

Out in front



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So much of the good stuff on the Net has been compiled by librarians — and why not? We are experts at selecting and organising information. Add to that list the University at Albany Libraries guide 'How to choose a search engine or directory site' [<http://library.albany.edu/internet/choose.html>]. The list is not annotated, but the big range of categories of tool means it doesn't have to be. You can see at a glance what tool might suit your particular inquiry best. If you want a search tool that limits by date, language, or geographic location, there is a list of those. If you want full Boolean logic, proximity searching, or Boolean by template, there is a list for them too. If you want tools that allow truncation or that accept plain English, again, there is a list. You can also select tools that present results in the way you prefer, or that let you search just within those subsets of a database. You can also look for tools specifically for Usenet newsgroups, the Invisible (or Deep) Web or that professionally evaluate sites. Because the lists are fairly comprehensive, the site will probably alert you to tools you did not know about before.

Also out from a library far away is *Preprint resources on the web* [<http://www.lib.iastate.edu/services/ref/preprint.html>], a comprehensive new list compiled by library staff of Iowa State University.

Third World freebie

Who ever said journal publishers were grasping? A few of them are lining up to give their journals away to research and medical institutions in the developing world. The World Health Organization has got together a team of six publishers (among them Reed Elsevier, Springer Verlag, John Wiley & Sons, and Blackwell Sciences) to provide 1000 medical and scientific publications online at no cost or low cost to these institutions. This is part of a United Nations' initiative to lessen the knowledge gap between the poorer nations and ones who can afford expensive journal subscriptions. [<http://news.cnet.com/news/0-1005-200-6524195.html>]

Morbid curiosity

While it deserves a place in any virtual reference collection, there is something slightly ghoulish about crashDATABASE.com [<http://www.crashdatabase.com/>]. The site claims to be the internet's first fully searchable online database of almost every commercial airline accident in history. It only covers accidents which resulted in fatalities of more than ten people, so it does not cover acci-

dents where fewer people were killed, or where no-one died at all. So don't bother looking for Qantas there; you will not find it. Even stated in bald fact, the accident stories are quite compelling, and some would seem incredible (except for the fact that they are true).

New world digest

World Review, a new electronic journal, has only a modest *raison d'être* — to keep time-poor people up-to-date with all the important new thinking being published in a rapidly changing world [<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/now/wr.htm>]. Whew! Rather than me. The journal's board aims to select books that should be read by anyone wanting to keep abreast of the ideas that are changing, or should be helping to change, the world. The journal will feature extracts from the said 'important' books or short explanatory essays by authors on the theme of their books. *World Review* will be published twice-yearly in Portable Document Format and made freely available through MCB's Emerald Now service. There are currently four issues available on the site.

Electronic collections

Just as our National Library did with its Pandora archive, OCLC is planning an archive of digitally-based documents. OCLC's goal is to create a service that will provide libraries with a means of identifying, capturing and later accessing documents published only in a web-based format. The Web Document Digital Archive will be built and tested using the features and functions framework of the Open Archival Information System model. Staff at OCLC are currently seeking input from several other institutions such as the US Government Printing Office and the Joint Electronic Records Repository Initiative. [<http://www1.internetwire.com/iwire/iwpr?id=29553&cat=te>]

Also new on the block is the InterPARES Project [<http://www.interpares.org/>], based at the University of British Columbia, in which archival scholars, computer engineering scholars, national archival institutions and private industry representatives are collaborating to develop the theoretical and methodological knowledge required for the permanent preservation of authentic records created in electronic systems. Do either of these initiatives get a mention in the NLA's recently released strategies document on Australian and overseas electronic information resources for the period 2001–2002? You will have to go online to check. [<http://>

www.nla.gov.au/policy/electronic/resourcesplan.html

Just ask me

Oxford University Press is getting into the AskMe business with the newly launched AskOxford.com [<http://www.askoxford.com/>]. Not a bad brand name to be starting with — will AskCambridge be next? AskOxford.com is designed to answer language queries of all types from crossword answers to explanations of jargon. There is even information on SMS abbreviations for sending messages to mobile phones. The site also includes language tips and articles and interviews about dictionary making and the English language. Visitors to the site can also ask English-related questions of the experts at the Oxford Word and Language Service.

Asking for trouble?

Also soliciting questions are the manuscript editing folks at the University of Chicago Press. They have put the Chicago Manual of Style FAQ online, but they also say they will answer questions sent in by users. These will presumably be incorporated into the FAQ over time, as staff are not promising to answer questions individually. [<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/cmosfaq.html>]

Highly exCited

Academics will probably find ISI's new site, ISIHighlyCited.com irresistible. The aim of the site is to identify those researchers whose work is most frequently cited in ISI's Science Citation Index. These influential researchers will be featured at the new site, which will be a freely accessible gateway to their achievements and expertise. Detailed information on each individual will be provided. ISI plan to list the work of researchers under one of twenty-one subject categories. Researcher numbers will be capped at 250 per category, so these should become highly selective listings. [<http://www.isihighlycited.com/>]

While we are on the topic...

A lot of research these days is being done in partnership with industry. The United Kingdom now has a professional association for people engaged in such academic/industry liaison work, the Association for University Research and Industry Links (AURIL). Any United Kingdom university may join AURIL and collaborating companies can get associate membership. The website gives contact and membership details and lists the

services available to members, such as good practice guides and case studies, full-text publications and conference papers. There is also a searchable listing of technologies patented by United Kingdom universities. Universities here might find AURIL a useful model to study as researchers increasingly begin to collaborate with or seek research sponsorship from industry. [<http://www.auril.org.uk/>]

Telling them where to go

If your own library is not starting up an online reference service, then send your users to LiveRef, which is a register of current services offering real-time Q&A services. Not all of the listed services will be accessible to Joe Public, since many are targeted services for staff and students of particular academic institutions. It is easy to avoid those if you are not in academia as the services are categorised by type, for example, public libraries, academic libraries and so on. There should be enough of the other kind to satisfy your users, or just to have a stickybeak yourself to see what others are doing. This would also be a good site if you have a digital reference service on the drawing board as the related materials such as the listing of digital reference technologies and the bibliography of articles and books on the topic could help to steer you in the right direction. It might be worth joining a discussion list such as DIG-REF to tap into all the existing expertise. [<http://www.public.iastate.edu/~CYBERSTACKS/LiveRef.htm>]

To fee or not to fee?

The crash of many dotcoms has resulted in the closure of many free web services. Now there is a site, The End Of Free [<http://www.theendoffree.com>], which aims to cover those changes. Some sites have gone forever, but others have simply changed their business model from free to fee-based as a survival strategy. Just think of Fairfax, where most online content is now only available to subscribers. Luckily, not everything is chargeable, or sites like the FreebieList [<http://Freebielist.com/>] would not be around. This listing organises freely available software and other programs or services such as chat rooms or free clip art, into approximately twenty-five categories. Within categories, the available material is reviewed, so you can get a good idea of whether to bother visiting a site or not. The list is aimed at webmasters and people who like to customise their computers or web use with extra tools. ■

**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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