# Leading the change

## A report on the Internet Librarian '98 conference

by Michelle Mach

More than 2,400 librarians and information managers, including exhibitors and more than 150 presenters, participated in the second annual Internet Librarian conference in Monterey, California, from November 1–5, 1998.

During the full conference, participants attended sessions from three simultaneous tracks. These tracks covered both the activities of Internet librarians (creating sites, learning, searching, digitizing collections, and managing) and the technology they use (metadata and Web tools, virtual services, trends, and intranets). In addition, many participated in the two days of preconference workshops or the day-long "Internet@School" session for K–12 librarians, browsed more than 85 exhibits, and networked with colleagues at the "Dine Around Town" expeditions and at the first Internet Librarian Golf Classic.

### It takes teamwork

At the opening session, "Internet Librarians in Action," Dorothea Coccoli Palsho, president of Dow Jones Interactive Publishing, spoke about the need for librarians and vendors to work together, as well as the need for increased teamwork within and across departments. "People's jobs are too small for their spirits," said Palsho.

The selection of speakers throughout the conference underscored this team effort with roughly equal contributions from both sides. Describing the "seismic shift" in the information world, Palsho advised the audience to "lead the change, don't manage it." She continued, "Shun the incremental and go for the big leap." Throughout the conference, presenters demonstrated that they were already taking this advice to heart, highlighting future trends with practical advice for the present.

### Legal topics

A session titled "Get Real! Legalities and the Realities of Web/Net Use" presented an overview of recent legislation, court cases, and licensing issues affecting libraries. Speakers Bob Simons, a former information industry attorney, Stephanie Ardito, of Ardito Information & Research, Inc., and Carol Ebbinghouse, of Western State University College of Law, outlined several events to a packed room, including the Ryan v. CARL Corporation case, the "Digital Millennium Copyright Act," and "click-through" ("click here if you agree to these terms") licenses.

The legislation that provoked the most comments from the audience was the Uniform Commercial Code, article 2, section B (UCC2B), legislation potentially more influential than copyright law. Still in draft format, UCC2B would harmonize the state laws for commercial transactions and streamline the

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process of licensing software. Unlike other legislation, it groups librarians, freelance authors, and vendors together as merchants. In the extreme case, UCC2B could require reference staff to offer a disclaimer when answering a reference question and sign formal contracts with users to avoid litigation. The latest draft of UCC2B dated August 1, 1998, is available on the Web at http://www.law.uh.edu/ucc2b/.

### Metadata issues

In the session, "Metadata Issues in Digital Libraries," Roy Tennant, of the University of California, Berkeley, presented an overview of metadata, a structured description of an object. In addition to deciding what elements to capture and storage format to use, librarians need to decide whether to provide access at the collection or individual object level.

The Online Archive of California (http://sunsite2.berkeley.edu/oac/) provides access at the collection level, meaning that while less metadata is required, access to individual objects in the collection is denied. In contrast, the Digital Image Catalog (http://sunsite.berkeley.edu./ImageCatalog/) permits access at the individual object level.

Initiatives worth watching include the Dublin Core (http://purl.org/metadata/dc/), the Making of America II (http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/moa2/), and the Library of Congress National Digital Library Program (http://www.loc.gov/).

### Access to all

Librarians interested in providing access to electronic materials for users outside the physical library learned about the latest techniques in the presentation "Authenticating and Authorizing: Providing Access to Information to Remote Library Users" by Marshall Breeding of Vanderbilt University.

Breeding discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the three main authentication methods currently in use: IP source address filtering, proxy servers, and credential-based systems such as passwords and digital certificates.

While IP filtering is currently the most widely used method, Breeding concluded that it is inadequate for the next generation of Web access and another rapidly evolving infrastructure will replace it.

### The Y2K emergency

The much-hyped year 2000 or Y2K problem was discussed in the session "Year 2000: Are you ready?," presented by Hope Tillman of Babson College. Tillman stressed the universal nature of this problem stating, "If you don't know whether you have problems ahead, you have a problem."

While the primary causes of the Y2K problem are dates expressed in a six-digit format (mm/dd/yy) rather than an eight-digital format (mm/dd/yyyy), Y2K is also problematic as a leap year. This problem will not be over on December 31, 1999, but it is one that will last several years, as other problematic dates exist like 9/9/99 and 2/29/00. Tillman advised librarians to fix "mission critical" applications, keep potential litigation in mind, and ask for Y2K compliance statements when purchasing items—new products are not necessarily compliant.

### Teaching the Net

While many sessions focused on emerging technologies, the human element was not forgotten. In the learning track, the audience often laughed with recognition as the presenters from academic and corporate libraries shared some universal truths about Web instruction including students' popular refrain: "It must be there—it's the Internet!" Corporate librarians offered tips on "triage training" at the point and time of need, while academic librarians demonstrated an online information literacy course and spoke about the special needs of Generation X students. Practical tips offered by the speakers included using templates to modify general materials for reuse and using Web pages like Search Engine Watch (http://www.searchenginewatch.com/) to keep up with rapid changes in search engines.

Overall, the Internet Librarian Conference was exhilarating with ideas so innovative that they demanded new vocabulary—"bread crumbing" (finding your path on Internet), "smog data" (the amount of use a particular article gets), and "academic infotainment." *Information Today* published the conference proceedings and their Web site (http://www.infotoday.com) contains links to many presentations. This conference confirms that librarians are leading the change in the ever-expanding world of Web. ■

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