Webb's Web

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

Picture this

I'm sure I heard about this one a while ago (and it's certainly been suggested as a possibility for a long time) but I was reminded the other day about the feature of Google Images Search that lets you look for images similar to one that you have. The easiest way is to drag an image to the search bar or use the Browse option to select one from your computer, then click enter. It will (usually) identify the image and its main website and display a selection of ones that look like it. Really quite impressive – and Bing, of course, has a comparable capability.

e-Lending – a long way to go

It seems that the publishers and the librarians are still a long way apart on the subject of lending ebooks, according to a report from Digital Book World at **http://tinyurl.com/9u2m96n**. It's remarkable that so little progress has been made, given that these two industries have worked together for so long and should have a better understanding of each other's position and prime motivation. The publishers are rightly concerned that any concession on their part will cut into their market, at a time when their business conditions are worse than ever before, but they do have some strange ideas about the range of clienteles served by libraries. On the other hand, it does look like the libraries working group has been a little slow in putting forward workable models that may address these issues.

Paying for what you read – however briefly

Having worked for the government one way or another for a long, long time, I've become used to seeing bright ideas come up for consideration and politicians leap at them – despite getting some very good advice to the contrary. There was one occasion when a head of government publicly boasted about how secure his websites were, against the very spirited suggestion from his head of IT Security that this was like waving a big red flag to a bull, and he was right. The security team spent a long time after that trapping attempted intrusions by those ready to rise to the challenge. The same (I'm sure) applies to the attitude of the French government wanting Google to pay a fee to news sites for linking to news items (and there is a draft German law to the same effect). It probably seemed like a good idea to someone, but, despite national sensitivities, there would have been someone to suggest to the Minister that it might be unwise. Google is objecting to this, of course, and is threatening in turn to stop linking to these sites. It will no doubt eventually be sorted out to everyone's apparent satisfaction (and advertisers will find their charges going up a little), but there will be a lot of posturing on all sides before that happens.

They get my vote

I'd like to say a little about the good folk at the ACT Electoral Commission (**http://www.elections.act.gov.au/**) and how they handled the October election for the Legislative Assembly. As the years go by, they're continuing to improve the electronic voting process, but what really struck me was how they were handling the other end of the business. Although the ACT's Hare-Clark system is a bit complicated (read about it if you dare at **http://tinyurl.com/9ev3695**), what they were able to do as they waited for the postal votes to come in was to crunch the numbers each night so they could publish an interim preference count, so the final result was not too much of a surprise.

Where we've been, talking among ourselves

I'm a bit of a history fan, and I also like to read stuff written by people who know what they're talking about. Those are two reasons why I thought James Dellow's piece on Social Intranets at **http://tinyurl.com/8l2r2c5** was worth looking at. It also links to a pretty good 2011 Deloitte report on Social Software for Business Performance (**http://tinyurl.com/95zuel8**) that looks at ROI of this sort of tool.

The internet kept working – mostly

Among all the trouble and strife arising from Hurricane Sandy in the Northeast United States only a few high profile sites were affected for a few days – which is how it was all engineered to work, of course. You can do load balancing and all sorts of fancy routing, but if your main operations centre is under five feet of water, there's not too much that will help.

So long, but no longer

Well I've been at this place in INCITE for quite a while, but the time has come for me to ride off into the sunset. Next year you'll see another sort of column here, so for now, thanks for all the kind words and keep enjoying the web, won't you?

Posted by Kerry Webb

We farewell one of our regular columns this year – Kerry Webb has mined the web to bring us interesting titbits, exciting developments, and not a few important messages for the last 18 years. Kerry is finishing up to enjoy his retirement without our INCITE editor hounding him for deadlines. We thank Kerry for his hard work, helpful hints, and humour for the last 18 years and wish him the very best in the future.