



What aren't you being shown?

I recommend the TED presentation by Eli Pariser on Filter Bubbles (tinyurl.com/44tg97y). What he's talking about is the concept that all sorts of services - Google, Facebook, news sites - try to guess at what you really want to see and block out what (they think) you don't want to see. Their reason for doing this is to present to you those ads that they believe will be most valuable to you (and of course to their advertisers). He illustrates this by showing the Google search results on 'Egypt' from two of his friends during the height of the Cairo protests. One search displayed lots of news stories about the events that were happening, the other one showed tips on tourist activities. I'm just a little alarmed at this. His book on the subject has since been published (*The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You*), and it does make sobering reading. As he says about the personal profile decided about you, "You don't know if its assumptions about you are right or wrong". Unfortunately, it's a bit difficult to hide yourself from these services so that you can make up your own mind, but logging out from Google before you start searching will help a little.

The politicians speak

I'd like to move a motion of congratulation to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library, with the publication of their digital version of Hansard going all the way back to May 1901. I do think they could do a little more to make the documents visible from the Reps and Senate pages at www.aph.gov.au/hansard/ but when you start drilling down you'll find much to appreciate - either in text or PDF formats - and they also offer you the chance to suggest corrections to individual pages. I had a quick look at what went on during the very first day of sitting back in 1901 and it was fascinating to see how it all began.

It seems so obvious

I was reading in Tom Johnson's blog *I'd Rather Be Writing about Mooers' Law* at tinyurl.com/5rc8nlq which says, "An information retrieval system will tend not to be used whenever it is more painful and troublesome for a customer to have information than for him not to have it" and I was struck about how true it is in everything we do. (But then to a certain type of person, everything but everything is an information retrieval system) if you just think about the instruction manual for your TV or PVR, do you really like going into the small type and badly-expressed information to find out about something that you probably don't really want to do anyway? (Assuming you haven't lost the manual in the meantime.) Usefully, Tom takes a few lessons from Mooer's Law and sets them out at the end of the post.

Let's get together

I went to an informative seminar in May on the subject of PDF publishing, which covered a number of the issues very well indeed. The main speaker was Dey Alexander and after her presentation, she spoke about her new *Web Content Managers Forum* ([/tinyurl.com/3twslx2](http://tinyurl.com/3twslx2)), which is free and open to all. I think it's a great initiative and I'd encourage anyone in the Web business to join, although after a few weeks I'd seen no real activity in the group. I can't believe that people don't have anything that they need to talk about.

That's a lot of pages

The National Library has now digitised more than five million pages in their Australian Newspapers Digitisation Program (www.nla.gov.au/ndp/) - and that's pretty impressive. Even more impressive is the way that the pages are displayed in both their original scanned format and the text equivalent - and if you see something that needs to be corrected, go to www.nla.gov.au/ndp/get_involved/ and just do it.

Big Apple 2.0

One of the best manifestos you'll ever see for the digital future is New York City's Roadmap for the Digital City at tinyurl.com/65etp8f. The document is well-planned and very well presented. The bar has been raised in a big, big way. And if you'd like to see an update on what they're actually doing in implementing the Roadmap, there's a video of Rachel Sterne (their Chief Digital Officer - love that title!) at vimeo.com/23540478.

A little bit of ammunition

In my rambling around the web, looking for background information on all aspects of web development (including this wonderful article by Gerry McGovern at tinyurl.com/3pqo29t I do see quite a few comments from web developers griping about the unrealistic - or just plain deluded - requests made by those who commission their work. It seems that anyone at all feels that they can have strong opinions on web design. If you happen to be confronted by a client with a little knowledge, you might like to look at Wee Nudge (weenudge.com/), a collection of articles that address many of the misconceptions people have, like not going below the fold or that whitespace is obviously bad.

More on my blog
www.alia.org.au/webbsblog



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