ONLINE NORTHWEST 1999: Technology In Libraries In The Pacific Northwest

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Introduction

The 16th annual meeting of Online Northwest, sponsored by the Interinstitutional Library Council Online Coordinators Committee of the Oregon State System of Higher Education, was held on February 12, 1999 in the Sheraton Airport Hotel in Portland, Oregon. The themes of this year's conference were creating information on the World Wide Web (WWW), finding someone else's creation on the Web and lastly supplying that information to patrons.

Keynote Address

The keynote speaker was Reva Basch of Aubergine Information Services, author of *Researching Online for Dummies* (Dummies Press, 1998). Her talk, "Online Research and the Web: Order Out of Chaos?," posited that technology surrounds us; that it will be accessible and intuitive to use, and that some forms of information-gathering, at least, will be much easier and more powerful.

Basch began by stating that the distinction between traditional online services and the World Wide Web is growing increasingly indistinct, and that even the biggest and most powerful search engine cannot keep up with the phenomenal growth of the Web. Information professionals are coping with change on every front: the old rules and roles no longer apply, and the old tools are inadequate. Despite the impression that chaos and confusion reign in the online realm, there are signs of order and stability emerging.

Basch presented three rubrics to describe the state of the Web: *differentiation, aggregation* and *chaos*. One major source of confusion with the Web and Web search tools has been the competing claims of individual search engines to be the best. These sites have turned to *branding* to capture market share, which means distinguishing oneself from one's competitors especially by adding real value in a unique way. Fueled by the need to differentiate, the leading Web search engines are getting "smarter" in various ways. For example, the site Ask Jeeves supplies "packaged" answers for common types of queries, thereby developing a knowledge base of frequently asked questions and answers.

Lack of aggregation has been one of the Web's biggest shortcomings as a research environment. This is changing, as evidence of aggregation is everywhere in formal institutional gateways such as FedWorld, collections of subject-specific pointers such as Statistical Resources on the Web, virtual reference collections, and Web interfaces to familiar online entities such as Dow Jones Interactive, Dialog, and Lexis-Nexis. Aggregation is closely related to *consolidation*; the end result, for good or ill (or, more likely, both), is fewer unique resources and greater standardization of interfaces and search protocols.

Basch identified several trends that she thinks will help information professionals find a way out of that chaos and into "order." Basch sees this chaos turning toward an integration where the desired unit of information could be located, quickly and directly, without regard for the online service or the particular database or publication in which it resided. Integration of online content sources is moving us in that direction. Integration takes several forms. She cited XML as a possibility of turning Web pages into truly searchable database records.

She also spoke of how technology is becoming more personal in the form of iMac and Furby. She concluded that information professionals do not have to worry about their careers because, as her colleague Melinda Scott of Chase Manhattan Bank said to her, "Now everyone wants to know about the Internet. It's like we're the ones giving out the shots in an anthrax community." (See http://www.well.com/user/reva/onlinenw.html for bullets from her address.)

Session One

The conference was divided into four sessions, each consisting of about six presentations. Session One featured a panel of four

library directors from both academic and public libraries and dealt with issues regarding the management of electronic resources. The moderator of this stated that managing electronic resources involves dealing with user perception, pricing, evaluating the performance of the product and staff burnout.

J.Q. Johnson, of the University of Oregon, presented a paper on Cascading Style Sheets (CSS); he described the basics of CSS and how the major browsers support (or do not support) CSS features. CSS specifications were established in 1996 and are only now being really used by Webmasters because the two major browsers do not fully support the CSS specifications. Also, there has been a dearth of tools aimed specifically at using CSS. Cascading Style Sheets were designed to clean up HTML syntax and separate specification of visual appearance from the logical function of text. However, both Netscape and Internet Explorer produce different results from the same set of rules and still do not properly follow rules of inheritance. Johnson suggested that one should keep one's audience in mind when deciding whether to try CSS or not. Many people still use older browsers that do not support CSS. In addition, he suggested formatting Web pages with traditional methods and then using CSS so the Web pages "degrade" well. He stated that a tool called Dreamweaver was better than FrontPage for implementing even simple Cascading Style Sheets.

Three corporate librarians (one from Nike, one from Intel and one from Tektronix) described their corporate Intranets and how important teamwork is for sharing information (see http://www.sla.org/chapter/cor). The librarian from Intel could only show two screen captures from her corporate site her legal department only allowed these. The Nike Website, the flashiest of the three, was for designers. The Tektronix Intranet was the least visually appealing, at least from the few screen captures shown. Overall, the presentation did not offer much beyond making the point that collaboration is useful for creating a successful Intranet.

Dolores Judkins from Oregon Health Sciences University spoke of using the Internet to obtain health information. Judkins suggested that the information consumer should question the authority, currency and objectivity of the health information. She also stated that any information you find should be discussed with your health care provider. She discussed print, online databases and Websites devoted to health. Websites can be found at http://www.ohsu.edu/women/consumer.htm

Three members from Multnomah County Library's School Corps demonstrated various methods of presenting online library resources to K-12 students. The School Corps consists of five professional librarians who work with teachers, media specialists and school library staff. The School Corps is an outreach program whose mission is to connect teachers and students to the information resources of the public library. School Corps services include library card promotions and training in the library's technology resources, including the library's online public access catalog, text-based Magazines Online and Web-based SearchBank article databases and the library's Web resources.

Session Two

In Session Two, Wayne Perryman of Humboldt State University made a presentation on using the Web to make course reserve materials available. He suggested that if a library has enough technical know-how and sufficient equipment, it can build its own electronic reserves solution such as the one at Humboldt State.

Bob Felsing of the University of Oregon presented a paper on the multilingual library workstation. Libraries that lack foreign language resources can provide Web-based materials in foreign languages. He stated that Internet Explorer version five beta two supported languages and demonstrated it by showing a union list of Japanese serials. Internet Explorer supports downloadable fonts such as simplified and traditional Chinese, which are freely available from Microsoft. (A Web version of his presentation can be found at http://libweb.uoregon.edu/asia/online/speak.htm)

Stephen Mosley, from Oregon State University, gave a presentation entitled "Putting Databases on the Web: An Overview of Principles and Possibilities with Allaire ColdFusion Application Server." According to Mosley, the increased demand for dynamic and scalable Web-based applications has led to a proliferation of proprietary Web-development products such as ColdFusion. ColdFusion does not require elaborate technical skills to produce database-to-Web products. One has to bear in mind that a database, regardless of which product one uses, requires careful planning. Mosley demonstrated two sample ColdFusion databases, an online professional development system and an online statistics and demographic data system. (This is available at http://forums.orst.edu/db2web/)

Sheryl Steinke delivered a paper on the Oregon School Library Information System (OSLIS) (http://www.open.k12.or.us/oslis). The purpose of OSLIS is to provide cost-effective access to resources, curriculum-based value-added products and assist Oregon students in becoming information literate citizens. Steinke stated that the first OSLIS grant was written in 1997 with representation from various Oregon agencies and consortia. OSLIS began in January 1998 with

18 secondary schools in the state of Oregon as a pilot project utilizing various databases via the Internet (such as General Reference Center, Health Reference Center and Super Tom).

Eleanor Fye from the Claim Practices Center, Inc., Austin, Texas, delivered a paper on "Roadside Attractions: Mapping the Information Highway." She spoke of integrating print media and electronic media and the use of concept mapping to facilitate the use of both. She stated that the conceptual map begins at the point where the patron enters the library. Three areas can be mapped: the methods by which patrons are going to accomplish their objects, the structure of resources available to them and the criteria that can be used to evaluate those resources. There are seven categories by which one can outline research methodology: purpose, location, appraisal, formulation, recording, presentation and evaluation. Concept mapping can be a way to help those who don't necessarily ask for help.

Carol McGeehon, from the Douglas County (Oregon) Library System, presented a paper on "Techno-stress: Practical Advice for the New Millennium" (see http://www.co.douglas.or.us/library/technostress.htm for a Web-based copy of the presentation). Techno-stress occurs when one is not able to adapt to new technologies, especially computer technology. McGeehon stated that we need to take control of technology and remember that it is a tool. She suggested that one way to cope is to decide which technologies one needs to learn and which can be passed.

Session Three

Session Three featured a presentation entitled "Faculty and Librarian Collaboration for Distance Learner Success: A Tailored Web Project." The presentation had a panel consisting of a librarian, a student and a professor discussing the Community College Leadership Program (CCLP) at Oregon State University. This collaboration produced a Web site to meet the research needs of students in a graduate level class.

Abigail Elder and Eric White from the Salem Public Library talked about security issues in online databases in public libraries. The Salem Public Library used to provide patrons with databases on CD-ROM. However, more and more databases are available via the Internet, which means libraries have to provide Internet access. Libraries then have the problem of patrons using these personal computers for email, chat and Web browsing. To deal with these issues, libraries need to implement acceptable use policies. Also, they need to create and enforce fair and effective procedures. If a patron is using a computer for its non-primary use, she or he should be asked to leave. Finally, security measures should be implemented on public PCs using security software such as Grand Corporation's Fortres101. Fortres101 prevents patrons from deleting Windows or changing the desktop wallpaper to something pornographic.

Laura Zeigen and Janet Crum from Oregon Health Sciences University made a presentation on library applications of XML. The talk was more one of a general introduction to XML than of library-specific use. XML is a language that can be used to create customized markup languages. The tags one creates can be used to specify what kind of data they were marking up. They showed a sample XML page that consisted of an interview with a doctor from Portland, Oregon. The name of the interviewee was tagged with <INTERVIEWEE>. Unlike HTML, XML does not mix content and display information. The actual specifications for displaying XML tags are found in a stylesheet. The disadvantage to using XML is that it is more complex than HTML and there is no real support for it yet in the major browsers. The only browser that supports it at the moment is Internet Explorer version five beta two. Their Website is http://www.ohsu.edu/bicc-Library/staff/crumj/XML

"Web Graphics for Dummies and Smarties: A Review of Web Graphic Software Packages" was presented by Jim Rible of Southern Oregon University. In this presentation, he covered Macromedia Fireworks, Adobe ImageStyler, Adobe ImageReady and Netstudio Corporation's NetStudio. Fireworks comes with a large collection of clip-art and is aimed at non-Web designers. ImageReady is a watered-down version of Photoshop and is similar to Fireworks. Rible referred to ImageStyler and NetStudio as "dummy" tools. They come with pre-designed graphics and styles and include Javascript rollover buttons. Rible prefers Macromedia's Fireworks because it gives him enough ease of use and flexibility to edit graphics. Adobe ImageStyler is his second choice since it can create Javascript rollovers and it optimizes graphics.

Linda Pierce from Gonzaga University spoke on "Ethical Questions in the Information Age." She pointed out that the current American Library Association code of ethics, written in 1995, does not address technology or an electronic environment. Technology brings with it ethical problems about ownership of information which is different from traditional print media. Who owns information from the Internet, who controls it and who profits from it?

Linda Absher and Connie Shearer, both from Sequent Computer Systems, presented a paper entitled "MySCEL: The Intranet at Sequent Computer Systems." SCEL stands for Sequent Corporate Electronic Library. It contains over 21,000 items which are indexed via metadata tags. Some of the required metadata fields are author, publisher, subject heading, document type and

security level. Users can search for documents via the MySCEL homepage. If the user cannot find something, he or she can submit a request for a librarian to find the document. The librarian not only finds the document, but also details how she or he found it. Recently Sequent made this system partially available for Sequent partners.

Session Four

Session Four began with "Soundbytes: Building a Security Awareness Program," presented by Kathryn Lawder, Oregon Health Sciences University (OHSU). She described the creation of a Security Awareness Program at OHSU. Eighty percent of security mishaps are from authorized users, and 90 percent of those are unintended. Security is important. (See http://www.open.org/library/onlinenw)

Kathleen Forsythe and Diana Brooking, both from the University of Washington, gave a paper entitled, "Metadata: Why Should We Care?" Metadata are information about an object that lets users know about the object's existence or characteristics without having to examine the object itself. Unfortunately, there are no standards for metadata and they are limited to localized products. Examples were drawn from the University of Washington's Digital Library Initiative. Their Website is http://content.lib.washington.edu/metadata/

Rod Miller, from the Fort Vancouver Regional Library in Washington State, gave a paper on "Managing the Library Internet PC without Librarians: The Fort Vancouver Regional Library Experience." Miller showed a picture of Internet workstations his library had set up to avoid making public what patrons were viewing. The local paper proclaimed that the library was providing peep show booths at taxpayer expense. He covered how they set up a PHAROS server to validate users. The library allows for unlimited searching, filtered searching, and guided searching. This allows parents to exercise what their children access at the public library. (His library's home page can be found at http://www.fvrl.org)

A group of librarians from the Oregon Health Sciences University and two representatives from Pacific Intermedia presented "The Virtual Learning Center." With a grant from the Department of Energy, a program was begun to test and deploy a Web-based course production tool to serve a new School of Nursing doctoral program. No knowledge of HTML is needed to use the software. The finished product is run on a Netscape enterprise server and uses an Oracle-based database for the storage of course materials.

Dale Vidmar, a librarian from Southern Oregon University, presented a paper on "Darwin on the Web: The Further Adventures and Evolution of Search Tools and Cybersearching." He spoke about Internet search tools and likened it to Darwin's theory of evolution: the fittest survive. His presentation was based on his Website devoted to search tools, which can be found at http://www.sou.edu/library/cybrary/search.htm

The final presentation, "From Chaos to Order: Bibliographic Software," by Sara Brownmiller and Katy Lenn, the University of Oregon, discussed bibliographic software such as ProCite and EndNote.

Summary

With over 450 in attendance, the conference was deemed a success by many who returned their conference surveys. The conference themes reflect the fact that, as more and more databases previously available only on CD-ROM become accessible over the Internet, the Web is increasingly more central to librarians. This change affects public, academic and corporate librarians alike, as is indicated by the spectrum of presenters and attendees at this year's meeting. The conference's Website may be found at http://www.ous.edu/onlinenw

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