Systems Librarians Getting Personal

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The Systems Librarian

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Librarians get creative as well as informative with personal Web pages

Sometimes in the middle of 1995, when I was just starting to work on the World Wide Web, somebody told me 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 have 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.

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. Quiller, electronic services librarian at the University of Illinois at Chicago (http://www.uic.edu/~lauramd). Her page highlights her interests in science fiction, and activism, but her special enthusiasm seems to be trees. That link of the week. She also runs an I Ching Page called "Diogenes the Cynic." In the years 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.bluehigh ways.com/kitchen.htm). 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 valuable 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.slrl.unich.edu/~superman) made "Dave's Home Page" look like a constructed 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.

Librarians' Home Page Directory

Welcome to the Librarians' Home Page Directory. This list is compiled to serve as a directory of home pages belonging to individuals working as librarians. It is intended to be a central location for information professional to list their home pages in order to facilitate the sharing of ideas and knowledge. Even if you're not a librarian, please read "My Own" by Em.

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

IAC's InfoTrac databases provide a multimedia 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.


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said Susan Homer, assistant system direc- tor of Peninsula Library System. "With par- ents 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 covering scholarly, business, and health disciplines. Access to Expanded Academic ASAP; Business ASAP, and Health Reference Center will allow SSHE mem- bers to research popular magazines, spe- cialized industry journals, newspapers, reference books, and pamphlets. Com- bined, these three databases deliver near- ly 3,000 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 trans- forming themselves to meet the informa- tion needs of the electronic generation, conceding that libraries intend to partici- pate 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 serv- ing communities," said Jean 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 pro- vide a multimedia approach to research, uniquely incorporating information from periodicals, academic journals, news- papers, pamphlets, encyclopedias, and refer- ence 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.


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OCLC Support Access Options Expanded to Include the Web

OCLC has announced that its user network support staff is now available to help with questions about software, online systems functionality, and telecommunications through the World Wide Web and by e-mail. OCLC has begun providing this alternative support in response to growing demand for 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,” said Bean. “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 institution 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. The OCLC support home page is now a lot like the one done by Eric Lease Morgan that had inspired 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 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, you can see if he’s at his desk and won’t have to guess if he’s available when you want to call him. Like I said, change on the Web never stops.

Terry Ballard is automation coordinator at the New York University School of Law Library. He can be reached by e-mail at ballard@turing.law.nyu.edu or via his Web page at http://pages.nyu.edu/ballard.

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