

about the silo management approach of the company.

### Navigation versus information

The usual format that I come across is a home page which has some navigation in the LH column and perhaps more on the RH side, but the centre is taken up with a picture of the office and news about the organisation. A few years ago I was working for an international organisation that had a graphics team whose sole task was to create a new image for the central section of the intranet every day. Where there is a news component it is often a mixture of news about the organisation from an external perspective and news about the activities of individuals and departments that in the past would have appeared in the staff newsletter, and been ignored. People are very selective about news, and are only interested in it when it has some impact on them. If it does not then it can be a total turnoff, and so a waste of valuable space.

One of the pieces of web design folklore is Peter Cochrane's 'three clicks' rule. With the current scale of web sites and intranets trying to get every piece of content just three clicks away from the home page is insanity. My version of the three clicks 'rule' is that within three clicks of the home page a user should be confident that they are heading in the right direction. This argues for navigation-rich home pages.

A very good home page design I saw a couple of years was on the intranet of Software Spectrum, a US-owned software company. This had three columns headed Our Clients, Our People and Communications. Each subheading had enough third-level headings to illustrate what content was likely to be found there. This was complemented by selected departmental links and very clear global navigation. Another feature of the home page was that the current times in the international offices were presented, which served both to emphasise the global basis of the company and also assist in working out when staff would be in the office. I recall there was also an indication alongside the time to show if the office was closed for a public holiday. All very simple things to do, but the overall effect was to reinforce the corporate culture of having a focus on meeting the needs of customers.

### Home pages and organisation culture

Not only do the home pages have to provide a high usability information architecture but they also set the culture of the organisation. I remember not so long ago being in a company where there was quite a large voluntary redundancy programme being put into operation. On the home page details of the programme could indeed be found on the employee information pages, but were listed after links to the cafeteria, sports clubs and theatre trips. The reason was of

course that this list was organised alphabetically, but staff concerned felt that they were being seen as second-class citizens.

The case is sometimes made that employees do not use the home page to find content on the intranet, but the reality is that they do, or at the very least open the intranet up at the home page before tunnelling into specific content.

### Top down and bottom up

Home page development needs to be managed with more care than is evident in many organisations. A top-down view that reflects corporate objectives and business processes is a good start, but then as the intranet develops in complexity and size there will be a need to look back at the home page and see if it still works. All too often changes in lower levels are force-fitted into the home page, and the first level below the home page. In my view the home page and first level down should be kept under continuous review. It can be quite instructive to ask users to describe the top level structure of your intranet without the aid of the PC! This is where usability testing becomes so important, not only to identify enhancements but also to make the business case for making the changes.

Unfortunately usability testing is usually regarded as an expensive luxury in many organisations, on the basis that 'employees will soon find ways of locating the information that they want, and in any case there is a search engine'. Search engines are important in an intranet, but only in conjunction with other elements that support the findability of content.

Going back to my initial metaphor, would you buy the third edition of a book if the publishers had used the book jacket from the 1st edition, and taped it in place because the current edition was now twice the size of the original, and that in addition neither the contents page or the index had been updated?

## Reference Management

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Following promotion of reference software (see my column in the last issue of eLucidate) and familiarity of the basics of the software (do come to my course on June 23rd) the next steps tend to be making appropriate use of the references.

### Posting references more widely

Posting references onto the web seems to be a fairly difficult area to locate adequate software. There are

very few commercial tools available which can be used to post reference management databases (such as endnote or reference manager) onto the web, especially since the demise (??) of Reference Web Poster (did anyone ever get it to work satisfactorily?!). On trawling the web to find some examples UKOLUG members might wish to pursue I came across Biblioserver. This new web service provides a mix of services and support operations for loading bibliographic data onto the web. Follow this link to a guest column on this service.

Another example is the Shaare Zedek Cancer Pain and Palliative Medicine Reference Database which is a searchable database of endnote references, using some inhouse technical expertise and putting references into the public domain. A very good example of how databases can be posted. Details found at <http://www.chernydatabase.org/>

ISI have launched Reference Manager 11 which allows posting of up to 15 different databases onto the web or an Intranet. Usernames and passwords can be added for security as well as other permissions. Further details from <http://www.adeptscience.co.uk/>

RefWorks is actually a web based reference software tool, supported by Cambridge Scientific Abstracts, which allows you to create a database and cite within word processed documents, from downloaded references. It supports a range of language data as well including Japanese. Several academic organisations in particular have recently subscribed to RefWorks including Loughborough University. Further details from <http://www.refworks.com/>

### Seeing references more widely

Reference visualisation is the "new black" in the reference management world with a number of companies offering visualisation capabilities to display interconnections between key terms and keywords between references. From the ISI stable comes RefViz. RefViz is used with Reference Manager and Endnote to explore references visually for major themes and topics. RefViz can be used to analyse sets of references downloaded from many standard bibliographic databases such as Web of Science or Medline or, just as usefully, with the Endnote libraries or Reference Manager databases. Provided abstracts are put against each reference (something not everyone does....) and you configure the software appropriately the references can be displayed in a range of styles.

The galaxy mode organises references according to how they are related conceptually by showing small document icons to identify the groups created by the software, and small squares to indicate individual documents. Below this is the Reference Viewer, which

shows selected details of the selected group, or document. Click on any reference and the full record pops up. Although RefViz is a separate package to Endnote and Reference Manager if you are trying to get a handle on references already held it is an important development in the reference process. RefViz is also available for Mac machines Further details from

<http://www.adeptscience.co.uk/products/refman/refviz/>

Xrefer Research Mapper is another information visualisation tool which displays records based on search terms and topics. This enables similar visualisation to RefViz above but is based on the content within xrefer, an online ready reference service that provides full-text, aggregated content to academic, public, and corporate libraries. A sample webpage can be found at <http://www.xrefer.com/research/index.jsp>

### Linking references more widely

Endnote and Reference Manager both now support OpenURLs links to locate the full text of listed articles. This will development will certainly provide added value to the reference databases. Such developments are supported by the National Federation of Science Abstracting and Indexing Services (NFAIS) which has issued guidelines with regard to reference linking and its role in enhancing scholarly communication. These principles include

\* Linking between electronic resources owned or licensed by a single entity should be strongly encouraged and widely permitted.

\* Full-text publishers, information aggregators, and abstracting & information services should pro-actively engage in collaborative efforts to link their resources as long as a secure information environment is in place.

\* Information purchasers and users should expect and request broad-based linking capabilities from their information and technology providers in order to maximize the return on their investment in those resources.

For further information check the NFAIS website at [http://www.nfais.org/2003\\_Guiding\\_Princ\\_Ref\\_Linking.htm](http://www.nfais.org/2003_Guiding_Princ_Ref_Linking.htm)

Adhering to these guidelines places reference management at the core of the information profession.