Good design recognised

Kerry Webb

The Australian Design Cafe is a site which features articles on design, reviews of software tools, and a series of awards for good design (hurrah!). It has been going only since last August, but already has established itself as a site to watch. A recent feature was an article covering six steps to website design, written clearly and sensibly. See it at http://www.designcafe.com.au/article/.

It was a dark and stormy night

The English Department at San Jose State University has for some years sponsored the Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest, a tongue-in-cheek literary competition that challenges entrants to compose the opening sentence to the worst of all possible novels. Have a look at http://www.bulwer-lytton.com/ if you dare.

From print to web to print...

Diaz, Karen, ed. *Reference sources on the Internet: off the shelf and onto the web*. New York: The Haworth Press, 1997. 266p with index US$60 hard ISBN 0789003589

One feature of the growth of the Internet has been a rash of magazines offering huge lists of URLs on a variety of topics. I have tried a few but found them generally unreliable, with many of the sites having disappeared between the time that they were discovered by the reporter and the publication of the magazine. And there is something incongruous about a print publication listing online resources in such a volatile environment. Which is why I approached this book with some caution.

I need not have worried. This book is a very good publication, and covers a broad range of subjects (business and social sciences, humanities, leisure studies and sciences), but more importantly the sites which it lists have been established for some time, have considerable authority, and are unlikely to disappear in a hurry. To take United States history as an example, the sites listed are Georgetown and Rutgers universities and the US Army Center for Military History.

The first section includes an article on search tools — covering search engines, subject directories and reviewing services — and although this information will inevitably change as new services or features are introduced, it does give an overall assessment of the functions of these facilities. Later sections covering broad subjects are subdivided (for example, international trade, performing arts, health and medicine) with a brief description of the content and ownership of each site. Finally, there is a comprehensive index which also includes each URL, indexed under http://. but I am really not sure how useful that is. The Internet provides most of its information in a small number of fields, such as popular culture and computing. You will not find these here, and maybe that reflects a more traditional sense of the reference librarian's duties. But within this traditional arena, it is is a highly recommended resource. ∎

Global digital library conference

Beyond the beginning: the global digital library was an international conference organised by the UK Office of Library Networking in June 1997. At the conference, speakers from around the world (including several from Australia) gave presentations on topics concerning the global digital library, scholarship, and higher education. A report of the presentations given is now available at http://www.anu.edu.au/caul/mirror/global/content/.

Code of conduct for ISPs

The Australian Internet Industry Association has released for comment a draft *Code of practice for Internet service providers* at http://www.iia.net.au/news/code3.html. While few libraries will be members of the AIIA, many will be in the position of offering Internet services and should therefore pay close attention to what the community is coming to expect of this industry.

The EULER project

EULER (European Libraries and Electronic Resources in Mathematical Sciences) is a project being co-funded by the European Commission in the Telematics for Libraries sector. It will provide network based access to mathematical publications, integrating bibliographic databases, library OPACs, electronic journals from academic publishers, online archives of preprints and grey literature, and indexes of mathematical Internet resources. A common user interface — the EULER Engine — will assist the user in searching for relevant topics in all sources at once. For more information, see http://www.emis.de/projects/EULER/.

Alertbox

Alertbox is a column published every fortnight by web useability expert, Jakob Nielsen, of Sun Microsystems. Recent notable columns include the October 1997 *Reading on the web* (apparently we don't read — we scan) and *The case for micropayments* in January 1998. He knows what he's talking about and he writes well. It should be noted that his advice was taken in the formative design of ALIAnet, and links from the ALIAnet technical notes page (http://www.alia.org.au/technical.notes.html) refer to Jakobs work. See the column at http://www.useit.com/alertbox/.

ABA Task Force activity

Derek Whitehead from the State Library of Victoria has been appointed to the Australian Broadcasting Authority's Task Force on Children and Content Online, and has reported on the Task Force's early work. The sort of issues that they are looking at include