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## Above and beyond

If you have ever wished for an alerting service for new online databases, then your wish has come true with the launch of the Virtual Acquisition Shelf & News Desk by Gary Price of George Washington University. Gary is the exceptionally hardworking librarian who brings you Direct Search, Fast Facts, Streaming Media, NewsCenter and a range of other useful web gateways (all of which are accessible from the new site). The Virtual Acquisition Shelf is an announcement service for mostly 'Invisible Web' material — new databases on a range of different topics. The site is updated weekly, so is worth stopping by frequently to see what's new there. Resources tend to be mainly North American, but there is always something of more general interest; for instance, the recent headline — Hoover's Adds Dun & Bradstreet Lookup Service. [<http://resourceshelf.blogspot.com/>]

### Finding tool for newspapers

The NorthernLight search engine [<http://www.northernlight.com>] has added newspaper search functionality to its arsenal. Papers indexed include the *New York Times* and more than a hundred other papers from the Knight Ridder/Tribune Business News service. If you want to search for papers, limit your search to the Special Collection. This service now indexes 7100 journals and research reports as well and will provide a copy of articles from the collection for a fee. Because newspapers are also in the Special Collection, you would need to pay a fee to see the full article. However, there is no charge if you simply want to use the database to identify articles.

### As one door closes, another opens

The big news lately for virtual reference librarians has been the reported shutdown of *Encyclopaedia Britannica's* free web service <http://www.britannica.com/>. This will be hard for libraries of all kinds as the online service was fast, easy to use and comprehensive. With shrinking advertising revenues, many sites such as Britannica and the popular online magazine [salon.com](http://salon.com) are finding free is not the way to go. Details of Britannica's new fee-based service are still being finalised but it will most probably take the form of a subscription service for its online content. For those in need of a replacement online encyclopaedia, Project Bartleby offers the newly updated (2001) *Columbia Encyclopedia*. Full-text searching is now faster,

and there are more than 17 000 biographical entries. [<http://www.bartleby.com/65/>]

### And another ...

Luckily, Bloomsbury is another publisher still in giving-it-away mode. Some Bloomsbury publications have been available and searchable for some time via [xrefer http://www.xrefer.com/](http://www.xrefer.com/), but Bloomsbury is also making selected publications such as the *Dictionary of English literature*, *Biographical quotations*, *Bloomsbury thematic quotations* and the *Guide to human thought* available through its own site, the Bloomsbury Research Centre. As new titles are published, they will be added to the series, and searches can be conducted across existing content as entries are all cross-linked. [[http://www.bloomsburymagazine.com/ARC/Arc\\_home.asp](http://www.bloomsburymagazine.com/ARC/Arc_home.asp)]

### Stargazing

Skywatchers will enjoy having a look around YourSky [<http://www.fourmilab.ch/yoursky/>], which is a virtual planetarium on the web. If you enter your nearest city location, you can use Horizon Views to see images of the constellations present in the sky at a certain time of day (and then appear knowledgeable when you point them out). You can use the Sky Map to produce astronomical maps by entering time and date, and the location from which you are observing the sky, for example your latitude and longitude. If, like me, you would not have a clue what those might be, you can select the nearest city from a list of names. You can also select certain planets or stars to gaze at.

### Talking heads

*The Economist* magazine is now offering video grabs on current topics. For those who prefer to see and hear their news rather than read it, the E-Vision site could be a promising one. Site news sections include world, business, science and technology, art and culture, and interviews. The interview section had an eclectic range when I visited — Peter Singer, Arthur Schlesinger and the chairman of NASDAQ, among others. Most segments are about five minutes long and can be viewed via Windows Media Player or with Real Player. There are links to related *Economist* sites. [<http://www.economist.tv>]

### Always fair weather

The good news just keeps on coming for family history researchers. The new UK Family

History Online [<http://www.familyrecords.gov.uk>] website provides very easy access to UK family history sites on the web. These include links to the places where records of interest to family historians are held, for example the General Register Office for Scotland and the Scottish Archives, and the Public Record Office for Northern Ireland. There are also links to Welsh records and records from the India Office. It is possible to click on links for records by type, for example birth, death and marriage records, wills, parish and military records, censuses, migration and adoption records, and so on. There are links to news of latest additions and guides to performing this kind of research online. All in all, this is a very easy-to-use and nicely presented site.

#### Copyright changes for educational institutions

Most librarians will already be aware that the *Copyright Act 1968* was recently amended to cover new technologies that affected copyright. The changes to the law came into effect on 4 March this year and affect educational institutions in particular. The Copyright Council has produced a website specifically for educational institutions grappling with these changes. The site answers a set of questions such as 'What are the changes?', 'Which licence do you need?' and 'When and how do the new licences start?' If you are unsure of what you can copy under the new laws, have a good look at the site. [[http://www.copyright.com.au/edu\\_digital\\_update.htm](http://www.copyright.com.au/edu_digital_update.htm)]

#### Digital Oz

The US Library of Congress has had a lot of coverage in this column for its digital initiatives, so it seems only fair to mention the National Library of Australia's contribution as well. The PADI project (Preserving Access to Digital Information) is a subject gateway to digital preservation resources. It also includes a news and discussion forum, padiforum-l, which interested people can join. The topics covered on the site include rights management (which covers copyright and preservation issues), data documentation and standards (which includes metadata), formats and media (for example, audiovisual material and networked digital material, including websites) and digital libraries. [<http://www.nla.gov.au/padi/>]

Anyone interested in this site should probably also visit the World Intellectual Property Organization. [<http://www.wipo.int>]

#### It's, like, slang

The pseudodictionary is more a fun site than a scholarly endeavour, but you could while away the odd moment here when you feel you need a break. It's a dictionary of slang, made-up words and colloquialisms, some of which might make it into real dictionaries further down the track. It includes terms such as 'screenager', which describes the generation that lives its life glued to a television screen or monitor. Users are invited to submit their own words or phrases to the site. See the rest of the terms at <http://www.pseudodictionary.com/>.

#### Farewell Deja, hello Google

Deja, the USENET search tool, has now been taken over by the search engine Google. Google Groups, as it is now called, has a much better interface than Deja had in its last moments. The front page, which is still in beta, lists the categories of newsgroups available, for example alt, rec, sci, biz, soc, while the Advanced Search allows word or phrase searching and allows you to search for a particular author, group or subject line. You can also narrow searches down by date or by language. According to Google, the USENET archive includes more than 500 million messages, and entries date back to 1995. This is also a big improvement. Before it sold out to Google, Deja was supplying access to only the latest six months or so of newsgroup discussions. [<http://groups.google.com>]

#### Are we in the war business?

Most libraries are fairly peaceful places, but we may be victims of attacks all the same. Think e-mail viruses. Think hackers. Think denial of service attacks. These things affect what we do and we need to keep ourselves well informed about them. The Information Warfare Site [<http://www.iwar.org.uk>] is a UK-based, online resource on a range of subjects from information security to information operations and e-commerce, with an emphasis on offensive and defensive information operations. You can find a range of materials, such as documents, articles and online journals, on topics such as computer security and crime and espionage. There are also links to news stories on cyberthreats and anyone interested can join the discussion forum. ■

This column  
[with URL links]  
can be found at:



<http://www.alia.org.au/incite>

Contributions and suggestions for this column are always welcome. Please contact Belinda Weaver via e-mail.

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