

Webb's web

Out of the bottle

I've not been too involved in genealogical matters, but my daughter is taking advantage of her time in the UK to chase up a few extra details of the Webb family. I was pleased to come across <http://www.geni.com> and invite her to contribute. I'd describe it as a

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good little Web 2.0 application with a neat use of Flash. No doubt there are others, but this one is very easy to use and the results are quite attractive. However I showed this to a friend, and he's an IT specialist and a definite digital immigrant. His response was that I was putting a lot of information about me and my family out there, trusting the system owners to keep it secure. I don't know the systems owners and I'm not really sure where they're located and what the privacy laws of that jurisdiction. So, before you use this service or something similar, be sure that you're comfortable with the risks involved.

Just one more thing to learn

James Robertson of Steptwo Designs is one of the more thoughtful people in the online publishing business, especially in the area of Intranets. In a recent posting at <http://www.steptwo.com.au/columntwo/archives/002764.html#002764> he makes a persuasive argument that the need to learn a new interface when using a wiki can be a reason why people are unwilling to embrace this technology. When you compare the process with the extremely simple way that you can type in a blog (like Wordpress upon which this one is based) you can see what he means.

Is the Web free?

The Copyright Agency Limited (CAL) has long been known as a collector of fees for photocopying. You can read all about this on their website <http://www.copyright.com.au/> What you won't find on the site is that they have

an agreement with the Commonwealth to collect an annual fee (based on a count of employees in departments and agencies) to represent staff access to material on the Web that is subject to copyright. There's a feeling that there's no copyright on the Web. Wrong. Unless explicitly stated otherwise, a page or a picture or a file on a website is subject to copyright. And under the current legislation, CAL is able to collect fees for access to this material (at least on behalf of Australian publishers). They are currently negotiating with states and territories along the lines of the agreement with the Commonwealth, and I wouldn't be surprised if they continued on to other sectors. One day, we may all be paying a surcharge to our ISPs to represent our personal access to Web material. If you've ever published anything personally on the Web, I'd suggest you join CAL as soon as possible. There's bound to be some money in it.

Nambour Chronicle online

A consortium of Queensland libraries and commercial partners has brought fifty years of a local North Coast newspaper to the world. The Nambour Chronicle from 1903-1953 has been digitised and can be read in PDF form at <http://www.nambour-chronicle.com/> Free registration is required (and a search of the region's most famous inhabitant returns a good number of hits).

A vision for Australia

The site for the Australia 2020 Summit has been launched at <http://www.australia2020.gov.au/> They're looking for submissions now.

Writing for the Mobiles

I saw this tool today <http://www.google.com/gwt/n?> and tried it with a few websites that I know, to see how they'd look on a mobile device. It's quite interesting, and means another step for the site development process, which of course requires that the site be tested on all popular browsers. I'm still checking to see what standard they're

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<http://www.alia.org.au/webbsblog>

using to display the content, because from the document 'Global Authoring Practices for the Mobile Web' <http://www.passani.it/gap/> it looks like there are a few possible standards used by the mobile phone manufacturers.

Useful usability

Some interesting comments from Jakob Nielsen on usability: general user skills are improving, many users are exhibiting advanced skills (such as opening multiple windows) and many are still confused when they come to a new website and expect it to work like the ones they're used to. As to search, they're still unable (or unwilling) to cope with masses of search results, and don't appear to be able to evaluate sites' usefulness. He still recommends against opening new browser windows for new links, which is a highly contentious matter. I'd allow it for portal sites or for search engine results pages, but not much else. Have a look at <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/user-skills.html>

Reminder: \$7 million offered to embed e-learning

\$7 million of funding is available to industry, business and RTOs to integrate e-learning into their education and training programs as part of the 2008 Australian Flexible Learning Framework Business Plan between January and May 2008.

Funding is also available to maintain and develop a national pool of e-learning resources, expertise, infrastructure and support networks.

To learn more about this important funding and how your organisation can benefit go to <http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au> and look for 'Funding Opportunities'.



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