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EBSCO's Library, Information Science and Technology Abstracts are now available to anyone interested in libraries and information management

Lost? Misquoted? We want better communication!

Lost books?

From a recent copy of the *Annals of Improbable Research* comes a timely warning for cataloguers – especially those working in a language other than their own. The author of the article reported that many books in Scottish Gaelic and Modern Irish were incorrectly catalogued because the staff involved didn't recognise that the initial word 'Na' meant 'The'. This author had identified the problem at Harvard's Widener Library 25 years ago, and it's still causing books to effectively disappear. Read the sorry tale at <http://improbable.com/pages/archives/paperair/volume12/v12i4/NA-The-The-12-4.pdf>.

Library blogs

You wouldn't be surprised to hear that the blogging revolution has been taken up by various librarians. One of those worth noting is *The Corporate Librarian* at <http://buslib.wordpress.com/>. Steven is a researcher for a consulting, outsourcing and technology firm, and addresses the sort of issues that librarians in the corporate world will be interested in, like using the resources of other libraries or getting jobs in corporate libraries. He doesn't get a huge number of responses and his traffic is quite light – which is a pity because his blog is worth reading. Another one is *The Distant Librarian*, run by Paul Pival, a Distance Education Librarian at the University of Calgary. A quick look at his archives shows a range of topics covered – not just distance librarianship. See it at <http://distlib.blogs.com/>.

Old books from Google

Google has announced the next stage of their Book Search facility, providing PDF files of scanned books that can be downloaded and printed for free. You can access this by selecting the 'Full view books' option on the Book Search home page at <http://www.google.com.au/books/> and then entering the search terms. The books available through this service are only those in the public domain and are of course intended for personal use. The system is also clever enough to block users from works that are not yet in the public domain for their country. All this is explained on the first page of each downloaded PDF file, with a note that users are responsible for following their own country's copyright laws.

What we think

A memograph is defined as a histogram of keywords that are used in search engines and in newsgroups; it shows what words and concepts people may be interested in over a certain period. For instance, you can see how searchers' perceptions of Tom Cruise ('good' or 'evil') can be tracked over time, annotated with comments on the major stages of his personal life. The site of

the meme Miner is at <http://www.realmeme.com/Main/miner/>. It could be a very useful resource.

Free access to LISTA

EBSCO Publishing has announced increased availability of Library, Information Science and Technology Abstracts (LISTA). This comprehensive library science database is available to anyone interested in libraries and information management and provides coverage on subjects such as librarianship, classification, cataloging, bibliometrics, online information retrieval and information management. Get it free at <http://www.libraryresearch.com>.

Sell, sell, sell

Samantha Starmer from Microsoft writes in the *ASIS&T Bulletin* on how Information Architects can sell their wares and their expertise, with a list of practical recommendations such as defining the problem (and your solution), playing the politics and paying attention to style – if you want to succeed. See it at <http://www.asis.org/Bulletin/Aug-06/starmer.html>.

At the centre

Realising the benefit of good relations with their providers, the folks at Google have established the Webmaster Central site at <http://www.google.com/webmasters/>. You'll find a collection of resources including a Site Status Wizard that shows whether and how recently Google has indexed your site, Webmaster tools to get the best out of Google, a blog and a discussion group for Webmasters, and a Help centre with FAQs. The whole collection is impressive.

Don't look now

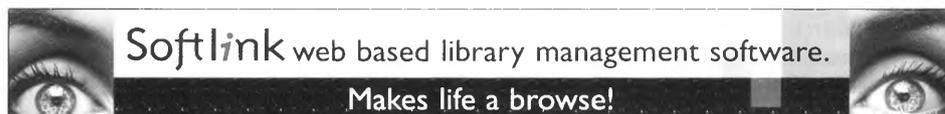
To illustrate how complicated Web publishing can be, try a Google Web Search using the terms 'confidential' and 'do not distribute'. I found over 60 000 hits.

The business of metadata

Showing that predictions of its departure are somewhat premature, metadata is still showing signs of life. In an article in the *ASIS&T Bulletin* at <http://www.asis.org/Bulletin/Aug-06/connors.html>, Christine Connors argues that there are real benefits from the proper use of metadata and gives a couple of examples calculated to impress the people who get excited about ROI. To achieve this, she sensibly advises, keep measurements of your activity. That way, your claims will be a little more believable.

Lots of good stuff on Web Design

Laura Carlson is well-known for the Web Design Reference site at <http://www.d.umn.edu/itss/support/Training/Online/webdesign/>. In an interview at <http://webstandardsgroup.org/features/laura-carlson.cfm> she talks about her experiences



supporting Web developers at her university and her participation in Web Standards work. She also talks about how they redeveloped her site, which is a good example of design, organisation and clarity. She also publishes the weekly Web Design Update newsletter through the site.

What's in a name?

Government bodies in the Commonwealth, States, Territories and in local government are required to follow strict guidelines in the domain names that they use. To guide them in making the right decisions, a page has been set up on the registration site at http://www.domainname.gov.au/Choosing_a_Domain_Name. Even if you're not in a government body, the information here is well worth considering. For instance it sets out the pros and cons of choosing a full name, an acronym or a function to identify your domain.

The Semantic Web – as far away as ever

For a couple of years now, we've been hearing from Tim Berners-Lee and other promoters that the Semantic Web is the way of the future (we used to hear the same thing about metadata). Well, he was challenged on this at a conference in July, where an executive from Google asked about the reality of this push. He based this argument on a number of points, including the incompetence of the average Web developer and the difficulty in getting them to co-operate properly (which we've all heard before in the debates about metadata). There's a brief report on the exchange at http://news.com.com/2100-1025_3-6095705.html?part=rss&tag=6095705&subj=news.

What's cooking?

The National Library of New Zealand, the US company Endeavor and Sun Microsystems have announced plans to build the National Digital Heritage Archive. Under the arrangement, Endeavor will own the rights to the software and intends to sell it to other major libraries. This development fits into the new rules that recently came into effect, where the National Library has the responsibility of archiving information from CDs, DVDs and websites.

How far is far enough?

There's a right old barney going in the accessibility community – or at least in the community that cares about the subject. It started with an article on Jeff Croft's blog at <http://www2.jeffcroft.com/2006/aug/21/has-accessibility-been-taken-too-far/> in which he asked whether accessibility has been taken too far, taking a swipe at proponents who see it as a binary choice – yes or no – and who require developers to go to extreme lengths to meet accessibility requirements. He got a number of responses – mostly agreeing with him, but there were quite a few who didn't and then matters became heated. In the ensuing discussion, he climbed down a little from his rickety perch but maintained most of his

belligerency. In a more temperate response at <http://www.joedolson.com/articles/2006/08/accessibility-has-not-been-taken-too-far/> Joe Dolson brought a different perspective. The whole discussion makes an interesting read, because all Web developers will be subject to different sorts of pressures to achieve accessible sites, and it's necessary to understand what it all means and what is a reasonable goal to aim for.

Better communication

One aspect of accessibility often overlooked is learning disability, which is the emphasis of Mencap, a UK learning disability charity. At http://www.mencap.org.uk/html/accessibility/accessibility_guides.asp they cover not only general information about what to do with websites, but also useful general information on how to write clearly and avoid jargon.

More accessible PDFs

Many people use PDFs on their sites (usually for very good reasons). The problem is that they do it in all sorts of ways and the results can be quite variable, especially where accessibility is concerned. In <http://alastairc.ac/2006/07/the-four-levels-of-pdf-accessibility/>. Alastair Campbell sets out the various ways in which the documents are created and how accessible they may be. He also explains what you can do to improve them, including summarising the document on the linking page, adding tags to the PDF (if you can) or giving readers the option to request an accessible version.

What was that again?

A mondegreen is the name given to a misheard song lyric (from a folk song whose words included 'they laid him on the green'). My particular favourite was from an ad for high quality recording tapes where Desmond Dekker seemed to be singing 'My ears are alight'. For a comprehensive list, have a look at <http://www.amiright.com/misheard/>.

It doesn't quite sound right

Related to these are funny things called eggcorns. An eggcorn is a term that is misunderstood and mangled, like 'give up the goat' or 'hone in on'. Now you could say that the collectors of these oddities are poking fun, ridiculing and pontificating, but they're also observers of trends in our language. Quite often, you can come across an expression and think 'that it doesn't quite seem right', and if it's on the Web there's a chance that people genuinely interested in using the right term can check it out. Have a look at <http://eggcorns.lascribe.net/>.

And they didn't really say that

And to complete the treble, there's an extensive list of popular misquotations at http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/List_of_misquotations. *

Save yourself the trouble of typing URLs!

This column (with URL links) can be found on ALIANet at: <http://alia.org.au/publishing/incite/>.

Contributions and suggestions for this column are always welcome. Please contact Kerry Webb via e-mail kerry.webb@alianet.alia.org.au.



To find out more – www.softlinkint.com
or call 1800 777 037

Putting PDFs on your site can have quite variable accessibility results. There are ways to improve them