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Web wisdom for librarians

WebWise for Librarians is a BBC website designed to teach librarians how to use the internet. It offers features, help and advice on different aspects of the web such as the changes in teaching that have occurred because of the vast resources the web provides for teachers and educators, and ways of using the web for local networking and community activism. Annabel Colley, one of the information specialists behind the BBC's respected 'Panorama' program, investigates the virtual communities spawned by online newsletters, mailing lists and newsgroups. There is also an examination of the risks posed to traditional librarianship by the growth in electronic books. [<http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/categories/librarians/index.shtml>]

No such thing as a free lunch ...

... but you can get a Free Pint, a British-based newsletter, and one of the best current awareness tools on the web. Free Pint can be read online, or received via e-mail. Back issues are available at the site, and again these can be read there or requested as mail. The newsletter includes book reviews, Q&A through the Free Pint bar, and usually two or three meaty pieces by specialists on a particular topic, whether it be economics on the web, UK government information, e-publishing, or business resources. It's worth trawling through older issues as the coverage in specialist pieces is so comprehensive. Even if you feel you know a topic well, you will find something here, and it's invaluable for topics you barely understand at all. You feel you have seen the very best the web has to offer on a topic when you have read a Free Pint article. Contributions are welcomed, as are shorter comments and feedback. Advertising is minimal and can be ignored. [<http://www.freepint.co.uk>]

Be a good scout

Scout Report, my other favourite current awareness tool, is currently under threat of losing its funding. It has come back from the brink before, but it still could go under unless they find a new sponsor. It would be a tremendous shame to see it die as it has consistently brought worthy resources to the notice of its grateful subscribers. For those who do not know it, Scout Report publishes four guides — a general one, which appears weekly, and three monthly ones for business and economics, for science and engineering, and for the humanities. They are publishing

an Open Letter to readers (follow link to the Scout Report funding update) in an effort to garner support for their appeals for ongoing money. Visit if you can and lend your voice to the campaign. High-quality web resources benefit us all. [<http://scout.cs.wisc.edu>]

Deep web

One of the gripes about traditional search engines is their inability to get into the Aladdin's cave of the invisible web. For example, a search engine can tell you MEDLINE exists, but it cannot search the MEDLINE database for you — you have to go to the PubMed site to do that. That may be set to change with the launch of 'deep web' services such as Intellisearch's ProFusion. ProFusion is a name that's been around for a while. The earlier ProFusion was a handy meta-search tool that queried search engine databases and removed any duplicate hits before fielding results. This ProFusion still does meta-search but you can also search for databases and then take a peek inside. For example, if you're searching for news, you can go to the news section, check the databases you want to query, then search them all at one go. Sounds like a timesaver. It is still in beta-test, so it will bear watching. Other categories include finance, reference, government and business. [<http://beta.profusion.com>]

Jazzing up the web

Xrefer goes from strength to strength. It has recently added the *New Grove dictionary of jazz* to its sets of dictionaries and encyclopaedias. This is fast becoming the must-have virtual reference tool. And it is still, amazingly, free. You'll find more than 4000 articles in the jazz dictionary, and topics covered include composers, musical instruments, record labels, and jazz bands, among others. [<http://www.xrefer.com>]

WATCH this space

Academics or authors who want to get permission to quote from copyrighted material will find the Writers, Artists, and their Copyright Holders (WATCH) site a handy new tool. You can search the WATCH file to find contact details for copyright holders of authors and artists whose works are held in libraries and archives across North America and the United Kingdom. WATCH is a joint effort of a Houston research centre and the University of Reading Library in England. Simple and advanced searches are available, or you can browse alphabetical lists. [<http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/watch/watch.html>]

*High-quality
web resources
benefit us all.*

Giveaways

The onward march of free magazine material continues with the launch of a new Canadian search tool called MagOMania. The site contains information on the contents of more than 300 Canadian magazines, and provides some articles free of charge through the archive. Subscription details are available if you are interested. You can search for articles via keyword, and searches can be conducted within a single category, if desired. Otherwise, you are searching the entire database. The search is in English, but results turn up a lot of French material too. You can also e-mail questions to writers. [<http://www.magomania.com/english/>]

Filters

Parents and librarians who worry about children straying into the bad neighbourhoods of cyberspace will find Consumer Reports' evaluation of internet filters useful. This special report, dated March 2001, takes a range of internet filters around the block for testing. Programs examined were AOL Parental Control, Cyber Patrol, Cybersitter, Cyber Snoop, Internet Guard Dog, Net Nanny, and Norton Internet Security. The testers checked whether offensive content (both words and images) was successfully blocked, and whether legitimate material got through. Ease of use was considered. The mechanics of filtering are also simply explained. [<http://www.consumerreports.org/Special/ConsumerInterest/Reports/0103fil0.html>]

Net classroom helper

School librarians might want to have a look at School-Libraries.Org, a site designed to keep school librarians up to date on web resources for school teaching and learning. Links are arranged by topics such as internet gateways, books and book reviews, and information literacy. The site has a bit of an American bias because of its origin, but when used in conjunction with the wonderful resources of Education Network Australia at <http://www.edna.edu.au/EdNA/>, it should prove to be a handy addition. [<http://www.school-libraries.org>]

Best of British

The British Library has definitely been humming along recently, as a swag of new catalogues have recently come online. First, it was the catalogue for the newspaper collection at Colindale, and now they have a new interface for the Public Catalogue and an all-

new catalogue for the National Sound Archive. The Public Catalogue [<http://blpc.bl.uk>] aims to provide seven-days-a-week service. It will provide search access to the BL's collection of more than 10 million books, journals, reports, conferences and music scores. Searches have been improved, and access to the BL's Document Supply Centre is also provided, allowing users to request articles and papers online. Links to British Library Net and other sites are available. Interestingly, the site is sponsored by Amazon.com, and a click-through link to buy books from there is featured. The National Sound Archive catalogue, called Cadensa [<http://cadensa.bl.uk>] provides access to approximately 2.5 million sound recordings. These range from music to sound effects to oral histories. The site advises users on how to place orders for copies, or to use them at the Archive, but there are no streaming audio or download options for any recordings as yet. You can search by keyword, personal name, title of a work, place or subject. There is also an advanced search.

Starting out

If you are new to librarianship, it can all seem a bit bewildering. Things are changing so quickly, yet the basics still need to be covered. Newbies should have a look at the NewBreed Librarian, a new online publication for those new to the profession. It appears monthly, and includes articles and features, interviews, columns, conference reports and job listings. Even 'old breed' librarians will find something here. [<http://www.newbreedlibrarian.org>]

Conserving America's heritage

Renowned for digitising historical documents, the Library of Congress now has a digital history of its efforts in conserving materials related to America's natural heritage. Yet another link in its impressive American memory chain, The Evolution of the Conservation Movement, 1850-1920, site records 'the historical formation and cultural foundations of the movement to conserve and protect America's natural heritage, through books, pamphlets, government documents, manuscripts, prints, photographs, and motion picture footage drawn from the collections of the Library of Congress'. The site includes a chronology of events for those who want to see a linear progression. [<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amrvhtml/conshome.html>]

This column
[with URL links]
can be found at:



<http://www.alia.org.au/incite>

Contributions and suggestions for this column are always welcome. Please contact Belinda Weaver via e-mail.

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