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Systems Librarians Getting Personal

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Systems Librarians Getting Personal

Librarians get creative as well as informative with personal Web pages

Sometime in the middle of 1995, when I was just starting to explore the World Wide Web, somebody told me I had to take a look at Eric Lease Morgan's Web site (<http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/staff/morgan/morgan.html>). As soon as I saw it, I knew why. Morgan is a systems librarian at the North Carolina State University, and his home page looked like the home page I would want to have if I ever had one. It contained practical things about systems librarianship (he maintains an electronic index to electronic journals in library science), links to his writing, and goofy stuff. Furthermore, it looked good.

Many of the systems librarians I know are called upon to be leaders in the rapid move into Web technology. Most of us are involved in maintaining some sort of official Web page for our institutions. To do this, we must constantly be learning new ways of doing things—the Web doesn't sit still. To that end, we take advantage of personal Web pages, which are often provided by our institutions. These pages can be a testing ground for new techniques as well as an outlet for creativity. They also help dispel the notion that computer people have no life outside of their binary codes—even though we are using computers to deliver the message.

Librarians' Personal Pages

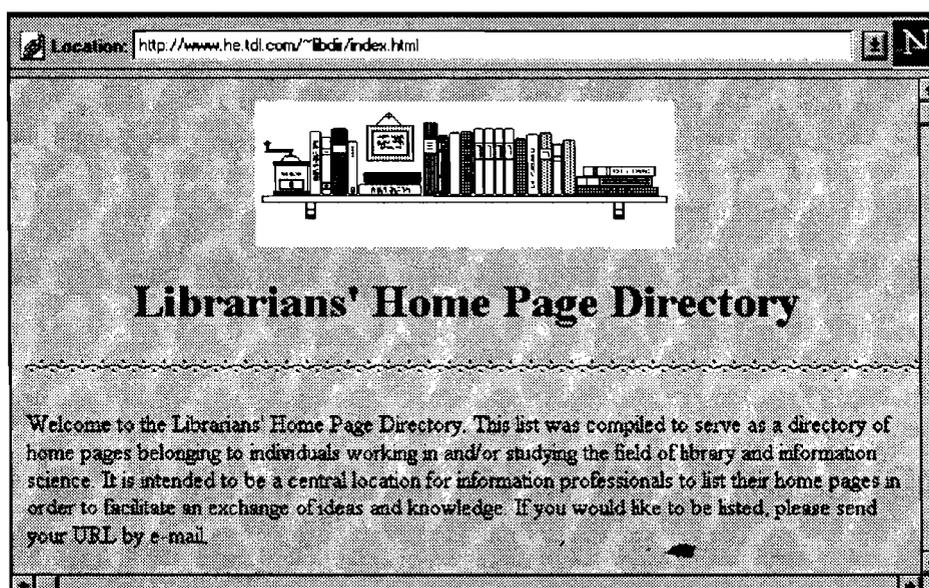
A look at some of the personal home pages of systems librarians reveals a variety of techniques that provide useful links for librarians. These pages are also a jumping-off point for a universe of interests. One of the systems librarians with wide-ranging interests is Laura M. Quilter, electronic services librarian at the University of Illinois at Chicago (<http://www.uic.edu/~lauramd>). Her page branches off into links about feminism, science fiction, and activism, but her special enthusiasm seems to be trees. That

page (with a forest background) launches into a tremendous selection of links to government and environmental information on all kinds of trees and forests.

Another librarian with a very broad selection is Elaine MacLean (<http://juliet.stfx.ca/~emaclean>), a librarian at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia, Canada. She provides links sorted by subject and geography, as well as a useful

able to me in teaching Internet classes when I encounter the inevitable student who says "Yes, the Internet is fun, but what is the practical good of it?" There is also an exhaustive selection of Internet resources and quite a bit about my neighboring state of New Jersey.

David S. Carter from the Internet Public Library (<http://www.sils.umich.edu/~superman>) made "Dave's Home



Systems librarians' Web pages are easy to locate thanks to this specialized directory.

link of the week. She also runs an I Ching reading every week (a Chinese fortune-telling system) with a further link to explain its meaning.

One of the most consistently useful sites over the years has been the work of Karen Schneider (<http://www.bluehighways.com/kitchen.html>). She has been providing hints on Internet use since the days of gophers. The current incarnation of her enterprise is called Karen's Kitchen. As in the past, she supplies a long list of the ways that the Internet has helped out librarians in real-life situations. This section, called "Internet Success Stories," has always been valu-

able to me in teaching Internet classes when I encounter the inevitable student who says "Yes, the Internet is fun, but what is the practical good of it?" There is also an exhaustive selection of Internet resources and quite a bit about my neighboring state of New Jersey.

A famous cartoon said that "On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog." However, when your owner puts your picture on the Web, there's no way to keep your identity secret. Such was the case when Missy Harvey from the Engineering and Science Library at Carnegie Mellon

University (<http://www.library.cmu.edu/usr/missy>) mixed pictures of her dog with links to science and engineering resources on the Web.

Finding other librarians' home pages is easy, thanks to a page called the Librarian's Home Page Directory (<http://www.he.tdl.com/~libdir/index.html>). It lists people alphabetically and by subject.

T. B.'s "Official" Web Page

In July, I was notified that my Web page at NYU had been generated (<http://pages.nyu.edu/~ballard>). I found an empty page with only a title (Terry Ballard's Personal Web Page) and a construction sign. I took out the "personal," which sounded too generic, and changed it to "Terry Ballard's Official Web Page," which makes it sound like I have a sense of humor. Since the page is controlled by my text account, I found that I could do the writing nights and weekends on my link-up at home, and the construction sign disappeared after one day. I could also add graphics by going to the university's graphics lab on my lunch hours to scan pictures.

I added the standard resume and a few of my own favorite, useful links. There is also a quotations gallery with a slightly new twist—I added links to the pages dedicated to the people making the quotes. The heart of my home page is the section of links to my writings—since I have been writing for 30 years, I had a lot of material in the attic. For instance, as part of my master's degree work in education media, I had written a mock TV interview with the obscure Greek philosopher Diogenes the Cynic. In the years since, I have never met a single person who had the slightest interest in Diogenes, but the Web contains a thriving subculture of Diogenes fans, including an elaborate Web page in his honor (<http://www.menagerie.net/LYCEUM/INDEXTM>). My interview became a popular feature on that page.

A similar thing happened with Clark Air Base in the Philippines. I had gone to school there as an eighth-grader but fell completely out of contact with others who

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IAC

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said Susan Homer, assistant system director of Peninsula Library System. "With patrons ranging from the young school student to the business professional using our online services, we require a system that's easy to use for patrons and easy to maintain for staff."

The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (SSHE) will provide SSHE member libraries with access to InfoTrac SearchBank reference databases. Students, faculty, and staff at 14 SSHE colleges and universities throughout the state can tap into InfoTrac SearchBank to research a wide variety of sources cover-

ing scholarly, business, and health disciplines. Access to Expanded Academic ASAP, Business ASAP, and Health Reference Center will allow SSHE members to research popular magazines, specialized industry journals, newspapers, reference books, and pamphlets. Combined, these three databases deliver nearly 3,800 indexed titles and 700 full-text titles for users to search and retrieve.

With this new agreement, SSHE joins the ranks of over 500 leading public and academic libraries throughout North America in providing access to InfoTrac SearchBank, which is indicative of the trend for libraries to offer database access to patrons.

Opinion Technology's National Library

Survey concludes that libraries are transforming themselves to meet the information needs of the electronic generation, contending that libraries intend to participate in a future in which they are a value-added gateway to authoritative and reliable information sources as well as an electronic center for community information.

"We believe that libraries will emerge as the primary electronic supersites serving communities," said Sean Devine, vice president and general manager of IAC's library division. "Our goal at Information Access Company is to bring users complete answers for each search, every time."

IAC offers general reference, business, academic, legal, and health reference

products designed to turn information into answers. IAC's InfoTrac databases provide a multisource approach to research, uniquely incorporating information from periodicals, academic journals, newspapers, pamphlets, encyclopedias, and reference books, and they are accessible on a variety of formats including 24-hour Internet and Web access. These resources serve information seekers worldwide in public, academic, secondary school, and corporate libraries and those using personal computers in the office or home.

Source: IAC, Foster City, CA, 800/227-8431; Fax: 415/378-5369; <http://www.iacnet.com>.



OCLC Support Access Options Expanded to Include the Web

OCLC has announced that its user and network support staff is now available to help with questions about software, online systems functionality, hardware, and telecommunications through the World Wide Web and by e-mail. OCLC has begun providing this alternative support in response to growing demand and international expansion.

According to Rick Bean, manager of OCLC's user support department, use of the Web and e-mail removes barriers of time and distance. "These requests for support will receive the same prompt attention that OCLC users have come to expect from telephone support." Support through the Web is accessible from the OCLC home page (<http://www.oclc.org>) by clicking the support button.

The support home page provides links to OCLC-affiliated U.S. regional networks' Web sites. "Networks are the front lines of support and training for libraries using OCLC products and services," said Bean. "Partnering with OCLC for over 25

years, networks are independent organizations that are developing and enhancing support programs in response to the needs of their members."

The OCLC support home page also provides information on the status of OCLC online systems. The "current system alerts" feature can be used to obtain a description of a problem, the corrective action being taken by OCLC, and any recommended steps users should take when using the affected system.

A FAQ file is located on the page to answer the most frequently asked questions on OCLC products and services. Other features of the support page include technical bulletins and the OCLC participating institutions list, which are both searchable, and numerous online documentation files and forms.

OCLC support staff can now also be reached by e-mail at support@oclc.org. When sending e-mail support messages to OCLC, users should include their name, telephone number, and OCLC holding symbol or account authorization number along with a detailed message.

Over-the-phone support continues to be available Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., Eastern Standard Time.

On Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, support is available for questions related to hardware and telecommunications.

U.S. and Canadian users can reach staff by telephone at 800/848-5800. The toll-free phone number in Mexico is 800/848-5800. International and local users should call 614/793-8682. Fax support remains available at 614/764-2694. Users outside the U.S. may also contact OCLC international divisions or OCLC international distributors for information. Contact information can be found on the support home page.

Source: OCLC, Dublin, OH, 614/764-6000; Fax: 614/764-6096; <http://www.oclc.org>.

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had lived there in 1960. Recently, I found out that there is a thriving Web presence of people who attended school in the Philippines (<http://www.gdma.com/wagner>). As a result of talking to these people, I started putting my memories of this time on a subset of my Web page, accompanied by pictures of the base that were supplied by my father. A few weeks ago, I got a note from a woman who had enjoyed this part of my Web page. Her name sounded familiar. As it turned out, she had been in my homeroom in 1960.

Of all of the reactions to the page, the most rewarding was when my 14-year-old son Bob called up the page in his computer class at school. It caused the kind of sensation that made him a celebrity for a day because he had taken some of the pictures on the main page.

My page is now a lot like the one done by Eric Lease Morgan that had inspired me last year. If you see Morgan's page, though, he has gone off in newer directions with features like a constant video image of his office, so you can see if he's at his desk and won't have to guess if he is available when you want to call him. Like I said, change on the Web never stops.

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