main benefit of the online version (at http://www.nyupress.nyu.edu/netwars.html) is that is has hotlinks to Net resources — and you can give feedback to the author via e-mail. There is also a text-only version if you do not want to read it through a web browser.

E-commerce and rights management list
The E-CARM list has been set up to provide an on-line discussion forum for matters such as secure transactions, competing rights management models, and the design, development and implementation of a rights management infrastructure. To join, send a message to listproc@lists.fsu.edu with subscribe e-carm <firstname lastname> in the body of the message.

Digital reference
The Virtual Reference Desk at http://www.vrd.org has started the DIG_REF list. It's a forum for the growing number of people and organisations answering the questions of users via the Internet. It will discuss all aspects of providing question and answer services over the Net, from service creation and implementation to issues of services and quality. This list will also provide information on the Virtual Reference Desk project and developments in the field of digital reference. To subscribe to DIG_REF, send an e-mail message to listserv@listserv.syr.edu with subscribe dig_ref <firstname lastname> in the message.

...and on Net regulation
Electronic Frontiers Australia has started the NETREG mailing list, for discussion and activism regarding regulation of the Internet. To join, send an e-mail message to netreg-request@efa.org.au with the words subscribe netreg <your e-mail address> in the body of the message.

How to get started
Elaine Hopper has written about her experiences in getting started on the Internet at her small library, with a series of tips and hints. She didn't have anyone at her site who knew much about it, so it was a real learning experience. It's a good read and you'll find it at http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ejhopper.

And then
Beyond the beginning: the global digital library was an international conference organised by the UK Office of Library Networking in London last June. The proceedings are now online at http://www.cni.org/regconfs/1997/uk-content.html. Some of themes discussed were the developing world of digital information and its impacts on professionals and infrastructures, major research and development programs, ways of measuring activities in the information field, and the changing relationships between information, education and learning.

Web indexing prizes
The Australian Society of Indexers has awarded its 1997 Web Indexing Prize to Christobel Wescombe from the Fisher Library, University

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of Sydney for her Faculty of Education Internet Guide at http://www.library.usyd.edu.au/Guides/Education. She adds this to the Argus/Clearinghouse Award (as reported in this column in December). Other winners were Ann Treacy of Minneapolis USA, for her index of Minnesota websites at http://www.mnonline.crg/uffda, and Graham Greenleaf, Geoffrey King, and Daniel Austin of the AustLII team for AustLII's World Law Index at http://www.austlii.edu.au/links/World/.

AMOL on the move
After a successful time at the National Museum of Australia, the Australian Museums site will be moving to the Powerhouse Museum at http://amol.phm.gov.au/AMOL/. Don't worry about updating your bookmarks though — the old address will work for some time, and it's possible that AMOL may undergo a name change in the next year. The NMA is to be congratulated on bringing the system to its current state, and the Powerhouse is bound to continue the good work.

New at the ANU
The Australian National University Library has announced two major new initiatives — it has become a charter participant in the JSTOR electronic text retrieval service and a member of a new consortium of prestigious academic libraries in the Pacific Rim formed to facilitate access to scholarly research materials through various digital networks.

In JSTOR, ANU joins more than 240 major north American universities in providing electronic access to major backfiles of core scholarly journals in the humanities, social sciences and sciences. Its staff and students have 24-hour access to the full text of fifty-two journal titles covering twelve disciplines, with more than 100 journal titles available by the year 2000. More information is found at http://www.jstor.org.

The Pacific Rim Digital Library Alliance involves academic libraries from Taipei, Mexico, Japan, China, Canada, and the United States of America.

The Alliance will support new and traditional library functions through the sharing of electronic and hardcopy data, co-operative collection development, personnel exchange and other activities, with special attention being paid to multilingual online library catalogue access, document delivery of journal articles via the Internet and remote access to online databases.

Identifying digital objects
In the December 1997 issue of the *Journal of electronic publishing*, there is an article by Bill Rosenblatt entitled 'Solving the dilemma of copyright protection online' (http://www.press.umich.edu/jep/03-02/doi.html). While this title promises rather more than the text delivers, the Digital Object Identifier (DOI) described in the article represents an advance in the development of a system which will enable better management of digital assets. The DOI has the support of major international publishers as well as CNRI, and will play a major part in electronic publishing.

RMIT report
A report has been produced by RMIT titled *The communications environment: Australia 1998*, recommending that this country speeds the pace of decision-making in the key communications industries of media, telecommunications and online services. It covers policy highlights for 1997 and challenges for 1998, describes the major players — government and private — and discusses issues such as structural regulation, content regulation, service obligations, copyright and privacy. Full details and ordering information are at http://www.mtpg.rmit.edu.au/public/publications/commenv-aust98/frontpage.html.

Walt Crawford on paper
Walt Crawford of the Research Libraries Group has written an article in the January issue of *Online* titled 'Paper persists: why physical library collections still matter'. It continues the arguments that he has been advancing over the past few years about the necessity of maintaining collections comprising both digital and paper-based material. Read it at http://www.onlineinc.com/onlinemag/JanOL98/crawford1.html.

Thesaurus of geographic names
The Getty Information Institute has released its latest vocabulary tool, the *Getty thesaurus of geographic names*, a source of geographic names for documenting and retrieving cultural heritage information. Nearly 900 000 places in the thesaurus are arranged in a hierarchical structure representing all nations of the modern world, providing vernacular and English names of places, variant names in other languages, and whenever possible, historical names. It will eventually be available in three formats — on the web, as tagged ASCII files, and in relational tables. The web version is available at http://www.gii.getty.edu/tgn_browser and the others will follow later this year.

And also from the Getty
The Getty Center is hosting an expert group which will be discussing socio-cultural and economic implications of the digital preservation issues. The discussion will evolve through the early months of 1998, and the results of the discussions will be archived on the site at http://www.ahip.getty.edu/timeandbits/intro.html ■