ALIAnet's 5th-generation website

Ivan Trundle

manager,
communications
and publishing
ivan.trundle@alia.org.au

We've listened carefully to you all. We have taken notice of what you want, and we've searched high and low to find the tools to deliver the features that you want on ALIAnet. Here is a brief summary of what we have built — or are about to build — into the 5th-generation website...

Faster loading

Not only much, much faster to load, but also a much simpler interface. We have stripped the images to an absolute minimum — but not so bare that it becomes unattractive — and made all site-wide navigation text-based. We have removed all javascript from the site, with only a few exceptions where we can not avoid it. How much faster? You be the judge!

Better printing

Many users of the site print what they see. Because we have previously fixed the page width, some content has not translated to print very well. And those users with big screens have loathed the fact that the content was always jammed into a column of 600 pixels. Printing with the navigation bar on one side has always been wasteful. We have addressed those concerns by placing the navigational elements at the top of the page. Down the track, we may offer 'print-versions' of each page (although my view is that a site that has to offer both screen and print-based versions is full of wasteful advertising and needs to be able to remove it).

Standards-based

ALIAnet has always been largely standards-based (it now wears the W3C validation tag), but some snippets of code have sometimes tangled browsers and made it harder for the intended audience. Not only are the pages coded far more simply, but they now rely on a single, standardised stylesheet, meaning that all links and link colours are now uniform and easily identifable. If you find the print too small, use your browser to enlarge the text — all of the page will enlarge to suit, including the navigational elements.

Members-only

You asked — we provided! We had to wait until we had a useful way of checking your personal credentials, and whilst we have had members-only access to ALIAnet ever since we first began, it has been too difficult to administrate an individual user-based login for 7000 members. However, now that our new membership database can talk to our web server, we can easily determine access based on ALIA membership. This opens the door to a raft of new features.

E-commerce

The ability to handle e-commerce (online shopping) goes hand-in-hand with knowing who you are — hence the delivery of this feature has been reliant upon our membership database communicating with the web interface. Consequently, we can now offer online payment of membership fees, registration at conferences, and ALIA merchandise and products. This feature should be ready in time for the membership renewal period.

Better search

Large websites rely on good navigation, good signposts, good content, and if all else fails, a good search engine. Whilst members have been satisfied with the previous search engine, the number of useful search results on any given search are gradually diminishing. This is partly because we have not properly implemented useful keyword attributes on every page, and partly because the search engine has not been flexible enough. We are now addressing both concerns, and will be employing extra staff to properly annotate keyword meta tags on every page. Each key area of the site has its own personalised search box.

Better chat

The original chat server was good, but recognised as a lightweight solution. The new chat server offers a good deal more: such as customised private rooms, a wide selection of group-based rooms, the ability to log chatter, and a registration process which ensures that it remains a members-only service.

Quicker updates

Until this iteration of the website, all pages had to be laboriously hand-crafted, which entailed great concentration and application. Although you won't see it, the pages are now built much more simply, and much of the routine work is automated. Additionally, much of the site is database-driven, which allows us to update material into a database and have it posted in multiple locations, resulting in higher accuracy and greater speed.

Greater flexibility

It's coming! One of the benefits in having a simpler, database-driven site is that we can build pages in more-creative ways. However, this does not have to translate into a mish-mash of disparate pages that lead nowhere. We'll keep the lid on the interface (other than conference websites) but offer more options in getting the all-important content to us. Having a database engine deliver much of the content means that we can display it on multiple locations and in multiple ways without losing the overall integrity of the site.

Member forums

This will be rolled out very soon. Until now, forums — being open to all — often degenerated into rabble or misuse because web-

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based spammers trawl the web for sites that allow input in this form. Consequently, our guestbook and other forums were mostly shut down because we spent too much time editing and removing the spam. In future, almost all forums will be behind the members-only wall.

E-list integration
Our new e-list server is capable of handling user details in a web-based format, and we will completely migrate all administrative tasks to the web interface. It is still perfectly possible to communicate with the e-list server via e-mail (after all, this is the medium it operates in), but we now have greater flex-

ibility in offering an interface via other protocols.

Web-based e-mail accounts
The trial began early this year, and has had a most enthusiastic response — so much so that we will be offering web-based e-mail to all members. So long as you remain an ALIA member, you can have an ALIAnet-based e-mail account, and access it from anywhere that web-browsers are in operation. Give your presence authority! Avoid the 'hotmail' stigma... (and if you need to ask what that is, you probably don't need an ALIAnet account!). ∎

Calling all editors

Calling for expressions of interest for two positions:
editor of the *Australian Library Journal*, and editor of *Australian Academic and Research Libraries*

The ALIA Board of Directors is calling for expressions of interest for the positions of editor of the *Australian Library Journal* (ALJ) and editor of the *Australian Academic and Research Libraries* (AARL).

ALJ
The Australian Library Journal has been reaching discerning and influential Australian libraries since 1951. Published quarterly, it contains a wide coverage of Australian library issues ranging from ongoing research to day-to-day news from the workplace. It is the ac-

knowledged flagship publication of the Association, and an appropriate vehicle for publishers, suppliers and services wishing to reach the decision-makers. An honorarium will be negotiated with the successful applicant.

AARL
Australian Academic & Research Libraries is a quarterly journal devoted to all aspects of librarianship in university and college libraries, including the technical and further education sector, and in research libraries of all types. It publishes original, refereed contributions

on all aspects of librarianship past and present, pure and applied bibliography, publishing, information science and related subjects. An honorarium will be negotiated with the successful applicant.

Full details, including duties statements and selection criteria are available from Emma Davis at ALIA National Office, phone 02 6215 8222, fax 02 6282 2249, or e-mail emma.davis@alia.org.au. ∎