Webb's web

Eight elements

I understand the frustration of the community that sees governments (or even big enterprises) endlessly gazing at their navels working out how to 'do' Social Media. "Why not just do it?" they cry. Well, believe it or not, the people inside government or enterprises are equally annoyed at the delay in getting going with this, but while we're going about gathering support and approval for our initiatives we can take advantage of the wealth of research that's going on. A good example is the guide produced at the University of Albany, SUNY (**http://tinyurl.com/2bgsylp**) that describes eight essential elements for a social media policy, based on an analysis of existing policies from around the world and a series of interviews with practitioners.

Looking for meaning

It's been quite a few years since Sir Tim Berners-Lee began spruiking the Semantic Web and while there's a fair bit of work going on, it'll be a while before it hits the big time. That, at least, is the general assessment of the experts polled in the Pew Internet study (**http://tinyurl.com/32jocdv**) Even looking forward ten years, there is no clear consensus that the results of this work will be noticeable to the average user. It's not surprising, really. It'll require a lot of attention to be paid to content creation (and massaging the material that's already on the Web) before any enhanced software is in a position to add that extra layer of comprehension that the Semantic web needs.

Mother knows best?

Don't go to the article on Open Government in Federal Computer Week (**http://tinyurl.com/2ekr8x5**) if you have a low tolerance for silly observations. In a discussion at the Open Government and Innovations conference, one member of the panel referred to the 'Mom test', that is if a dataset that's been published can't be understood by his mother then it has failed. This ignores the basic point of open access to government information. His mom would be able to understand Where Does My Money Go (**http://www.wheredoesmymoneygo.org/**) which can come about only because the basic data has been published by the government in a usable format.

Get it out and get it used

Some more sensible comments on open government were delivered at the WWW2010 conference in April. A special session (summarised at **http://tinyurl.com/39hdybq**) had assessments from a number of experts, with general agreement that the public should be strongly encouraged to use the data that's been published, and that government staff be advised that concerns about the quality of the data they have is not necessarily a justification for keeping it hidden.

Keeping up with the World Wide Game

By the time you read this, the FIFA caravan will have moved on for four more years and the only memories will be the faint echoes of the vuvuzelas. But good things arise from all sorts of unlikely places. A couple of notable websites were developed for the cup, and I think we can expect to see them influencing football coverage for quite a while. One of them comes in Spanish and English versions (see **http://tinyurl.com/2v2uoxv**) and has a very unusual interface – one that nicely balances the need to look at teams, venues, groups, and dates. A more traditional site, but with excellent presentation is the FIFA site (**http://www.fifa.com/**), especially the live match coverage.

WCAG 2.0 in Australia

A Transition Strategy (**http://tinyurl.com/3ydr95z**) has been released for government bodies at all levels to make the move to compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2.0, setting out a roadmap for ensuring the their websites are suitable accessible. The strategy requires that all federal, state and territory websites will conform to the guidelines to meet Single A level by the end of 2012 and at least AA level by the end of 2014.

On the table

I'm in the middle of a long project that will inter alia need to put a lot of tabular data on a website – which anyone who's tried to do it will realise takes a long long time and a lot of fiddling. So it was with some pleasure that I found Tableizer (**http://tableizer.journalistopia.com/**), which takes a group of cells from an Excel spreadsheet and then converts it to an HTML table. It's not bad at all!

The essence of communication

I've had a look at the iPad and I like it a lot – and I've decided that it doesn't fit into my lifestyle yet. But I'm not everybody, and the story at **http://tinyurl.com/3aehhqh** about a woman with cerebral palsy and her first experience with the gadget shows you that users as well as developers can show a lot on ingenuity.

The shock of the new

While we're on the subject, Jakob Nielsen was not afraid to bring his experienced gaze to an evaluation of the iPad's usability and subsequently copped a lot of flak (**http://tinyurl.com/2cwuygb**) from the bright young things at Johnny Holland. I wonder what they think of his colleague Donald Norman in his more general commentary (**http://tinyurl.com/3xllrgx**) on the general usability considerations of gestures, swipes and other 'intuitive' ways of using this new technology.

Life-long learning

YouTube has a huge range of entertainment and education on offer. You probably think that it's not yet a big force in education, but just have a look at Khan Academy (**http://www.khanacademy.org/**) for a demonstration. I skipped the extensive collection of home-made videos on mathematics, chemistry and biology and checked out his summaries of the Napoleonic Wars - which are very good indeed: well researched and presented in clear laymen's language.

Aaaah, I remember when …

As one who was involved (albeit on the periphery) in its activities in the 90s, I was interested to see that AARNet had published its 20 years of the internet in Australia. After a few months during which it was available only in print, they've done us a real favour by putting it up online at **http://www.aarnet.edu.au/about-us/publications.aspx#aarnetbook**. We'll each enjoy reading our own favourite snippets, but I really liked the bit about the planned takeover by Boeing Computer Services, with the apparent connivance of the Federal Government.

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