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Are we now webliographers?

Much ink has been, and is still being spilt over what many of us, as professionally-qualified librarians, should call ourselves. The latest angst I have read has appeared in the Australian version of the *One Person Library* — a newsletter driven by that guru of one-person librarians in North America: Guy Saint Clair. But it is not Saint Clair who is spilling the ink this time. It is a number of Australian librarians.

What's in a name I wonder? Did I like the name my parents chose for me when I was a little girl? Emphatically *no*, particularly as they decided to spell it like a boy's name. But as I grew older — at the rosy age of say nine years — I was glad my name was spelt like a boy's and I soon forgot all about this great shame in my life.

So what has all of this to do with Webliography? Carolyn Kotlas's recent article, *Observations of 'webliographer'* which appeared in the February 1997 issue of the Special Libraries Association's *Information Outlook*, suggests that she, as a former bibliographer, is enthusiastically embracing webliography. And so am I, though perhaps not in the same sense as Carolyn Kotlas.

If libraries are a web of information, as our Australian Library Week 1997 slogan states, then what are we who are associated with libraries? I don't share Carolyn's passion for compiling and collecting bibliographies, but my bibliographical skills are paramount as I surf the Internet and crawl around the Web.

It is just as well I don't have time to be a professional Internet surfer; goodness knows I now find that my many memberships to information lists, as well as delving into the vagaries of the world wide web take up time in my day previously spent doing other (more productive?) things. But I find this Internet activity essential to my professional life. And I find my library and records professional background, education

and training, essential to being an organised Internet surfer. Ask my colleagues — if they can't find a message, they contact me. I am testing my e-mail software's capacity to create and assist in the organisation of my message files. I am currently into column three, with sub-menus for some dozen or so of these headings. And I add and delete messages and files, daily. I cannot boast the same quantity of bookmarks for URLs as I tend to keep only those vital to my current information seeking needs (for example, the ALIA Home page!)

The need to communicate plays an important part in my professional life and I have found the power of e-mail astounding. Many of my students now communicate with me via this medium — it gives me, and them, a more substantive record of our transaction than does a phone call. And I find it far less invasive of my personal and workplace space — how often do we interrupt a vital conversation to answer the phone? Do we do the same with an e-mail message? I doubt it.

Carolyn Kotlas, like those of us who surf, has found that our search and retrieval skills learned for on-line database searching do not always apply in the world wide web environment. This makes teaching Web searching a lot of fun for the students and the teacher.

Most of us now realise that we cannot ignore these new information technologies and I have read your letters of appreciation for our Association's web site, ALIANet, and for Kerry Webb's pages in *inCite*, as efforts to keep you up-to-date with these changes.

What a fascinating profession we belong to. Little did I know that when I surfed Sydney's northern beaches as a youngster and collected shells to be meticulously catalogued and filed, that I would be a surfer of a different kind in my later life. I'm quite happy to remain a librarian who uses her education, training and skills in many ways in the electronic environment. ■