

Webb's web

Ephemera 2.0

The movie *Us Now* has created a lot of attention in web 2.0 circles, featuring quite a few examples of how social media concepts have been harnessed to provide good results for the community. Services like Couchsurfing (<http://www.couchsurfing.org>) and Zopa (<http://www.zopa.com>) are going strong, but it looks like there have been some casualties.

One of the quirkiest (and heart-warming) segments of the film covered the British minor league club Ebbsfleet United, where financial members were given the authority to select the team each week. The club's manager, when interviewed for the movie, seemed only just comfortable with the arrangement. Their first season was very successful, but since then membership has dropped off dramatically, and there are very serious doubts about the viability of the club under the current arrangement. It just shows something that I've observed a lot about the 2.0 plants: you need to keep tending them carefully.

Government 2.0: the dialogue continues

Early in May, the Commonwealth Government released its response to the Gov 2.0 Taskforce, and that response has been generally well received. Just about all the recommendations have been received favourably, but there's a little criticism around that we're seeing a lot of talk and not much action. To keep the ball rolling though, the Australian Government Information Management Office has continued its blogging at <http://agimo.govspace.gov.au/> where many strands of the discussion are continuing. Also from that site, we see that Senator Kate Lundy announced at a US conference that a formal announcement on Open Government is imminent. We'll stay tuned.

More e-books

In a move to challenge the existing e-book suppliers, Google has announced that it will be selling content from its library of scanned works, probably around "the middle of the year". The new online store, Google Editions, will be different from the other services because it won't rely on specific technology like the Kindle or the Kobo or the iPad; instead its content will be readable though any device with a web browser. They'll all be playing to their strengths, of course, and Google expects that its 12 million+ collection will be the key factor in its anticipated success.

Free Meds

I don't know enough about the subject to judge whether this is really a great leap forward, so I'd appreciate any feedback from people who are really into biomedical research. BioMedSearch (<http://www.biomedsearch.com/>) claims to offer the most comprehensive free web facility for the discipline and if so, should have a healthy future.

What's happening in your community?

Facebook just keeps on gathering the wrong sort of attention – unless they believe that any publicity is good publicity. A current example is Community Pages. Someone alerted me to these a couple of months ago, when a new page for the ACT Government turned up. But we couldn't see where it came from and who authorised it, and the information on the page was scanty – apart from the official logo. So where was the community? It turns out that Facebook Inc had created many, many community pages from a mix of Wikipedia entries and assorted Wall posts – so no one really owns them. And the Facebook search engine has the habit of throwing up these community pages before any others when you search for that

organisation – so a casual user can easily think that what they see is an official version. Apart from annoying those of us who've worked to establish a 'Facebook presence', it won't be good news for the Facebook marketing people who are trying to get legitimate sponsorship deals in place.

Hue'd have thought of it?

One of the neatest tools I've seen in a while is Vischeck (<http://www.vischeck.com/vischeck/>) Accessibility requirements state that you should be aware of the problems of colour vision deficiency, but unless you suffer from such a condition, it's hard to tell whether your website will give your viewers any trouble. Vischeck can take an image or a page and render it in the way that people experiencing this sort of problem will see it. It's still in Beta, so there may be an occasional bug – but try it anyway.

Designing for the seniors

I suppose it can't be stressed too much that when you develop a website you need to consider your audience, and we're often reminded that our users are getting older. With that in mind, the article from UXmatters at <http://tinyurl.com/23pq2yd> provides useful advice on catering for this important segment of the population. The contribution from a group of Usability experts is complemented by a selection of good references.

Follow the money

We've all seen this sort of data before, but I really liked the user interface. Where Does My Money Go (<http://www.wheredoesmymoneygo.org/dashboard/>) was built for the UK community and lets you drill down as far as you wish to find out levels of budget allocations. The categorisation takes a bit of getting used to, but once you've mastered that, it really is good. Now, the people who really care about such things would probably be happy delving into a complicated spreadsheet, but for the rest of us this offers an insight into what's being spent and where.

Standing on his own

Showing a little bit of thinking against the flow, Thomas Malone of MIT offers another view of crowdsourcing on Radio National's Future Tense program (<http://tinyurl.com/27cutez/>). In a romp through the worlds of biology and genetics (and a side trip to the Linux operating system) he shows that it's not always true that the crowd is oh-so-wise.

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Don't forget to visit my blog
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