

BRITISH LIBRARY

BRITISH LIBRARY <http://www.collectbritain.co.uk/collections/dialects/> have announced their new website for Northern England's accents and dialects. It includes recordings and images during the 20th century. A wide subject area is covered ranging from steelwork, farming and football. It is a valuable collection into the changing dialects over the last century. When complete in September the Collect Britain digitisation project will include over 350 hours of recordings and 100, 000 images.
<http://www.bl.uk/collectbritain>

INDEX TO THESES

INDEX TO THESES <http://www.theses.com/> have announced that the bibliographic coverage of dissertations accepted for higher degrees by UK universities and Ireland has increased. Coverage goes back to 1716, with 44,000 additional abstracts for the 1970 to 1985 period. In total there are now 480,000 entries in total, with all entries from 1986 onwards including abstracts.

R.R.BOWKER

R.R.BOWKER <http://www.booksinprint.com/> has introduced a new version called PatronBooksInPrint.com. The site is designed to be user friendly for library users to search the site. There are options to search for fiction and non-fiction, popular fiction areas such as romance or crime, or for a recurring character or series. For library users, there is an option to receive free e-mail alerts when new titles are available matching their search criteria. The current subscribers to booksinprint.com will receive this additional service as complimentary.

INGENTA AND EBSCO

INGENTA <http://www.ingenta.com/> AND EBSCO <http://www.ebsco.com/> have announced that Ingenta plc., will be working with EBSCO on a project to simplify the process for institutions to register their subscriptions to journals. Currently each title has to be individually registered. The new scheme should enable librarians to have immediate access to their subscribed journals purchased through a subscription agent. There are 260 publishers that supply data to Ingenta, 98% of these have agreed to follow this new process.

NETLIBRARY

NETLIBRARY <http://www.netlibrary.com/> have teamed up with Information Science Publishing to provide full text material on research trends within IT. It is available through the Netlibrary interface and covers the latest information on areas such as knowledge management, E-commerce and distance learning. The database is regularly updated and currently contains 2,000 documents.

Internet News

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Further to a previous item on the Information Society, there was a World Summit on the Information Society held in Geneva from the 10th to the 12th December 2003 see: <http://www.itu.int/wsis/>. The summit was held at the initial instigation of the International Telegraph Union (ITU). If, like me, you aren't sure just who the ITU are, the following item from their website may surprise you:

As the world's oldest international organization, ITU can take much of the credit for developing the vast, interconnected web of networks which have grown to become the planet's largest man-made artifact. Established in 1865 to manage the first international telegraph networks, the Union has worked tirelessly to ensure that the latest technological advances have been rapidly integrated into the telecommunication networks of countries all around the world. Over the last 135 years, the Union's mandate has expanded to cover the invention of voice telephony, the development of radiocommunications, the launch of the first communications satellites, and, most recently, the technological convergence that heralds the dawn of a new, telecommunications-based information age. With a membership which includes almost all the world's countries and over 500 private members from the telecommunication, broadcasting and information technology sectors, ITU can boast a long and highly successful track record in developing and managing our telecommunication resources.
<http://www.itu.int/aboutitu/overview/foreward.html>

The Public Library Authority conference in December announced a new three-year action plan that included the development of 'Digital citizenship'. This is to build on the success of the People's Network and is intended to develop national services for information, learning and reading. As part of this development, Government minister Stephen Timms has stated that he is 'very keen' on the idea that every public library should be a Wi-Fi hotspot. It is claimed that 90% of libraries have broadband already, which will aid in the roll-out of Wi-Fi. Even now, according to Intel, there are more hotspots in the UK than in the whole of the rest of Europe put together.

At the same time, a report prepared for the Government (Business in the Information Age: The International Benchmarking Study 2003) <http://www.ukonlineforbusiness.gov.uk/benchmarking2003/index.htm> points to the widespread take-up of ICT by British business. The particular value of the report is that it provides a benchmark comparison against our European competitors and helps to pinpoint best practice, both here and overseas.

Is there a strange smell as you read this newletter? There soon could be if Telewest Broadband approves trials of a new technology add-on – scented emails! While it may sound ‘gimmicky’ at the moment, there is respected research that indicates adding a third sense to the internet will help to humanise cyberspace as smell is one of the most primitive of human communication methods. Advertisers are particularly interested in the technology, imagine viewing a holiday advert and smelling the sea or an alpine meadow. Also mentioned in the article in The Times: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/newspaper/0,,173-1006845,00.html> is the idea of being alerted to emails by the smell of freshly roasting coffee or baking bread... sorry, my mouth's watering just thinking about it, must go!

Intranets and CM

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Just at present I seem to be making a reasonable living sorting out organisation that have found themselves entangled in the tentacles of a content management software (CMS) application for their intranet and/or web site, so perhaps it's time to demolish a few myths about content management, though in no particular order.

We can save money by using open-source software

The software will be free, or nominal cost, but then who is going to pay for all the development work. Not only will the CMS have to be customised for your particular application but you will need to continue to develop the software to meet new information needs. One of the benefits of commercial CMS applications is that product upgrade costs are spread over the entire client base.

Our web agency can build a CMS for us.

Would you ask the garage where your car is serviced to build you a car? I may be pushing the metaphor a little but web agencies do many things well, but building a CMS for a client is not one of them. They may well have one that they use to manage their own site, and perhaps those of customers, but building and continuing to support a product they are selling to someone else is a different proposition.

With a CMS we will easily be able to change our site if we don't get it quite right at the beginning
CMS applications are certainly able to facilitate making changes to a site, but not without a lot of work. If the content metadata is not well thought through then how will the CMS be able to identify the content that needs to be relocated? Major site changes will also mean rewriting all the associated links, and the extent to which the CMS can do this varies quite considerably.

We will be able to add content straight from Word documents

Two myths in one. First the way in which different CMS products handle content being cut and pasted in from Word files needs to be looked at quite carefully. In many cases organisations do not have consistent Word styles, and most CMS products will need consistency to be able to render the document in HTML. If that was not a big enough problem you will then find that the documents are written to be read on paper, and have not been written for the web. There is a big difference in terms of structure, paragraph length and heading consistency.

<http://www.useit.com/papers/webwriting/writing.html> is a good place to start, or have a look at <http://www.writingfortheweb.co.uk/artlist.html> from Malcolm Davison.

A budget for the software has been agreed

But by who, and on what basis. If the IT department has phoned round for a few quotes you have a big problem. As a rough rule of thumb the cost of the consulting work that will be needed to implement the CMS software will be at least the software cost in addition, and for high-end systems that are effectively tool-kits it could be three or four times the basic licence fee. It is also easy to forget about the maintenance fee (typically 20%) and the cost of training.

Once we get content in more quickly intranet hits will increase rapidly

They may do, but for the wrong reason! First adding content to an intranet is only part of the battle. People still have to find it, and that requires a blend of good information architecture, metadata and link management and a search engine. Second, measuring intranet use just by hits as the sole metric is very dangerous. Ideally you should be looking to minimise the number of hits because you have brought the heavily used content up to the top of the intranet hierarchy. Too many organisation just see a CMS as a way of reducing the web-master bottle neck, and end up increasing the total percentage of staff time spent on both contributing and finding relevant content.

We don't need a search engine because the CMS has one built in

The search engine that comes with the CMS is there to enable content contributors to locate content in the repository that they can then repurpose into a new document. Often the functionality is quite limited, and the license only extends to the CMS server. If you want to use the search engine for other purposes you will almost certainly need to upgrade the license.