twice-yearly DLF Forums. Although only members and invited guests can attend, the rest of us can virtually attend by reviewing the many interesting presentations that are available online shortly after the end of the meeting. I won't attempt to list the topic areas of the presentations, which vary widely, but will leave you with the assertion that if you are interested in digital library issues of any stripe, there is likely something of interest here for you. – [*RT]

It's About Time: Research Challenges in Digital Archiving and Long-Term Preservation   Washington, DC: The National Science Foundation and the Library of Congress, August 2003.
http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/index.php?nav=3&subnav=11. - I'm old enough to remember that for a while the preservation of print materials was all the rage. The issue of books crumbling into dust was at the forefront of everyone's awareness within the profession, and at least to some degree, without. Therefore government money to fund print preservation activities was relatively easy to obtain -- particularly for large research libraries. Now, although the print preservation problem has not suddenly disappeared, it is the preservation of digital materials that is all the rage. So it certainly isn't surprising to see this report, which comes out of a workshop co-sponsored by the National Science Foundation and the Library of Congress. If you're involved with digital library research or -- god help you -- in digital preservation itself, this report is essential reading. The rest of us can probably skip it. – [*RT]

LeFurgy, William G.. "PDF/A: Developing a File Format for Long-Term Preservation" *RLG DigiNews* 7(6) (15 December 2003)
http://www.rlg.org/preserv/diginews/diginews7-6.html#feature1. - The number of files in Adobe Acrobat format (also known as PDF for Portable Document Format) is astounding. This file format has been embraced by the U.S. Government, journal and book publishers, and indeed just about anyone who wishes to have more control over how something displays on screen than can be attained by HTML. And although PDF is a somewhat open format (with the specification openly published), it nonetheless remains in the control of a commercial company, and therein lies the preservation rub. "Adobe controls its development and is under no obligation to continue publishing the specification for future versions. The format includes some features that are incompatible with preservation purposes," states the author. Therefore, there is a move afoot, which this piece outlines, to specify a stable subset of the PDF format upon which librarians, archivists, and others can rely as a method to preserve digital information over the long haul. Given the number of PDFs that were created while you were reading this, such a development can only be good news. – [*RT]

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Meetings Reports

Online Information 2003

Each year, for the past very many years, I have found myself in London at the beginning of December for one reason or another and have spent some time at the annual Online Information meeting. In 2003 I had no other reason to be in London but decided that I would 'treat' myself to the full works and attend Online Information for the whole three days. I should add that the organisers, Learned Information and Imark Communications are very supportive in offering press passes which enables attendance at the conference sessions for those, such as myself, editors of library and information science, or related, journals.

The content of Online evolves from year to year, although its format has not changed greatly over the years. There is a fee-paying conference with refereed papers and an exhibition which is basically free for all.

This year the format for the conference was to have one or more keynote talks at the start of each day followed by, usually two, parallel tracks on specific subjects with three or four speakers in each track. In total there were over 60 presentations over the three days, and more than 40 of these appeared in printed proceedings available for full conference delegates; a web version of the proceedings is also available for delegates. Specific topics covered included information architecture (IA), content management (CM), the impact of weblogs, and the future of virtual reference; these complemented hardy favourites such as search tools and techniques, quality searching and networking. I found the standard of the papers this year to be generally high. There were some very 'big' names amongst the speakers.

On the first day, Lynne Brindley, Chief Executive of the British Library presented a paper entitled "Powering the world's knowledge: the future for libraries and information professionals" in which, inter alia, she described the challenges facing the BL in the implementation of the forthcoming legal deposit of electronic publications. Peter Morville, described in the conference book as a "founding father of the field of information architecture" and co-author of a major book on IA, Information Architecture for the World Wide Web, provided a good introduction to this topic for people, like me, for whom it was new.

On the second day another American, Bob Boiko, provided the keynote talk. Boiko, author of the Content management bible, introduced the terms metator and metatorial. Boiko is on the faculty of the University of Washington Information School and also runs a company, Metatorial Services Inc. http://metatorial.com/. On this website a need for a metator is described in the following way: "Overall, metadata needed a type of person who was a cross between an editor, a librarian, and a database administrator to do a good job creating and maintaining metadata."

Linda White, Digital Projects co-ordinator at the Library of Congress was one of the speakers on the final day. She spoke of the experiences in migrating the traditional skills of librarianship into the online environment. One of her comments that I remember was "we need to think of the library as remote and not the users as remote." Not all speakers were from 'over the pond'. There was a good number of papers from Europe. Ones I particularly found interesting were Wouter Gerritsma and Marc E. Loman on implementing portal functionality at Wageningen library in the Netherlands (particularly as in one of their PowerPoint slides the key book on organic farming given was written by a colleague from Aberystwyth!) and Evelind Hutzler from the University of Regensburg in Germany talking about the Electronic Journals Library/Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek.

In addition to the formal presentations there was a number of discussion or question/answer type sessions. One on searching involved acknowledged experts such as Marydee Ojala (editor of Online), Phil Bradley, Danny Sullivan (SearchEngineWatch), Chris Sherman and Gary Price. The organisers reported that some 800 delegates, from countries as far away as Australia, Bahrain, Canada, China and the Philippines attended sessions at the conference. Seating in the main auditorium was very comfortable although some of the other sessions in much smaller rooms were so well attended that many of us ended up sitting on the floor!

The layout of Olympia means that there is quite a walk from the conference area to the exhibition area and so it is not easy to just 'pop-in' to a few stands in between papers. There was an impressive number of exhibitors– 250 or so in all, and the organisers state that there were 11,000 attendees over the three days. As ever, some of the stands were very big and 'flashy', others were smaller and more subdued. For seasoned Online attendees it is always interesting to note which organisations are NOT exhibiting at Online in any one year, and to ponder the reason, as well as, of course to hear of new products from the exhibitors. An impressive addition this year was the number of free sessions (over 100) many by independent experts (i.e. not describing a specific product from an exhibition stand). These sessions covered Information

Masterclasses (in information literacy, weblogs, managing virtual learning environments, collaborative working, tips and tricks of searching), Career talks, Subject focused sessions (e.g. medicine, law, engineering), and Content management. The one I attended on weblogs by Peter Scott at the University of Saskatchewan was very well attended.

So all in all a lot to see and hear about. As with all conferences and meetings the 'content' is important but also meeting people is important. As ever at Online I met some old friends, some old students as well as new people. In particular, as I am involved in the education of library and information science (LIS) professionals I especially enjoyed 'ad hoc' discussions with Swiss and Swedish colleagues also involved in LIS education who I found myself sitting by at various functions.

Many of you reading this may also have been at Online … and perhaps helping on the ever-present and ever-useful UKOLUG help desk. Your experiences will no doubt be very different from mine… there is so much to see, so many people to meet that all attendees have to work out exactly what they wish to see and all will have a different view of the event. For me, the time was well spent. I learnt a lot about new developments and enjoyed meeting people. The Conference Chair and Vice Chair (Martin (White) and Karen (Blakeman), both of good UKOLUG pedigree, and their various committees are to be congratulated on bringing together an impressive collection of speakers that attracted an interesting collection of delegates.

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Perspectives on Information Architecture

Seminar organised by the UK Online User Group with the support of the Asilomar Institute for Information Architecture

CILIP, 3rd March 2004

The main question in my head before the meeting was "What is Information Architecture?". Discussion with other attendees on arrival showed that many others were thinking the same thing. Fortunately, a major theme during the morning was to review and discuss a range of possible answers to this. Martin White, whose idea the meeting was, raised the matter right from the start, and introduced us to AIfIA http://www.aifia.org/. He added another question for us to keep in mind throughout the day: "Is there a role for CILIP and UKOLUG here?".