

Good stuff



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Librarians really do produce some of the best and most useful sites and information on the 'net. The Law Library Resource Xchange [<http://www.llrx.com>] provides a terrific lot of useful articles and research, many of which are relevant to all kinds of librarians, not just law librarians. Two recent features may be of interest. WTO/GATT Research by Jeanne Rehberg [<http://www.llrx.com/features/wto2.htm>] is a wonderfully organised guide to the maze of material, both online and in print, available on the topic of world trade and trade agreements and treaties. Gloria Miccioli's 2001 update to *Researching Medical Literature on the Internet* [<http://www.llrx.com/features/medical2001.htm>] is a must-read for anyone looking at health information online. It explains a lot of the existing health tools, such as PubMed, and covers what they can and cannot do. For those who would like to see exactly what work Miccioli is updating, have a look at the earlier article *How to Search for Medical Information* [<http://204.17.98.73/midlib/www.htm>].

Bright ideas?

Brisbane hosted a four-day ideas festival to debate issues on the future of Australian society from 16–19 August this year at the newly refurbished Powerhouse. Speakers included Phillip Adams, Eva Cox, Germaine Greer, Dale Spender, and Peter Doherty. About 15 000 people attended the festival which now has a website, Ideas at The Powerhouse [<http://www.ideasatthepowerhouse.com.au/>], to showcase speakers and transcripts. Some material is available for audio download while other material can be read only in transcripts. Some of the sessions were broadcast on Radio National [<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/>] as well and may still be available from there.

Take it slowly?

Andante [<http://www.andante.com/>] is a wonderful new resource for classical music fans and for librarians who want to link to musical information online. The reference section links to well-known works such as the *Concise grove dictionary of music* and the new *Kobbe's opera book*, as well as to discographies, concert notes, listings of compositions, sheet music in print and to classical music reviews. The directory section is equally impressive, providing links to sites for composers, ensembles, perform-

ers and festivals, as well as to music industry sources and to other classical radio stations around the world. There is also an events calendar, a magazine archive, profiles of famous composers, performers and orchestras (Cecilia Bartoli was featured when I visited), and a music room where you can listen to streaming audio from andante radio. There was a web-cast of music by Pierre Boulez from the Salzburg Easter Festival on offer when I looked at the site, but the program is ever-changing. This would be a wonderful virtual reference resource for any library, but should be a huge addition to libraries who cannot afford such resources in print.

Virtual update

In case it is not already in your list of virtual reference standards, it is worth taking a look at the most recent *CIA world factbook* [<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>]. The 2001 edition has just gone online and, as ever, it is chock-full of handy ready reference material for librarians. It provides information on 266 countries as well as information about the world as a whole, which is actually a summary of all the available data. The factbook gives information on a country's geography, population numbers and characteristics, economy, communications infrastructure, and armed forces. There is also a section on trans-national issues which covers refugees and other issues such as border disputes. If you prefer, you can browse the data by field and category, which is an easy way to compare statistics across countries.

Your nation [<http://www.your-nation.com/>] offers a more graphical comparison of CIA factbook data. It allows you to compare countries by an enormous range of criteria such as literacy, GDP, number of airports, and so on. Comparisons generate an attractive table with figures and bars. You can compare countries with each other, or against larger entities such as the European Union. The site also allows you to rank the top five and bottom five countries by specified criteria. The site is still using older Factbook data so it would be worth checking any findings against the more recent edition.

These books are not for burning

The American Library Association held a Banned Books Week from 22–29 September 2001, to celebrate the public's freedom

to read [<http://www.ala.org/bbooks/>]. This freedom is under constant challenge in the United States with certain books and authors targeted by parents and citizens for containing occult or Satanic themes, having an inappropriate religious viewpoint or anti-family approach or depicting too much violence. The Harry Potter books by JK Rowling top the most challenged books list, but other books such as John Steinbeck's *Of mice and men* and Maya Angelou's *I know why the caged bird sings* also draw the ire of outraged Americans. United States libraries are often challenged by individuals or groups concerned about the availability of certain library materials to the public. Libraries have to address such challenges with a balance of carefully crafted policy, knowledge and understanding of intellectual freedom principles, and sensitivity to community needs and concerns. The site has some tips about how to go about defending items from censorship moves. Also, you can find the complete list of challenged books as well as the list of most challenged books for the past decade. In addition, the site hosts a press kit, links to other banned books sites, and a page on book burning.

We all need friends

After all that book banning, it is nice to turn to a good news story such as the launch of the new website for the Friends of Libraries Australia [<http://www.foia.org.au/foia.htm>], an organisation that seeks to promote public awareness of (and, with luck, encourage new members to join) 'friends of library' groups around Australia and the library services they support. The site also encourages the greater use of library and information services. Friends of Libraries Australia was launched in 1994 at the State Library of Victoria by its patron, the Honourable Justice Michael Kirby. Latest news can be accessed from the site, in addition to other resources.

UNESCO freebie

UNESCO Information Services has launched a new website that provides free access to articles published in around 250 journals in the social sciences [<http://www.unesco.org/general/eng/infoserv/doc/shsdc/journals/shsjournals.html>]. The journals are organised into approximately twenty broad subject categories, which include business, environment, economics, demography, and psychology. Clicking on a category

brings up an alphabetical listing of available journals which can then be clicked on in their turn. The service is designed to promote the international exchange of information in the social and human sciences. The site also provides access to some of UNESCO's other bibliographic or full-text databases, such as DARE, a database of social science institutes and specialists, and the databases of the Peace Institutes and the Human Rights Institutes which help to identify research and training institutes in 121 countries.

Nominations are open

A while ago, I wrote about the Internet Librarian Hall of Fame. I recently heard from back from John Ferguson, instructional services librarian of Richland College in Dallas, which hosts the site. He said: 'Thanks for the write-up on the Internet Librarian Hall of Fame. We would love to consider some Aussies for the Hall, but we don't know any. Nominate at will!' So there you go. If you have a candidate you would like to suggest, John can be contacted by e-mail at jferguson@dcccd.edu. You can see previous inductees into the Hall of Fame at <http://www.rlc.dcccd.edu/lrc/hofprevious.htm>.

Odds and sods

The perfectly targeted search tool is always a handy thing to discover. You may never want to read postings to message boards or Web forums but some of your users might, so it is good to know that there is a choice of tools to find what they need. BoardReader [<http://www.boardreader.com>] and Message King [<http://www.messageking.com>] are new search tools that offer search and browse facilities for postings. With BoardReader, you can prelimit queries by topic and category; this should eliminate some irrelevant postings. When you search on MessageKing, results are listed by category which makes it easier to target what you want. Another new tool around is Daypop [<http://www.daypop.com>], a service that allows you to search across a range of online news sites and weblogs. You can limit searches just to news or just to weblogs or search both simultaneously. With news, you can limit to very recent news (three-hours old, twelve-hours old, one-day old) as well as see material from the latest four weeks. This is a handy tool if you want the very latest news from a range of sources. ■

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



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

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

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