Online

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British Library
The British Library have developed an online learning package (http://www.bl.uk/training_package/introduction.html), aimed specifically at public library staff in the UK, demonstrating the services the Library has to offer. The package consists of an online tour, using video, images, text and web links, with a downloadable workbook, guiding you through the full range of services available. The aim of the package is to educate Public Library staff so they can help their users fully exploit the resources of the British Library. The whole package takes about three hours to follow in full but to help staff who are unlikely to be able to find a spare three hour stretch to work on it, users can logout and resume the tour later from wherever they left off. The British Library plan to develop the tour so that it can be used as a quick reference tool and so that it is relevant to library staff in other sectors including academia and business.

Literature Online (http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk/)
Chadwyck-Healey, in partnership with the Modern Language Association of America (MLA), have launched the MLA International Bibliography (MLAIB). This is an annual index of books and articles on modern languages and literatures, linguistics, and folklore, which has been published in print form since 1921. The electronic version covers volumes from 1963 to the present, and comprises more than 1.7 million fully searchable records, covering literature from all over the world, history and theory of linguistics, semantics, stylistics, translation, literary theory and criticism, dramatic arts (film, radio, television, and theatre), the teaching of language and literature, rhetoric and composition and the history of printing and publishing. Also included is the MLA Directory of Periodicals, which gives extensive editorial, contact and submission information on more than 7,100 titles. From early 2005 MLAIB will be available as a premium add-on module to Literature Online.

Google (http://www.google.com)
Google have announced plans to create a global virtual library. Michigan, Harvard, Stanford, New York Public Library and the Bodleian Library in Oxford have signed a deal with Google to digitise millions of books and make them available free of charge on the web. Michigan and Stanford will digitise their entire collections, Harvard and New York Public Library will digitise part of their collection and the Bodleian will contribute about one million books published before 1900. The project will make available to users unique publications and out of print titles irrespective of location and will allow increased access to these works while preserving the originals. Books which are out of copyright will be available complete although newer titles will only appear with the publishers' permission.

………and more on the google front - for anyone who hates struggling around the shops and who has any money left after Christmas – you can now shop online with Google http://froogle.google.co.uk. The site allows you to perform one search across multiple online stores and auction sites – including ebay – for whatever you need.

patientINFORM (http://www.patientinform.org)
Scientific publishers, medical societies and the US's leading voluntary health organizations are piloting an initiative to give patients and caregivers direct access to original medical research. The scheme, called patientINFORM will be launched in Spring 2005 and will be a free, online service providing accessible, up-to-date, reliable research for specific diseases. patientINFORM will initially focus on three diseases: cancer, diabetes, and heart disease and users will be able to access free full text research articles via the voluntary health organisations websites.

Internet News

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I thought that this first column of the New Year might be an opportunity to offer a few mental challenges to revive those tired and jaded brain cells after the Christmas and New Years festivities. My interest in puzzles other than crossword puzzles has been piqued over recent times by the Puzzle Panel programme on Radio 4, which incidentally is due to make a welcome return to the airwaves in January; and also by the Su Doku puzzles in The Times.

Su Doku puzzle
The aim of the Su Doku puzzles is deceptively simple, there is a grid of 9x9 small boxes, with the instructions – "Fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 through 9". They have nothing to do with maths but everything to do with applying logic and deduction. The puzzles get progressively more challenging during the week. I enjoy the challenge of these puzzles as information work can be very word and text based that this seems to use another part of the brain. The puzzles are published in The Times, and

also online at www.timesonline.co.uk, click on the link to 'Games'. The Times games page also includes the Polygon puzzle, as well as the Bridge and Chess challenges. There is more information at www.sudoku.com.

The Polygon puzzle
The aim is to create as many words as possible using the letters in the Polygon, but the highlighted letter must be included in each word.

An 'Audio' Crossword
Radio 4 has an audio crossword, which is available online, and plays audible clips to supplement the text based clues. It can be filled in online and is available at www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/comedy/ select the 'Try the Radio 4 audio crossword' link under the 'Useful BBC Links'.

Puzzles to enhance skills
I've also been looking at sites which use puzzles as a way of enhancing different skill sets, such as problem solving skills or your creativity.
One site, Creativity Unleashed, which is primarily supporting a business creativity training organisation, does offer some interesting puzzles on its site at http://www.cul.co.uk/creative/puzzles.htm. They also have interesting links for further exploration of creativity.
Aha! Puzzles is another interesting site, found at http://homepage.ntlworld.com/atalanta/home.html.

There is an extensive range of puzzles at the main www.puzz.com page, which also has a large number of links to all sorts of other puzzle type websites. If you're after some really challenging logic puzzles, you might want to try out this page within the web site, http://www.puzz.com/lloydkingpuzzles.html.

Another large site is at www.puzzlemonster.com, with sections for logic puzzles, trivia puzzles, visual puzzles and word puzzles. Again, many puzzles to choose from to revive those flagging grey cells!
Edward de Bono, regarded by many to be the leading authority in the world in the field of creative thinking and the direct teaching of thinking as a skill has his authorised website at http://www.edwdebono.com/index.html . Amongst the resources there are full descriptions of two of his games – the L game and the 3 spot game, described as a 'social justice' game as sometimes the winner is in fact the loser!
http://www.edwdebono.com/debono/gamesi.htm

Maths
If you're a maths puzzle fan then this site might be one to visit, http://www.counton.org/. It is produced by the University of York for the DES and includes a wealth of maths based information. It also includes the wonderful 'Who wants to be a Mathonaire?', to

see just how good your maths skills are!

Many of these sites have pages with links to many other sites. Trying out a few games and puzzles from each one could provide some interesting material to add a different challenge to team building events, as well as sharpening our individual problem solving strategies.
Have fun and puzzle away!

Intranets and Content Management

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By the time this column is published we will be well into 2005, but at the time of writing I am still in 'what will happen in 2005' mode. So here are some thoughts on trends and issues that I think will occupy your attention in the year ahead.

CMS applications will offer better price/performance
One of the most encouraging aspects of the Online Information exhibition last year was the number of UK CMS vendors who were offering some really well-developed products, and were demonstrating them with flair and enthusiasm. Although a number of US-based CMS vendors are trying to enter the UK market the lack of local support has been a major consideration for many organisations. I have recently been working with a client where the absolute limit for the CMS was around £40k (including VAT!) and they received a number of excellent proposals.

As always you need to read the proposals carefully as there will always be a requirement for some professional service support for installation, training and template development, for example. But certainly if you have £60k or so in the budget you will find an increasing range of products at this price level. Among the companies that have impressed me recently have been Contentis (www.contensis.net), Goss (www.gossinteractive.com), iLevel (www.ilevelsoftware.com), Immediacy (www.immediacy.co.uk) and Terminal Four (www.terminalfour.com) though I do find the Terminal Four pricing structure somewhat difficult to understand.

Migration issues will continue to plague CMS implementations
The paradox about migration is that there is very little that can be done about migrating pages from one system (typically Front Page) to a CMS