

# Webb's web

## It's one way of looking at it

Here's another neat little idea - Wordle <http://wordle.net/>

What it does is take a batch of text and makes a word cloud out of it, with the size of each word indicating its frequency. If it just did that it would be useful, but what sets it apart is that the font, colours and overall shape of the cloud can be varied.

## Seems like old times

Fancy a trip down memory lane? Try the online archive of *The Times* at <http://archive.timesonline.co.uk/tol/archive/> They've digitised all the editions from 1785 to 1985, with a full-text search facility, but if you don't have anything in particular to look for, you can try one of the events in their timeline. It's remarkable how the format of newspapers has changed over the past couple of hundred years. It's free for an introductory period, so there's not a minute to lose.

## For some of those really difficult reference questions

I've just heard about a couple of resources that might help on those occasions when someone has but a vague recollection of what they're looking for. The first is the Lost Titles, Forgotten Rhymes <http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/lost/> guide from the Library of Congress that's a compendium of suggestions and links for where to start looking for literary works. Then there's the Hymn Lyrics Detective <http://www.namethathymn.com/hymn-lyrics-detective-forum/> discussion board for misty memories of those long-ago Sunday mornings.

## A few neat samples

It's useful to get an idea of design trends in websites, but the difficulty is in collecting good samples. It's so much better when someone else does the hard work. Nick La has put together a remarkable collection of sites at <http://www.webdesignerwall.com/trends/2008-design-trends/> and classified them into several categories.

## Keeping track of the polities

Launched around the middle of June, OpenAustralia <http://www.openaustralia.org/> follows on from the efforts of TheyWorkForYou <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/> in mashing up Hansard with a few other sources to keep you informed of your federal representatives and what they've been saying in Parliament.

## Getting to know you

There's a bit of good advice in the SEO Theory and Analysis Blog at <http://seo-theory.com/wordpress/2008/06/05/three-seo-tips-for-people-who-like-seo-tips/> on the subject of 'About us' pages: the ones on your site when you can write in glowing terms about your organisation and how it's proactive and follows best practice etc. What this post recommends is that you can make these pages work a little harder by focusing the content on how this website relates to the organisation and maybe getting a few more hits from the search engines.

## A lot has happened in 50 years

Everyone loves an anniversary - especially the mass media, and while the connection can sometimes be tenuous, the result can be stunning. That's how I feel about <http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/features/2008/07/internet200807> in the July issue of *Vanity Fair* - a feature about the life of the Internet. The actual anniversary is of the Advanced Research Projects Agency, one of whose projects led to the Net. What they've done is put together a while lot of snippets from the researchers responsible for the network and the protocols through the early entrepreneurs to the latest crop of social network developers and bloggers. My favourite part was the accounts of how Microsoft tried to collaborate with Netscape, was rebuffed and hunkered down for an all-out battle.

## Pointers to digital collections

It's hardly comprehensive, but this article at <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubs/crlnews/backissues2008/may08/visualresources.cfm> from ACRL lists a few of the more important digital collections in US libraries, museums and other collecting institutions. All very useful if you're looking for ideas or images.

## Feats of Clay

A few weeks ago, I came across a video of Clay Shirky talking about social networking and the Cognitive Surplus. The clip at <http://www.calacanis.com/2008/04/30/clay-shirky-cognitive-surplus-talk-at-web-2-0/> isn't long and - best of all - it's not on YouTube so your organisation will probably not be blocking it. I then looked around a bit and found his new book *Here comes everybody* which I've just started reading. It begins with the story of the woman who lost her mobile phone and the unfortunate young person who found it, but then learned that 'finders keepers' doesn't always apply. Anyway, he not only tells the story well but goes on to explore all sorts of implications. It's good stuff.

## Time for action on Government 2.0

A couple of ideas came from a stimulating conference called Web Directions South: Government <http://gov08.webdirections.org/> held over two days in chilly Canberra. Both were from New Zealand: a highly-publicised wiki that was used in the review of their Police Act and a blog entry by Jason Ryan (one of the conference speakers) on 5 principles for Govt 2.0 <http://psnetwork.org.nz/blog/2007/04/29/5-principles-govt20/>

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