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EDITORIAL

SAOUG has kicked off well in 2002 with a sparkling new website look and feel - everything is far better organised and things are much easier to find! A big thank you for this to Cornel Muller. Have a look at <http://www.saug.org.za> to see the changes for yourself!

I hope you had a good Christmas - here is an article submitted to a 1999 Louisville Sentinel contest to find out who had the wildest Christmas dinner - this won first prize.

Christmas with Louise

As a joke, my brother used to hang a pair of panty hose over his fireplace before Christmas. He said all he wanted was for Santa to fill them. Every Christmas morning, although Jay's kids' stockings were overflowed, his poor pantyhose hung sadly empty. One year I decided to make his dream come true. I put on sunglasses and went in search of an inflatable love doll. They don't sell those things at Wal-Mart. I had to go to an adult bookstore downtown. If you've never been in an X-rated store, don't go. You'll only confuse yourself. Finally, I made it to the inflatable doll section. I wanted to buy a standard, uncomplicated doll. Finding what I wanted was difficult. love dolls come in many different models. I settled for 'Lovable Louise.' She was at the bottom of the price scale. To call Louise a "doll" took a huge leap of imagination. On Christmas Eve, with the help of an old bicycle pump, Louise came to life.

The next morning my brother called to say that Santa had been to his house and left a present that had made him VERY happy but had left the dog confused. She would bark, start to walk away, then come back and bark some more. We all agreed that Louise should remain in her panty hose so the rest of the family could admire her when they came over for the traditional Christmas dinner. My grandmother noticed Louise the moment she walked in the door. "What the ### is that?" she asked. My brother quickly explained, 'It's a doll.' 'Who would play with something like that?' Granny snapped. 'Where are her clothes?' Granny continued. 'Boy, that turkey sure smells nice, Gran,' Jay said, trying to steer her into the dining room. But Granny was relentless. "Why doesn't she have any teeth?" My grandfather, a delightful old man with poor eyesight, sidled up to me and said, 'Hey, who's the naked gal by the fireplace?' I told him she was Jay's friend. A few minutes later I noticed Grandpa by the mantel, talking to Louise. Not just talking, but actually flirting. It was then that we realised this might be Grandpa's last Christmas at home.

The dinner went well. We made the usual small talk when suddenly Louise made a very rude noise. Then she lurched from the panty hose, flew around the room twice, and fell in a heap in front of the sofa. The cat screamed. I passed cranberry sauce through my nose, and Grandpa ran across the room, fell to his knees, and began administering

mouth to mouth resuscitation. My brother fell back over his chair and Granny threw down her napkin, stomped out of the room, and sat in the car. It was indeed a Christmas to treasure and remember. We discovered that Louise had suffered from a hot ember to the back of her right thigh. Fortunately, thanks to a wonder drug called duct tape, we restored her to perfect health I think Grandpa still calls her whenever he can get out of the house.

THE WEB NEEDS INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS - BUT ARE INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS READY?

By: David Kempe

The Scene

The web is changing. Recent events, such as the collapse of several dot.com companies and the increased awareness of and emphasis on web design and usability, have revealed that the Web is still in its infancy, still learning how to establish itself as part of the bigger world of information. The Web is also, as never before in its ten-year history, more in need of the skills and knowledge of information professionals. But are information professionals really ready to shape the future Web of Information?

The Argument

I am suggesting that information professionals, while skilled in serving users and clients in such traditional areas as Libraries and corporate information centres, still need to become more proficient with the applications that shape the web. In short, information professionals need an increased knowledge of and more hands-on experience with the tools (HTML, CGI, etc) and theory (web design, navigation, interface) that make the Web work.

Yesterday's Reality

A few months ago it seemed like the whole world was about to be engulfed in dot.coms. All activities from shopping to dining to whatever obscure hobby one can think of were anchoring themselves on the web. Then something happened.

Today's Reality

The dot.com bubble burst, popping loud enough to send shockwaves through the tech economy. In the aftermath, in which we continue to see the spectre of bankrupt dot.com companies, the 20-, 30-something owners are left scratching their heads. As smart as they were in establishing their website presence and garnering financial support, and as ingenious as some of their sites were, they did not understand users and their needs. Although they understood every aspect of HTML coding and how they could attract venture capitalists, they simply did not know how to deliver the goods and satisfy users' needs.

Now moving away from the world of retailing to the world of information, which the web is mostly all about, the question is as follows: Who knows how to deliver the goods and satisfy user needs in the world of information? The answer is: librarians and information professionals. Now if librarians/information professionals are the experts in information dissemination, why, then, aren't there more librarians/information professionals involved in the web design process?

The Need Is Out There...

Ever come across a website whose designer has created a Frankensite? You know the kind, where the designer has sewn together a hideous colour scheme, a bunch of annoying animated GIFS, and a confusing navigation system. Not to mention an organisation of information that leaves you pumping the BACK button on your browser in frustration. And to make matters worse, this site claimed to carry pertinent

information.

Travel along the web long enough and you will come across a large share of poorly planned, poorly designed, and, basically, un-user-friendly websites. If the world of Web-based information remains in these incapable hands, the information users seek will be that much harder to find.

Web design is a serious issue, especially for information professionals interested in Web of Information that is forming in the world today. Unfortunately, the web is far too big now to be completely re-designed. However, it is at a stage when new ideas can and must be injected into its sagging foundation.

But how can librarians/information professionals make a positive impact in the world of the web when it is dominated by technology and money, two seemingly untouchable players? On the one hand we have computers and computer programmers; and on the other we have big business. Both are integral to the proper functioning of the web: but neither have the skills -- the librarian skills, I might add -- to select, organise, retrieve, and transmit information. In order for information professionals to make an impact in the web, I believe they must become more adept in and less intimidated by computer technology and business matters.

The Plan

In light of the fact that the structure of the web is undergoing changes, both subtle and obvious, and that the 'business' model that gave life to dot.com mania is undergoing some well-deserved scrutiny, it is now, more than ever, crucial for information professionals to become involved and take their rightful place in the evolution of the web. To do so, information professionals should be more intensely trained to deal with the challenges that computer technology brings and be given more opportunities to learn the necessary computer and management skills in order to stand their own against the dominant players of the web. A well-rounded information professional, proficient in his or her field, as well as capable and competent in the fields of computers and business, is a necessity.

This change will require much time and effort. But it is necessary in order to maintain the effectiveness and viability of the profession in the 21st century.

librarians/information professionals establish standards in many different information environments, and the web should not be an exception.

MARSH'S LIBRARY, DUBLIN - 300 THIS YEAR - GETS ITS OWN STAMP

Founded in 1701, Marsh's library in Dublin has been celebrating its 300th anniversary this year. The Irish Post Office, An Post, has issued a commemorative 30-pence stamp, this year, according to the Irish Times, which features Archbishop Narcissus Marsh, the library's founder.

The paper states that the stamp is '...A tasteful affair in muted shades of green and brown. It shows the archbishop in front of one of the ornate 'cages' in which, legend has it, readers used to be locked lest they were tempted to do a little unauthorised 'borrowing' of rare books. A companion 32-pence stamp marks the 450th anniversary of the first book printed in Ireland, 'The Booke of Common Prayer, with a reproduction of the original title page.'

The article also features an interview with Muriel McCarthy, the current Keeper of the library.

THE SECRET OF LIBRARY MARKETING: MAKE YOURSELF INDISPENSABLE

Marketing is an ungodly, complicated problem for librarians. Like some corporate octopus, we offer an immense range of products--information, books, reading itself, the Internet--to an immense range of audiences, from children to parents, public officials to businesspeople, toddlers to seniors. So when we talk about improving our marketing, we need to define which product we want to sell, and to which audience.

The marketing effort that concerns me most is convincing the local power structure that we are the 'go-to' people for information. In *A Place at the Table: Participating in Community Building* (ALA Editions, 2000), Kathleen de la Petre McCook surveyed library literature and funding information for urban redevelopment; she found that libraries were virtually invisible to the movers and shakers who wanted to revitalise their communities. And the 'Gee, they have computers!' tone of virtually any news story about libraries makes it clear that reporters are not library users and may not have entered a library since junior high school. What are we doing wrong?

Perhaps our key error is waiting for those movers and shakers to come to us. If we want the influential people in our service areas to regard us as full partners in community building, we need to know their information needs before they do, and get the resources into their hands that will facilitate their decision-making before they realise they need it.

Building such relationships with reporters requires our understanding that their work is driven by the 'news peg'--the fourth estate's operating principle that no matter how interesting an idea or issue may be in the abstract, it won't make the editorial cut unless it's connected to a breaking news story. Reporters won't write about the issue of underage drinking and fake IDs until Jenna Bush is arrested. Journalists are almost guaranteed to write about women's issues in March during Women's History Month and African-American achievements during Black History Month in February, but not during the other 10 months of the year. In other words, reporters will welcome story ideas and information that are pegged to news events, past and present. Because journalists have to do their research on short deadlines, we can earn their gratitude by offering them story ideas and pro-packaged research.

Librarians need to teach them by example that we can find better information than they can with their quick Internet searches.

How might we do that? One way is a regular library newsletter (by mail, e-mail, Web page, or all three) that includes a 'This Month in History' feature that highlights interesting historical and cultural milestones of 25, 50, or 100 years ago--votes for women, the first Barbie doll, the first IBM PC--and recommends excellent books, articles, magazines, and online resources for each.

We can do the same thing for current issues, both local and national. Where flood control is an ongoing concern, we could recommend books on the history of efforts to control local waterways, and online documents such as Corps of Engineers reports and historical statistics. Library Web pages could include scanned photos and news accounts of previous floods, and reading lists and on-site displays could offer that same information for library visitors. Librarians can be equally proactive with leaders of local government. First, study their immediate and continuing issues, and their individual hobbyhorses and pet projects. How? Make a point of attending city council meetings or at least reading their minutes, which, in many towns, are posted on the Internet. You can then research those issues, and supply city officials with pertinent articles, Web sites, and other documents that indicate how other cities have dealt with similar

problems.

Another marketing resource librarians may not be mining is our public meeting rooms. Odds are that community leaders attend events in our library meeting rooms at least once every few months--everything from book-discussion groups to quilting-club meetings and folk-music presentations. Knowing in advance what interests each scheduled group, you could maintain a shifting display outside the meeting room of materials that would appeal to each group. You could also publish brochures recommending particularly good books, Web sites, magazines, and reference sources on those topics.

You also want to know who the community's innate 'sales-people' are--those who are good at convincing others to undertake projects, spend money, and offer their time and effort. You need these people on your side as well. If librarians and board members already know some of these people, you have a relationship to build on, and knowledge of their interests. If you don't already know them, find a way to reach them. Arrange to join groups they're involved in, to work with them on community projects, such as "Race for the Cure" or fundraising for a new Gilda's Club.

You may be reading this and saying, 'in what possible universe will I have time to do all this stuff and still serve the people who are already coming to us?'" And you're right; there's a limit to how far we can stretch. Librarians can't do all the things I'm recommending.

But if we don't do some of them, we will continue to be invisible. If we don't want to settle for being good at what we do but want to be known to be good at what we do, we have to put marketing time and money into reaching out to the people who make things happen in our community.

Library salesmanship:

- Is the ultimate knowledge-management experience.
- Never ends.

LIBRARY TIDBITS

British Library

<http://www.bl.uk>

The British Library has launched a new version of their Website, the first significant redesign since their initial launch in 1995. The new site eliminates frames, simplifies navigation, makes the look and feel of the site more consistent throughout, and aims to make the site more accessible to a variety of browsers, platforms, and bandwidths. In addition, the library offers an exhibit to accompany the installation that went on display this summer, *lie of the land: The Secret life of Maps*. The online exhibition is brief but does feature images of some of the museum installation's highlights in the explore section and the tour the exhibit section. A nice browse for map aficionado.

Zambia Library Association

<http://www.zla.co.za>

Have a look at this happy web site - it is very comprehensive and is really a one stop shop for all their members.

10 TIPS FOR TEACHING NOW TO SEARCH THE WEB

Teaching how to search the Web is hot--it's become standard practice in public- service librarianship. We teach classes, hold workshops, distribute handouts, mount tutorials on the Web.

But are we doing a good job?

Many of us take a descriptive approach to teaching the Web. We are masters at identifying search tools and describing their salient characteristics. We routinely detail their query options, search syntax, and results-ranking schemes. Our instruction is loaded with facts.

The answer lies in the question.

As admirable as this approach is, it is ultimately unproductive. Description isn't much help in an environment in which search tools and their features are madly proliferating on an over-burgeoning Web. How many of us have expended good time and effort giving an in-depth review of a search tool's features, only to see these features mutate or disappear?

I propose that we take an approach that is more apt to provide knowledge that endures - a query-based approach because it is based on the individual query. If we teach search tools for their usefulness with specific types of queries, we are giving users a reason to return to these tools. We are identifying needs and finding solutions. In short, we are providing users with a strategy.

Here are 10 tips for shaping a query-based approach.

1. Apply what we know about library resources to search tools on the Web. Librarians understand the characteristics of library-based research tools and when it is appropriate to use them. With library resources, it is a matter of routine to match the query to the tool. When teaching how to do research on the Web, we should evaluate its information-finding tools based on the queries they support, and recommend them accordingly.
2. Help users find what they need. Users tend to view Web search tools as an amorphous, undifferentiated whole. By the same token, many users believe that there are tools that can answer all queries. It's our job to explain that different search tools serve different purposes and to help users identify which tools match their needs.
3. Define searching broadly. To teach query-based searching, we need to view searching as a process that begins with the quest for information. It is far more than the act of constructing a search statement--in fact, that step comes last. Users should begin the search process by analysing their query. Do they want to begin with a broad topic and become familiar with its subtopics? Is their topic targeted to a narrow concept or made up of multiple concepts? Are they looking for a specific Web site? Do they want a targeted set of data? Dynamically changing information? Multimedia?' Based on the answers to these kinds of questions, we can help users explore the tools that might bring them results. Once they have chosen the right tool, we can address the matter of constructing search statements.
4. Teach search tools, not just search engines. The Web offers three major types of information-finding tools: directories, search engines, and the deep Web. Teaching search engines alone is not enough. A query-based approach to Web searching encompasses all types of Web-based tools. We need to familiarise users with the full range of tools and the kinds of queries they can address. Search-engine training is limiting, while search-tool training opens up a world of possibility.

5. Teach users to analyse their queries and identify the tools that support them. The following illustrates how useful a query-based approach can be. Here are three queries, all on the topic of American architecture, each of which requires a different type of Web-based tool.

I'm looking for: sites on American architecture.

Use: A professional directory created and annotated by experts.

I'm looking for: the site of the Society of American Registered Architects.

Use: A peer-ranking, human-mediated engine such as Google or Direct Hit.

I'm looking for: a list of architects in Baltimore.

Use: A database on the deep Web such as a phone book.

These examples demonstrate the advantage of analysing the query first, then choosing the search tool as a second step. Tips 6, 7, and 8 cover each major type of tool in greater detail.

6. For general queries or for topics that need exploring, recommend directories. Directories, especially those compiled and annotated by experts, are appropriate starting points for broad topics. A few examples are the Argus Clearinghouse, InfoMine, and the librarians' Index to the Internet. These tools give users an opportunity to see what the experts have to say about the best resources available on their topic. With their hierarchical subject listings, directories are also good for browsing. Listed subtopics can help users become familiar with the scope of their topic for further refinement. In addition, directories often include meta pages that are jumping-off points for topical research. It's important to teach directories as human-mediated tools that tend to offer substantive content.

7. For targeted, ambiguous, and sometimes broad queries, recommend search engines. Traditionally, search engines have worked best for targeted or multi-concept queries. Because we are searching the full text of millions of files, we are able to pick up specific and often obscure information. With the current crop of engines, an even wider range of queries is supported. The following examples illustrate this point. These queries range from the specific to the very broad.

Query type: targeted to a narrow topic

Query: I'd like to view sites about the Hubble telescope.

Use: Peer-ranking, human-mediated engines.

Examples: Google, Direct Hit.

Why? The Web is a community of content creators and users of this content. People who link to external sites from their Web pages exercise judgement about the relevance and value of these sites. Google's relevancy ranking measures this activity. Direct Hit tracks the sites that users select from their search engine results. The collective judgment of millions of these searchers adds up to a continual and dynamic peer ranking. Both types of rankings work quite well when we are searching a narrowly-defined topic.

Query type: targeted to a specific site or other restriction

Query: I'd like to view NASA documents about the Hubble telescope.

Use: Engines with a searchable site field.

Examples: AllTheWeb, AltaVista, HotBot, Ixquick Metasearch, Northern Light.

Why? Engines that offer 'site' or 'URL' as a field restriction allow us to retrieve documents from a specific site. These limits may be put into effect through search syntax or menu choices in a search template. This idea can be extended to other types of field delimiters such as geographic location ('I want to see documents from South Africa about Nelson Mandela'), date last modified, language, file type, etc. A number of search engines work well for these types of targeted queries.

Query type: ambiguous or terminology-seeking

Query: I'm interested in learning about stocks.

Use: Concept-processing, thesaurus-creating engines.

Examples: Excite, SurfWax.

Why? Ambiguous words are always a challenge in a database search. Thesaurus-creating engines can help us narrow our concept to our intended meaning. These engines offer a choice of meanings based on the initial search, from which users can select for a subsequent search. Thesaurus-creating engines, like their library-based counterparts, can also help users choose appropriate terminology for a search.

Query type: general, In-depth

Query: I'm doing research on renewable energy.

Use: Concept-clustering tools that parse topics into component subtopics.

Examples: Northern light, Guidebeam, Query Server, Vivisimo.

Why? Concept-clustering tools process a search and return results that are organised into subtopics and relevant sites. This can be very useful when you want to become familiar with different aspects of a topic, are unfamiliar with a topic, or want to be sure you are examining it in depth. In this respect, these tools and directories serve a similar purpose.

8. For information stored in databases or non-textual files, recommend the deep Web. Fixed Web pages are only one part of the content available on the Web. The much larger part is held in databases or contextual files. Data, graphics, software, dynamically changing information, and multimedia are examples of deep Web content. This content may be retrieved in a variety of ways. Many databases on the Web are searchable from their own sites, and these sites can be retrieved from directories and search engines. Also, many search engines offer deep Web searches as featured options. A few sites specialise in gathering a collection of links to searchable databases on the Web, for example the Invisible Web. Others, such as ProFusion, search the content of selected databases from a single interface.

9. Avoid getting bogged down in teaching search-tool features. Features come and features go. Trying to keep track of which ones belong with which tool is very difficult. If this is a challenge for us, what about our users? Even if we could keep track of everything, teaching features in and of themselves has little value. We should avoid an approach that says, "This tool does this, that tool does that." This leaves users with numerous details but no grounds for using the tool once they're on their own. It's much better to say, "Search engines have features and they change." Then, give advice about the features to look for based on the nature of the query. Remember: context is everything.

10. Be realistic--and relax! It's amazing to think that we are still in the early years of information-finding tools on the Web. The volatility of this world is sure to continue. Absolve yourself and your users of the burden of tracking a multiplicity of details. Instead, teach what is useful in the actual process of finding information. Rather than elaborating on features, put your attention on the query. This is a lesson that will stand the test of time.

Steps for this search and those to come:

- Define the nature of the quest.
- Choose the most useful tool.
- Construct the proper search statement.