# IR research orgy to be held in Glasgow

**For many international IR researchers this September is going to mean Glasgow. That is when Glasgow University's IR group is holding a major IR Festival as part of the Department of Computer Science's general research festival stretching from July to September.**

The point of the *IR fest* is to get as many researchers as possible together for a time to interact, work on ideas, and foster collaborations. Less formal and longer lasting than a conference, it will provide an opportunity to work freely in an international research environment. Participants will come and go as they please, spending anything between a few days and a few weeks in Glasgow. The computer science department is providing space and equipment and some funding to cover the travel and accommodation expenses of invited speakers. Funding is also being provided by the Idomeneus European network of excellence and The Computer Journal. At the same time the members of the IR group in Glasgow will do whatever they can to make it a socially as well as an intellectually stimulating time. Glasgow is a lively and interesting city and, quite cleverly, this year's Edinburgh Festival has been timed to coincide with the IR fest. Couple that with its proximity to the breathtaking Highlands of Scotland and it's almost worth making this your summer holiday.

A number of more formal activities will

# European IR summer school bursaries available

**The 2nd European summer school in information retrieval (ESSIR) will take place from the 3rd to the 8th of September at the Computing Science Department of the University of Glasgow. Bursaries are available for young researchers.**

The school is aimed at those starting out in the field of information retrieval, and will cover a wide range of subjects. Each course will be taught by IR researchers who are regarded as experts in their field.

Planned courses include IR models, architecture/implementation, natural language processing for IR, user interfaces, IR

# Colloquium prize winners

**For the first time at the IRSG colloquium a prize was presented to the best speaker. The winner's name was Mark and he's from Glasgow. Bit predictable really. Not that there's any hint of foul play of course, it's just that Mark Sanderson is such a damn fine speaker.**

Sponsored by The Computer Journal, the prize was a year's free submission to the journal and a quaich (a traditional Scottish communal drinking cup). The prize was awarded on the basis of votes by the delegates, although there were suggestions that some normalisation should be done to make up for the fact that some speakers

*Mark Sanderson adds to his quaich collection*

## Colloquium prize winners

(continued from front page)

were in parallel sessions whilst others had the benefit of a much larger audience. However, nobody could come up with a sensible normalisation function and, in a magnificent display of IR ad hoc-ery, it was agreed to let people 'vote with their feet'. As it happened, Mark and Cuna, who were voted first and third, had both been on at the same time, so it seems that the decision was correct and our whole approach to science was vindicated.  The results were:

1. Mark Sanderson
2. Khursid Ahmad
3. Cuna Ekmekcioglu

A colloquium report is on page 3

*Khursid and Cuna both seemed mightily pleased with the result*

# IRSG 'membership cards' available

As you may know, the BCS IRSG is a co-operating society for the ACM SIGIR conferences.  This means we advertise their conference and distribute the call for participation.  In return, IRSG members get ACM rates at the conference.

The problem is we do not have any way of proving membership.  After John Lindsay's suggestion I have arranged for cards to be produced as proof of membership.

For proof of membership please send:
- Your name
- Home address
- Date you joined the BCS IRSG (i.e. when did you start getting the newsletter)

together with 10 pounds (to cover costs and admin) to:

BCS IR SG Membership Proofs
Mark Dunlop
Computing Science Dept
University of Glasgow
Glasgow G12 8QQ

A card will be sent out together with a receipt for your payment.  Cards will be dated and will be valid for one year.  Please allow 28 days turnaround.

To join the group simply complete our form and post it to the BCS (form available from me or on the Web at *http://www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/bcs/ir/*) - this does not come with proof. Membership of the group continues to be free.

- Mark Dunlop (*mark@dcs.gla.ac.uk*)

# ESSIR bursaries

(continued from front page)

and databases, evaluation.  intelligent retrieval, IR and hypermedia, multimedia and retrieval, IR and wide area networks.

The British Computer Society Information Retrieval Specialist Group (BCS-IRSG) is in a position to support the attendance of a number of young European researchers at the ESSIR.

This funding is restricted to those researchers from industry or academia who
- are aged 35 years or younger on the start date of the summer school
- work in information retrieval or one of its related areas
- are citizens of Europe or have been working in information retrieval in Europe for at least 2 years

The funding is intended for young researchers who are relatively new to the area of Information Retrieval and related areas. The funding will be for 100 Pounds of the registration fee for the Summer School. Completed applications should be lodged not later than 30th July 1995.

Further information and application forms for the summer school and for bursaries can be obtained either via WWW from *http://www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/essir/*

An ESSIR booklet that can be ordered from
Jane Reid
Computing Science
University of Glasgow
Glasgow G12 8QQ
tel:  +44 (0)141 330 5006
fax:  +44 (0)141 330 4913
email: *essir@dcs.gla.ac.uk*

Bursary information can be obtained from
Ruairi O'Donnell (IRSG bursaries)
Computer Applications
Dublin City University
Glasnevin, Dublin 9, Ireland
tel: + 353-1-7045828
fax: + 353-1-7045442
email: *rodonnel@compapp.dcu.ie*

# '95 IRSG Colloquium at Crewe

**The 17th BCS IRSG Annual Colloquium was held on the Crewe campus at the Manchester Metropolitan University on 4/5th April.**

Following the tradition of previous years, this ran from lunchtime to lunchtime over the two days. The programme was divided into sessions of identifiable areas of IR research covering Implementation Methods, Term Weighting, Query Expansion, Image Retrieval, Semantic-based Retrieval, Theoretical Models and Systems. The application of new techniques, such as Object-Oriented Design, Neural and Genetic Programming, was notable in the presentations as was the impact of applications, such as Multimedia, Hypertext and the Internet. This is, of course, only a general impression: the full colloquium proceedings will be published by the end of the year.

This year the colloquium attracted 54 delegates comprising both students/researchers and established members of the IR community from academia and industry. The location at Crewe was, perhaps surprisingly, agreeable with the requisites for a small and informal conference set in pleasant surroundings. All in all, it is the opinion of the participants that IR is the most interesting of disciplines which makes this event most enjoyable and worthwhile.

It is intended to publish the proceedings but no publishing agreement has yet been finalised.

# New MSc at Robert Gordon

**Hot on the heels of Glasgow University's new MSc/PhD in Advanced Information Systems, Robert Gordon University have announced a new MSc/PgD in Advanced Information Processing.**

This advanced postgraduate course aims to extend and specialise the expertise of Computing Honours graduates in the area of Information Processing. It is designed to provide expert knowledge and research skills necessary to become specialist practioners and independent researchers in this area.

The degree has two main strands: a Technical strand offering study of advanced information systems and processing techniques, and a Research strand which provides training in research skills in the context of individual specialised study.

The course includes: multimedia systems, distributed systems, advanced database systems, information retrieval, KBS, HCI, research training, special interest workshops, and an individual research project.

A major focus of the course is the construction of advanced information systems by integrating various technologies within a distributed computing framework. Information Retrieval will be introduced as one such underpinning technology, and the application of IR techniques in building advanced information systems will be demonstrated.

For more details concerning this course contact:

Dr Susan Craw (Course Leader)
School of Computer and Mathematical Sciences
The Robert Gordon University
Aberdeen AB1 1HG
Tel: 01224 262701
Fax: 01224 262727
Email: *s.craw@scms.rgu.ac.uk*

Information on the course is also available on world-wide web:

*http://www.scms.rgu.ac.uk/courses/ msc_aip/*

Details of the Glasgow MSc, reported in the last Informer, Spring 95, are available from *http://www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/ courses/MScPhD_AIS/*

Next year the colloquium will again be hosted by Manchester Metropolitan University but a final decision between a Manchester and Crewe setting is still to be made.

More or less this same information can be found on the BCS IRSG Web pages at *http://www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/bcs/ir/ colloquia.html*

- Frances Johnson

## Research orgy

(continued from front page)

be taking place during the IR Fest. There will be seminars given by many of the participants, the 2nd European IR summer school (ESSIR - see accompanying article), and meetings of various project groups including the Mira working group on the evaluation of interactive IR systems and the MIRO working group on Multimedia IR. MIRO in particular is planned to be an open meeting during which many of the participants will give talks and demonstrations in the manner of a mini conference on multimedia IR. Keynote speakers include such notables as Nick Belkin and Bruce Croft so it promises to be quite a gathering.

Details of the Glasgow IR Fest and its associated activities are available on the World Wide Web from *http:// www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/irfest/* which is worth visiting if only to see the Kandinsky/ Dunlop painting of Glasgow University. If you can't access the Web then further details are available from Mark Dunlop (*mark@dcs.gla.ac.uk*). See you in Glasgow in September.



*An exciting scene at the Crewe Colloquium*

# New MSc in Textual Computing

**The Departments of Information Studies and of Computer Science at the University of Sheffield are jointly offering a new one-year MSc programme in Textual Computing from September 1995.**

This programme will provide a sound professional education in new areas of information technology connected to the computer processing of written and spoken language and the retrieval of written information from textual databases. The wide range of elective courses in the programme means that is it equally appropriate for graduates with a strong computing background who wish to increase their knowledge of textual and language-processing techniques, and for graduates in other disciplines who wish to develop their computing skills in the database area.

### Course Objectives

The programme will provide graduates with a strong academic and practical grounding in the processing of computerised textual information. It will hence prepare graduates with the basic skills they need in today's world of language and information in the media, electronic publishing, political, economic and scientific information handling, computer aids to translation, composition, language learning, legal retrieval and information handling, health and other counselling systems and business, inter alia. The value-added components of the MSc will be knowledge of specific text- and language-processing capabilities for students with a first degree in computer science and novel computational approaches for those already familiar with textual information systems.

The programme will also provide an excellent introduction to the substantial research opportunities that exist in textual and language computing in the departments of Information Studies and Computer Science, with the possibility of subsequent doctoral-level study in these areas.

### The Academic Profile

Both Departments have a substantial research base in textual and language computing, which has now resulted in University funding for ILASH: the Institute for Language Speech and Hearing, with which the MSc is associated. ILASH has its own machine, premises, support staff and academic staff attached to it from nine departments. Sheffield is a node on the EU-funded ELSNET (European Network in Language and Speech) network and participates in many Europe-wide programmes that give opportunities to link to work across the Community. The Department of Computer Science is co-ordinating the 11-laboratory Human Capital and Mobility (HCM)

EU network SPHERE: 'Representations in Speech and Hearing'. It also participates in EU ERASMUS programmes in speech and language where students can complete their dissertations abroad.

### Programme Description

The programme consists of taught components for the first two University semesters, followed by a project examined by dissertation. The taught part of the programme will consist of core modules, together with elective modules, the choice of which will be approved by the student's tutors. A range of teaching methods will be employed, including conventional lectures, small-group seminars, and a large amount of group work.

### Core modules include:

- IT for Information Management (Information Studies)
- Information Storage and Retrieval (Information Studies)
- Natural Language Processing I (Computer Science)
- Language and Logic (Computer Science with Psychology)
- Information Storage and Retrieval Research (Information Studies)
- Natural Language Processing II (Computer Science)
- Research Methods And Dissertation Preparation

Electives will be offered from year to year depending upon the availability of staff and the trends in research and professional practice. These are expected to include:

- Research Topics in Language, Speech and Hearing (Computer Science)
- Reasoning and AI (Computer Science)
- Database Design (Information Studies)
- Multimedia Information Systems (Information Studies)
- Health Care Information: Systems and Services (Information Studies)

### Further information

The Postgraduate Admissions Officer
Department of Computer Science
University of Sheffield
Regent Court, 211 Portobello Street
Sheffield S1 4DP
Tel: (+44) 0114 282 5590
Fax: (+44) 0114 278 0972
Email: *dept@dcs.shef.ac.uk*

# Ejournals R Us

Electronic journals, that is journals which you access over a network via your computer and don't read on paper unless you print them out, are booming. Whether it's scholarly e-publications, online newspapers or cool and kooky underground e-zines, it seems that everyone is getting into it. A look around at current research projects shows that just about every publisher you could name is involved in feasibility trials. The future of information dissemination seems to be up for grabs in the new world of electronic publication with predictions of the likely outcome ranging from monopolistic thought control by the publishing industry moguls to new age liberation through total info-anarchy.

So what's out there for us? Well, the best way to find out is to climb aboard your Internet browser and go take a look. Here's where:

The single best starting point at the moment is the Hyperjournal Web page at *http://www.gold.ac.uk/history/hyperjournal/contents.htm* (note the 3-letter PC extension), which not only has links to all the major lists of e-journals but also links to resources, research projects and written articles about issues in electronic publishing. Within the *directory of electronic journals* good links to go for are the World Wide Web Virtual Library (near the bottom of the list), BUBL Ejournals, and NewJour. The first of these is by far the most interesting if you're looking for leading edge quality e-journals across a wide range of subject areas. Academic peer-reviewed examples include The Chicago Journal of Theoretical Computer Science, British Medical Journal, and Journal of Artificial Intelligence Research. The BUBL and NewJour lists, however, are the ones with a lot of links to IR-related e-journals, particularly in library science. These are mostly Gopher-based and include BLRDD Research Bulletin, Information Policy Online, Journal of Electronic Publishing, LIBRES, and Online Libraries.

So there you have it. A whole new world of discovery just waiting for you. A valuable resource. Of course, if you're like me, you'll spend most of your time consulting such gems as The Australian Kite Association Newsletter, Journal of Irreproducible Research, Annals of Improbable Research, Electronic Journal of Intimate Violence and The Internet Informer (What a great name).

- Mark Magennis (editor)

# Classic high recall search requirement may be unachievable in practice

In February, New Scientist ran an interesting article on patent searchers being frustrated by indexing errors. For a company wishing to market a new product it is obviously essential that if a patent already exists for a similar product then it will be discovered by a database search. This is the classic example of a high recall requirement. However, a professional patent searcher has reported some gross errors in the database entries.

In the European Patent Office's index an organic compound in the phthylenone group was indexed as an 'ogthylene-3-one', probably because the typist's hand had slipped one key along the keyboard. Most mysterious of all were entries in the EPO's international Inpadoc database for patent applicants named Robaato Uiraaton Furemingu, Uiriamu Bii Reisufuiirudo, Bii Oo Shii Guruupu and Kuringe Fuarama. By digging out other patents with cross-indexed numbers, the names were decoded as Robert Willerton Fleming, William B. Laceford, the BOC Group and Klinge Pharma. Inpadoc's headquarters in Vienna automatically collates data from computer tapes supplied by 56 patent offices around the world. The Japanese tapes contain names which have been translated from Western originals into pictorial characters and back again by computer. The result is often gibberish, and there is no provision for human checking.

# Exon bill passed by US Senate

**On 14th June the U.S. Senate voted 84 to 16 for the Exon amendment to the telecommunications bill.**

Senator Exon's measure imposes fines up to $100,000 and prison terms up to two years for knowingly transmitting indecent material over a computer network accessible to minors. It also applies to "obscene lewd, lascivious, filthy or indecent" comments, requests, or suggestions intended to annoy or harass.

Senator Leahy produced a stack of petitions from some 35,000 people who believe that Exon's measure is a serious threat to constitutional rights, free speech, and the Internet.

# From Research to Real Retrieval

**One morning *Margaret Fieldhouse* woke up and found herself in the real world**

In library land, where information retrieval is the stuff of life, what evidence is there that users are concerned with recall and precision, and the usability of information retrieval systems? Has the shift to end-user retrieval, made possible by wider access to CD-ROM databases and the increased availability of online library catalogues, turned searchers into the discriminating individuals, who spend hours refining their queries, that the IR research community would have them be?

Having recently abandoned the world of research for a new life in an academic library, I have to report that this is not the reality. Dealing with the information needs of students, researchers and academic staff on a daily basis hardly reflects the challenges that IR systems set out to address. The finer points of interactive vs. automatic query expansion and the definition of what a query really is, pale into insignificance when compared with the information needs that must be satisfied during the course of a typical session on the enquiry desk, that focal point to which all the interesting questions in the universe are directed.

First, what is a query? Well it can range from the potentially challenging "I need to find out something about graphical user interfaces" to the rather more common "Where's the stapler/hole punch/scissors/glue?"

Now the first is just the sort of thing I like to get my teeth into. Here's a user after my own heart, someone who wants to know all about developing GUIs perhaps? An enquiry about UIMS? Motif toolkits? Visual Basic? No, a presentation to demonstrate the benefits of windows and direct manipulation. Undaunted, I lead the student to an OPAC terminal. "Try a keyword search first". Of course that's unproductive, since our Boolean system will insist on ANDing all the keywords together sequentially, so if graphical and user yield nothing, ANDing the results with interface is a complete waste time. A title search is as useless, since we don't have anything called graphical user interfaces, so I resort to a keyword search for user interfaces.

This does at least find something, but the student, by this time, has to rush off to a lecture, so makes a note of the shelf number saying he'll check it out later. 'Don't forget we have some CD-ROM databases that might be useful' I suggest as a parting shot.

Hmmm, CD-ROM databases. Now they're another story. Users seem to love them and will usually happily attack them unaided. They spend hours searching them, and print out reams of pages of articles and bibliographic references. But query formulation? Narrowing searches? Expanding queries? No way. They type in the first meaningful word of their topic, then browse through the hundreds of records they're likely to find. Unfortunately I never have time to find out what happens to those whose searches are unsuccessful, they don't seem to stay long enough.

Another enquirer asks for information about the Department of Trade and Industry. 'What sort of information about the Department are you looking for?' I venture, racking my brains for any sort of information sources that might be useful. 'Oh anything really, I've got a job interview there tomorrow'. I wonder just how interested she really is and offer her the potted description in Whitakers. She heads for the photocopier.

I return to the Enquiry desk, anticipating the next enquiry. A request for an online search perhaps? Few and far between since the advent of CD-ROM, but one lives in hope of the occasional opportunity to get to grips with Boolean search commands and delve into operator precedence. However, just thinking of the level of deprivation that would be suffered should academic research results ever be taken into consideration by IR systems developers sends me into a short-lived reverie. 'Excuse me, but the photocopier's jammed'. Oh well.

- Margaret Fieldhouse, University of Greenwich

# You are being Formed

**Our resident agitator, *John Lindsay*, once again tackles the socio-political issues head on**

## UKOLN

The research project on library cataloguing (does that have enough to do with information retrieval to grab your interest?) at the University of Bath has undergone a number of transformations over the years. Its most recent one is into the United Kingdom Office for Library Networking (UKOLN), as which it organised the conference on preserving the intellectual record in April, with the blessing of the British Library and the Joint Information Systems Council of British Higher Education. There were about 250 people there, so something is going on.

I must admit I felt like Alice having walked through the looking glass the whole time. Non British readers bear with me - your world might not be as mad.

We have a thing here called the Higher Education Funding Council. This allocates money every three years on the basis of a research assessment exercise. That requires every academic who wants to count, to produce four steaming turds on a silver platter for inspection by a panel. There are nineteen categories of these things, but generally regarded as the most significant is a refereed paper in a scientific journal. So the 100,000 academics in Britain churn these out - that is about half a million per funding cycle. Still with me?

This is the intellectual record which has to be preserved.

Of course publishers know when they are onto a good thing. The prices of journals has been escalating. The same HEFC allocates money for library budgets. This has been falling. It also calculates student numbers and allocates funding for teaching. Student numbers are now at the ratio of 25 per teaching academic (the same person as above!). With that number of students you can even remember names in a year. The same funding council gives out student grants which are now so low that those who are not rich have to work for a living and study while asleep. These students are the users of the intellectual record (along with other academics who are either preparing their own contributions or peer reviewing others).

But whichever role you play in this process, there are some interesting information retrieval issues.

Which is where secondary services come in. Readers of the Informer will be well acquainted with INSPEC, ABI Inform, Chemical Abstracts and so forth, which have been increasing the prices of their paper products in line with journal subscriptions, as the whole of the publishing industry tries to adjust to the Internet.

And this is where JISC comes in. Still with me? Paper abstracting resources used to be subscribed to by libraries and held on shelves. Electronic ones raised issues of who had access. On line services such as Dialog had no problem. Every access was from an account which was paid for on time of access with enough security to ensure cash flow. There were lots of interesting information retrieval issues, but as we couldn't afford access it didn't matter, which was where specimen collections came in. Now these resources are available in every university in very different ways.

You can have a CD-ROM on a local area network or a stand alone machine; you can have jukeboxes on a wan. You can have clients with servers anywhere, like the British Library OPAC. You can have Z39.50 compliancy, or ERL compliancy such as the EARL project. You can telnet to services like BIDS running ISI and IBSS. The last two are financed by JISC out of topsliced funding from the HEFC, but while IBSS is then free at the point of consumption, it still has a control process which means your organisation is allocated a user id and password, which it can then further manage according to how it wants to handle its information management. The former has a local financial contribution though, about £6,000 when I last checked, which you might have decided not to pay, in which case all members of your organisation are locked out.

# Software reviews

## Bookfind-CD World Edition

**Reviewed by *Colin Galloway*, Glasgow University Library**

BookFind on CD-ROM, marketed by Book Data, claims to provide information on English language books in print, recently out of print, and forthcoming titles up to 24 months before publication. It is updated monthly. It is in direct competition with two other products, the British Whitaker's Global Bookbank and the American Bowker's Global books in print plus. It is difficult to evaluate a product like BookFind for several reasons. Pre-eminent amongst them is who the evaluation is for: is it for the casual user wanting to check the price and availability of a known book? Is it an academic, teacher or librarian searching for what is available by subject? Is it for the librarian verifying bibliographic details prior to taking a decision on whether a particular budget can support a particular purchase in a particular form? Importantly, are editions available in more than one country at widely differing prices? If price rather than speed is the main consideration, perhaps an American edition of a book also available in the UK would be purchased. Not least amongst the considerations is ease of use (which to some extent is subjective) and ease of exporting or otherwise manipulating the data.

The full version of BookFind, called the World Edition, is produced on 2 discs although there are options for purchasing subsets of this information. Searching features such as author-title (4-4) are included as well as a wide variety of other search strategies such as ISBN, title keyword, author, publisher, Dewey classification, Bookdata classification, publication year, country of publication, wholesaler, option of excluding US or UK availability and US or UK price. Searches can also be limited by content level and form, e.g. adult/child/fiction/non-fiction/academic/paperback. As well as searchability on all elements of records, searches can combine fields using wild cards, truncation or Boolean logic. This means that searching is at least as flexible (and can be more easily tailored to the user's requirements) than the competing Bowker's Global Books in Print and more so than Whitaker's Global Bookbank.

For book selection, as well as limiting by level of material and sophisticated subject searching, each record has a short description of the content. Whether the above facilities outweigh the disadvantages of the product being available on two discs (this can be an irritant if your machine has only one drive) depends on what you want from the system. Bowker, for example, took a policy decision to keep to one disc and therefore had to sacrifice some functionality. This was done because it was felt this was what their customers preferred.

Undoubtedly to this reviewer BookFind is a much more attractive product to look at than its competitors: no flashing cursors or lurid screen colours as with Bowker. The data is also very clearly displayed. Whitaker and more particularly Bowker have rather untidy screen displays where it is not always immediately clear the differences between British and American imprints and certainly not clear to the inexperienced eye who is the publisher and who is the wholesaler unless the Detailed Format option is chosen (wholesalers are of relevance to booksellers but not librarians, the general public or academics.) A single BookFind screen also holds more information than that of its competitors.

On price BookFind compares favourably with its competitors. For the 2 disk World Edition with monthly updates the UK price for 1995 is £1295, but there are cheaper options if bi-monthly updates are sufficient, or if the smaller 1 disk Compact Edition is chosen, and for subject sets in Medicine and Healthcare or Business and Law. Networking costs are reasonable, starting at £150 for up to 3 simultaneous users.

Up to date information on new and forthcoming publications is important, and equally so revision of existing entries to flag items as now out of print or subject to price increase. In our small, but broad sample of publications checked in the various databases, we expected BookFind to be less comprehensive as this was the main adverse comment about the product when first launched. Again emphasising that our sample was small, we found that BookFind did not compare unfavourably. (Bowker and Whitaker exchange tapes, so the books but not the layout of details and search strategies, should be the same except that Bowker contains the content of International Books in Print which Whitaker lacks.) Downloading from BookFind is flexible and relatively easy.

The recommended configuration is a PC compatible with: 80486/33MHz processor or higher; SVGA colour monitor; MS-DOS 6.2/Windows 3.1; 250Mb hard disk or larger; 8Mb memory or higher; CD-ROM ISO 9660 drive.

Ed's note - Since this review was written BookData have released Windows and networking versions of BookFind-CD and a developer's pack which provides application program interfaces for MS-DOS and Windows.

## PC text retrieval packages

The April 1995 Issue of PC Magazine, published in Great Britain, tested eight text retrieval packages. The products reviewed were ConSearch 3.0, Folio Views 3.1, ISYS, MemoryMate, Recall Plus, Search & Find, SmarText 3.0 and Wordbase Professional.

ISYS was selected as the editors choice. ConSearch 3.0 was recommended as the best of the rest.

The bottom line ... "ConSearch 3.0 was slow - due to non-indexed searching - but makes up for this with its natural language interface and superb file recognition abilities ... Consearch will track down documents that other products reviewed here will never find. In addition, ConSearch lets you view practically any PC file format."

# Book review

## Scholarly Journals at the Crossroads: A Subversive Proposal for Electronic Publishing

**Edited by Ann Shumelda Okerson & James J. O'Donnell**

**Reviewed by *Mark Magennis***

This is a very strange book. It is made up entirely of email messages. Subtitled 'An internet discussion about scientific and scholarly journals and their future', it records a recent nine month fragment of a continuing discussion about the reporting of scientific research in the electronic era. Since this debate is being carried out mostly via email discussion lists, it makes a lot of sense to look into these email exchanges to see what's being discussed.

### Basic details

What is being discussed is the inevitable move of publishing from paper to electronic media and the opportunities this presents for radical change in the way scientific research results are distributed and accessed. The starting point was a call for collective action by the scientific research community to force publishers to adopt a new publishing model. This call was made in a message posted to an email discussion list last June by Stevan Harnad, Professor of Psychology at the University of Southampton and editor of Psycoloquy, one of the first electronic-only peer-reviewed scientific journals. Harnad's 'subversive proposal' aimed at ensuring future published research would be available completely free of charge. Being immediately appealing to most people outside of the publishing industry, this proposal generated an enthusiastic response from many sides and the discussion began about how to realise it and whether it would work. But this was no mere utopianism from the anti-capitalist cyber-warrior community. The ensuing discussion was, and continues to be, both lively and informed.

### The subversive proposal

Harnad believes that the results of scholarly scientific research should be freely available to all but that authors have hitherto been forced into a 'Faustian bargain' with publishers in which they agree to erect a price tag as a barrier between their work and its intended audience. According to Harnad, this Faustian bargain, made necessary by the economics of traditional paper publishing, is no longer appropriate. Instead, Harnad believes it is time to adopt a new model, in which readers pay nothing for electronic access and the much-reduced costs are covered by authors, their institutions, learned societies and governments. However, publishers are not likely to adopt this new arrangement by their own volition so they will have to be forced into it. Harnad's proposal is that all research scientists, from this day on, should make all their research papers publicly available via ftp as unrefereed preprints prior to publishing. If this were to happen, so the argument goes, then when the refereed paper is finally published in a journal, the author can just replace the preprint with the refereed reprint and no-one will buy the journal. Publishers will then be forced to restructure their activities to stop charging readers money for access but to charge authors for preparation and distribution instead. If they don't then someone else inevitably will, and the subversion will be complete.

Although this subversive proposal is the starting point of the discussion, it covers many of the issues that are relevant to anyone involved in publishing or scholarly research.

### Presentation

So, how readable is a book of email messages? To anyone who is used to following mailing list discussions this book will be no problem, since the transformation from email to print has been carried out with a minimum of interference. Only a few small irrelevancies have been deleted, the layout has been slightly improved for readability and temporal ordering has been strictly adhered to so that reading the printed version is easier than reading the real thing. The email look and feel has been maintained even to the point of keeping the asterisks used for *emphasis*.

The text has been partitioned into chapters which is an interesting concept in the circumstances. In a normal text book chapters would delimit topics but the chronological ordering of email contributions would seem to make this impossible. However, short chapters such as 'E-Journal costs and editorial costs' and 'Journal publishing systems and models' do seem to form coherent enough foci so that the reader can decide on their area of interest and jump in with a reasonable chance of knowing what to expect. Where this falls down is with chapters such as 'A researcher's perspective' and 'A librarian's view from Europe' which really only serve as convenient headings for short paragraphs explaining what is discussed in those sections. As a result, the contents page is like a collection of abstracts, each describing a bundle of four or five messages and each with an occasionally gratuitous title. That this works at all is largely due to the nature of the contributions, many of which are mini-essays keeping to a specific subject and some of which actually are published or prepublished research papers.

### Contents

The content of the discussion is sufficiently focused and intelligent to be an interesting read even in start-to-finish mode. After the subversive proposal itself the discussion covers questions of strategy and feasibility before it begins to broaden as participants from varied backgrounds join in, each with their own perspectives. Issues subsequently discussed include the roles of learned societies, academic libraries, academic institutions and the journal publishing industry itself. A great deal of time is spent on various aspects of cost, including the central and continuing 70/30 debate on whether electronic publishing saves 70% of the costs of paper publishing, as Harnad and others believe, or only 30%, as publishers claim. There is also a healthy amount of basic discussion on what purpose publishing serves and how the very nature of scientific research and its reporting can change and ben-

# Editorial

Welcome to another edition of The In-former.  As you can see, or at least I hope you can see otherwise I've been wasting my time, I've tried to make this one look a lit-tle bit more interesting by using exciting techniques like bold first paragraphs, chunky grey lines and photographs. Hope-fully, you'll still be able to recognise the faces after they've been through the photo-copier but I don't guarantee it.  I'm also try-ing to develop the content a bit more - no-tice the software and book reviews.  So if you've got anything useful - stories, news, reviews, or anything else that would be good content, please let me have it.

- Mark Magennis (editor)
*mark3@dcs.gla.ac.uk*

# Book review

efit from the opportunities provided by computer-based methods of information exchange.

Practical and theoretical issues are cov-ered in equal measure and a good deal of what is written comes direct from the par-ticipants' experiences of publishing, edit-ing, running libraries or setting up E-Jour-nals.

**Worth buying?**
So is it worth buying this book? It isn't the last word on any of the issues it covers, neither does it attempt to be complete in its coverage of any particular issue like a standard text book might. The debate in all the areas covered is still raging on those same discussion lists. However, for anyone interested in the costs of information ac-cess, the future of publishing, and particu-larly the future of scientific research, this book represents a lively and simulating starting point and I would recommend it.

The debate format is refreshing and continually reveals the biases and the ignorances which are a part of us all. It is perhaps this which makes it so stimulating to read. On many occasions I would find myself whole-heartedly going along with the author of a message only to find their arguments shot down in flames in the very next message. This fosters a healthy scep-ticism and a sense of perspective and re-veals the contributions for what they are, not immutable facts but only viewpoints.

The main strength of this book reflects the strengths of email and bulletin board discussion. It throws together a wide range of current ideas and perspectives and re-ports on a genuine debate of a sort that rarely appears within the pages of a book or journal. However, it does so in a way that improves the readability somewhat and means that you can carry it with you on the train or read it propped up in bed with a cup of cocoa (I don't have a laptop)! The downside is that it is not as malleable as electronic files and that there is an inevita-ble delay between the appearance of the ideas and the appearance of the book - up to a year for the early postings. The fact that it is a book made of paper rather than the original email on a computer screen and that, in some ways, the book is more desir-able than the email, is its great irony. Whilst reading this book I found my interest was captured as much by its form as by its con-tent.

I hate to say it, because everyone does, but I was reminded of Marshall McLuhan's great quote 'The medium is the message'. It really fits in this case. Here we have a paper publication, reporting on the immi-nent demise of paper publishing and suc-cessfully illustrating the benefits of the elec-tronic communication of ideas but doing it in some ways better than the electronic medium itself. As I said at the beginning, this is a very strange book.

To order a copy, contact:

Patricia Brennan
Information Services Coordinator
Association of Research Libraries
21 Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 800
Washington DC 20036, U.S.A.
Tel:  202-296-2296
Fax:  202-872-0884
Email:  *patricia@cni.org*

Cost is US$20 + US$7 p&p. Alterna-tively, the raw source files from which the Subversive Book is derived can be downloaded via ftp from *ftp.princeton.edu* in the directory *pub/harnad/Psycoloquy/Subversive.Proposal*

Scholarly Journals at the Crossroads: A Subversive Proposal for Electronic Publishing. Ann Okerson & James O'Donnell, eds.  Washington, DC, As-sociation of Research Libraries, June 1995, 250 p. ISBN 0-918006-26-0

# Bulletin board provider ruled responsible for content

A New York state trial court ruled on 24 May 1995 that Prodigy is responsible for the libellous statements of its users because it exercises editorial control over their posts.  In the case, an anonymous Prodigy user made statements against New York Investment firm Stratton Oakmont accus-ing it of criminal and fraudulent acts. Stratton Oakmont sued Prodigy and the vol-unteer moderator of the forum where the statements were published.

The Court found that Prodigy was act-ing as a publisher and therefore was respon-sible for the content of the posts.  The Court distinguished the case from the earlier Cubby v.  Compuserve decision, which found that Compuserve was subject to the standards of a bookstore or library.  It that case, the US District court ruled that Compuserve had no editorial control over the text.  According to the New York state court.  Prodigy has virtually created an edi-torial staff of Board Leaders who have the ability to continually monitor incoming transmissions and in fact do spend time censoring notes.

The court attempted to downplay the significance of its decision on the greater area of electronic networks.  Prodigy's con-scious choice, to gain the benefits of edito-rial control, has opened it up to greater li-ability that Compuserve and other compu-ter networks that make no such choice. Prodigy has said that it will consider ap-pealing the decision.

- David Banisar, Electronic Privacy Information Center.

# Conferences update service

Check out http://www.iao.fhg.de/Library/conferences/ for conference announce-ments.  It offers a subject index, keyword searching and soon a facility whereby you can register interest in particular subject areas that you would like to be informed about by email as new conferences in those areas are announced.  Very useful I'd say.

# Journals

## Convergence

### The Journal of Research into New Media Technologies

The first issue of the journal was published in May 1995. Containing research articles from the USA, Canada, Australia and the UK the journal has an international focus. Convergence is a new refereed academic journal which addresses the creative, social, political and pedagogical issues raised by the advent of new media technologies. As a research journal it will provide a forum both for monitoring and exploring developments and for publishing vital research. Published biannually in paper form and adopting an inter-disciplinary approach Convergence will develop this area into an entirely new research field.

The contents of the first issue are:

**Debates**
Roger Silverstone, Convergence Is a Dangerous Word
Charles L. Ross, Authority in Hypertext: The Analogy of Anthropology
Adrian Page, Participating in Intertextuality
Margaret Boden, How Artificial Intelligence Can Help Our Creativity
Roy Ascott, Nature II: Telematic Culture and Artificial Life

**Articles**
Micheline Frenette and Andri H. Caron. Children and Interactive Television: Research and Design Issues
Philip Hayward and Geraldine Orrock. Window of Opportunity: CD-ROMs, The International Music Industry and Early Australian Initiatives
Brent MacGregor. Our Wanton Abuse of the Technology: Television News Gathering in the Age of the Satellite
Amy Bruckman and Mitchel Resnick. The MediaMOO Project: Constructionism and Professional Community

**Feature reports**
Jeremy Welsh. Virtual Reality: almost here, almost there, nowhere yet. Report on two Scandinavian conferences VR Oslo 94 and Cybersphere
Giulio Blasi. The Future of the Book: Report on the conference at the University of San Marino, July 1994

### Further details

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## LIBRES

### Library and Information Science Research Electronic Journal

The Essays and Opinions Section of LIBRES is now accepting submissions. This is a non-refereed section.

The Essays and Opinions Section of LIBRES publishes articles that report on applied research incorporated to improve services and thus stimulate further thinking. One essential aim is to emphasise the importance of basic research but the Section also seeks articles that address non-traditional ways of doing research, that break out of the survey/quantitative mould. These should be theoretically grounded think pieces with substantive intellectual content but need not reflect empirical research. Indeed, the Opinion pieces can stimulate discussion as to what comprises "good" research. We look for speculation, forecasts, and the explication of problem opportunities. All opinions should be crisply delivered from a strong position. We also look for a clear delineation of ideas but written with humour, wit, and most importantly, a sense of engagement.

LIBRES is a quarterly electronic journal with an editorial board of library and information science scholars. LIBRES communicates scholarly thought and discussion on library and information science topics. LIBRES consists of four sections: Research and Applications (refereed); Essays and Opinions (non-refereed); News, Letters, and Reviews (non-refereed); and Pre-Prints and Abstracts (non-refereed). LIBRES is indexed in ERIC RIE and Library Literature

### Further details

Keith Morgan
Essays and Opinions Editor
email: *kamorgan@mit.edu*

## IDINews

### Initiatives in Digital Information

Initiatives in Digital Information (IDINews) is a new electronic newsletter designed to help keep you informed about digital information resources and projects underway at the University of Michigan. This quarterly publication offers feature articles as well as links to exciting resources and projects being developed at UM. The URL for the inaugural issue of IDINews is *http://www.lib.umich.edu/libhome/ IDINews/June95.html*

The June 1995 issue features articles on:

The Humanities Text Initiative
The NSF/ARPA/NASA-sponsored Digital Library Project
The Journal of Electronic Publishing
The Flint Community Network Initiative

In addition, links to the following resources are also included:

Social Science Data Sets
The Papyrology Project
The Electronic Reference Shelf
The Internet Public Library

### Further details

Janis Giannini, Jay Jackson, and Pat Hodges (editors)
email: *IDINews@umich.edu*

# Conferences

To save space, none of the announcements reproduced here are the full versions. They have all been edited specifically for inclusion in The Informer. Although a certain amount of information (e.g. hotels, registration processes) has been left out, nothing has been added.

## ISDL'95

*[The submissions deadline for this conference has passed]*

**International Symposium on Digital Libraries 1995**
**Aug 22 - 25, 1995**
**University of Library and Information Science, Tsukuba Science City, Ibaraki, Japan**

The issue of digital libraries is key to making global information super-highways really work. Many digital libraries cannot be realized without the integration of various information technologies. Social, cultural and human aspects are also important in the implementation of digital libraries. ISDL'95 will offer a forum for researchers, engineers, librarians, information scientists, and users, all of whom have different backgrounds, but who share equally an interest in digital libraries.

**Topics include**

Digital library networks based on high-speed wide-area network technology . Storage, communication and delivery of multimedia data . Digitization and database construction using printed materials from the social sciences, the humanities, and the natural sciences . Creation, storage, retrieval, and usage of multimedia . Information visualization and user interfaces . The digital library as a collection of materials and a collection of information . The digital library as an environment to support intellectual activities . Roles of, and restrictions on, digital libraries in communities.

**Further details**

email: *ISDL95-info@DL.ulis.ac.jp*
(This is an Automatic Reply Address. Write "help" at the top of text.)
web: *http://www.DL.ulis.ac.jp/ISDL95/*
gopher: *gopher://gopher.dl.ulis.ac.jp/1/ISDL95/*

## SGML Asia-Pacific

**Oct 23 - 25, 1995**
**The Regent Hotel, Singapore**

The first SGML Asia-Pacific conference, held in October of 1994 promoted a positive and progressive image of SGML. As a result, there was strong representation from dominant Asian economies such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Japan. In addition to solid support from many SGML industry stalwarts, there was significant coverage of the conference by the - mainstream Singapore business press and nightly television news.

Keynote presentations from one of Singapore's leading information industry figures, Mr. Ko Kheng Hwa and the "father" of SGML and HyTime, Dr. Charles Goldfarb were simply the highlights of what proved to be a diverse and substantial field of speakers. Representatives from such industries as air transport, EDI, petroleum and commercial publishing all spoke of their use and support of SGML.

The well publicized trend of the booming Asian economies toward infrastructure spending was represented through the type of attendees that this conference attracted. Endorsement from the telecommunications, air transport and publishing communities is a trend expected to accelerate at SGML Asia-Pacific in 1995. The 1995 conference will focus specifically on these areas.

With the continuing support of the Graphic Communications Association and the National Computer Board of Singapore, SGML Asia-Pacific 1995 is already promising to be significantly larger than the 1994 event. There will be added tutorials, poster and conference sessions catering to the increased demand for comprehensive SGML and HyTime information. In addition, there will be follow-up sessions to topics introduced in 1994 such as the use of SGML in the impressive Information technology 2000 project of the Singapore Government.

Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML) ISO 8879, is being used by an ever-increasing number of organizations to facilitate the creation, management, storage and delivery of document-based information. As a standard, SGML goes far beyond the goal of information interchange: it is also a tool for managing and protecting an organization's data assets.

While there will be a typically wide range of topics addressed at SGML Asia-Pacific 1995, this year's focus sessions will feature the air transport industry, the telecommunications/EDI and semiconductor industries.

**Topics include**

Document Management . Air Transport . Telecommunications . SGML and Asian Language Character Sets . HyTime Implementations . SGML and EDI . Internet Publishing . Petroleum . HTML + SGML Relationship

**Tutorials include:**

Business Introduction to SGML . Technical Introduction to SGML . Intro to SGML, HTML and the World Wide Web . Introduction to HyTime

COMDEX/Asia at Singapore Informatics'95 immediately follows SGML Asia-Pacific'95. Singapore Informatics is a leading Information Technology (IT) event in the Asian region. COMDEX shows are the world's premier IT events. For COMDEX/Asia details call (65) 284-8844 or Fax (65) 286-5754.

SGML Asia-Pacific will include technical demonstrations of a wide variety of SGML tools. Scheduled sessions will be dedicated to demonstrations by the technical staff of developers. If you are interested in participating in these sessions, please contact the conference committee person in your region. Detailed information and pricing is located on the exhibit

# Conferences

registration form.  Additional information will be available by 1, May 1995.

**Further details:**

Joy Blake Graphic Communications Association
email: *blake@access.digex.net*
tel: (703) 519-8177
fax: (703) 548-2867

## PNC'95

**People, Networks, and Communication '95**

**Oct 30 - Nov 3, 1995**
**Hawaii**

"The Emergence of Application, Information Technology & Policy for the 21st Century."

- How do you get past buzz words to understand them and create benefit?
- Concerned about privacy in an online community?
- Concerned about issues regarding intellectual property?
- How will community and specialized libraries evolve?
- What form and function will educational networking possess?
- What about copyright and patent issues?
- Business and the internet? What must I be aware of?
- Security: understanding policy and structures.  Why now? How should I?
- Directions of the global internet. More forked roadways ahead?

**Further details**

email: *bm189@po.cwru.edu*

## CIKM '95

*[The submissions deadline for this conference has passed]*

Fourth International Conference on Information and Knowledge Management
**Nov 29 - Dec.  2, 1995**
**Baltimore, Maryland, USA**

CIKM'95 will bring together leading researchers and developers in a wide variety of scientific areas, with a common interest in improving information and knowledge management technologies.  Its objective is to provide an effective and established forum for the discussion and dissemination of original and fundamental recent advances in the area, and to foster close international collaboration between the database, information retrieval, and artificial intelligence communities.

The primary focus of the conference is on new and original research results in the areas of theoretical foundations, design, implementation, and applications of information and knowledge management.  We solicit the submission of papers that address novel, challenging and innovative results. We also solicit short papers that challenge the field with new technologies or applications and open new horizons of research.

**Topics include**
Mobile Databases and Wireless Computing . Digital Libraries . Knowledge Resource Discovery . Multimedia . Information Representation and Modeling . Modeling Database Dynamics . Information Structures and Interaction . Hypertext and Hypermedia . Distributed Object Management . Query Languages . Transaction and Workflow Management . Data and Knowledge Sharing . Heterogeneous and Distributed Systems . High Performance Algorithms . Design Techniques for Object Databases . Intelligent Agents and Network Mediators . Temporal/Spatial Databases . Active and Extensible Databases . Engineering . Scientific and Design Databases . Intelligent Search and Data Mining . Time . Event Management and Monitoring . User and Application Interfaces . Consistency . Integrity and Security . Tuning . Benchmarking and Performance . New Experimental . Commercial and Educational Systems . Integrating Databases and Information Retrieval . Cooperating and Interoperable Federated Systems . Parallelism and Distribution . Object Storage and Servers . Imprecise and Uncertain Information

An important part of the conference is the workshop program, which focuses on timely research challenges and initiatives.

**Further details**

Dr.  Charles Nicholas
email: *nicholas@cs.umbc.edu*
tel: (410) 455-2594

## Imaging on the Internet

**Imaging on the Internet**
**Jan 29 - 31, 1996**
**San Jose, California, USA**

Part of the IS&T/SPIE Symposium on Electronic Imaging: Science And Technology

The proliferation of applications like the World-Wide Web and the Internet Multimedia Backbone (the MBone) has resulted in vast amounts of image and video data traffic on the Internet.  This, in turn, has given rise to a host of technical, social, and legal problems relating to creating, publishing, storing, indexing, transmitting, and viewing image and video material on the network.

This conference serves as a forum where practitioners and researchers can present and discuss state-of-the-art research, development, and applications that use image and video on the Internet.

**Topics include**
Communication and Operating system issues for Internet image and video . Compression and processing . Language and Environments for Internet image and video applications . Security, including encryption, and copy protection . Applications of images and video on the Internet . Content issues, such as indexing and retrieval . World-Wide Web browsing and authoring tools . User Interfaces for on-line materials . Billing models for accessing and publishing on-line material . Legal issues, including copyright and privacy . Social impact

**Important dates**
- Submission deadline: July 3, 1995
- Notification of acceptance: September 15, 1995
- Camera-ready abstracts due: November 13, 1995
- Camera-ready manuscripts due: January 2, 1996

# Conferences

**Further details**

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Faculty/Brian_Smith.html*
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fax: (607)255-4428

## Hypertext '96

**Seventh ACM Conference on
Hypertext
March 16 - 20, 1996
Washington DC, USA**

In the '70s Ted Nelson coined the term 'docuverse' to describe a global network of interlinked and personalizable information. Now, two decades later, the docuverse is taking form. Graphics and computing technology now brings inexpensive hypermedia technology to everyone, and the World Wide Web is linking all those everyones together.

Hypertext '96 is the seventh in the premier international series of ACM conferences on hypertext and hypermedia theory, systems, and applications. Originally a fall conference, the annual event has been moved to a spring schedule; locations will continue to alternate between the United States and Europe.

We have enjoyed famous and picturesque settings for past conferences in this series — Chapel Hill, Pittsburgh, Versailles, San Antonio, Milan, Seattle, Edinburgh — and we think Washington will extend that record nicely. The city is very well connected for both international and US domestic travel, The conference hotel is the Hyatt Regency in Bethesda, right on the DC subway for easy access to the downtown sights as well as the suburbs of Maryland and Virginia.

We certainly hope you will enjoy the conference setting, but the main attraction at Hypertext '96 is the technical program. We will present the latest results in Hypermedia research and development, including WWW technology. Plan now to visit the US national capital for a few days of professional development and collegial interaction.

Hypertext '96 will provide a common setting for researchers and practicing professionals to share experiences and to compare notes about hypermedia authoring, publishing, system construction, human-computer interaction, digital libraries, and electronic literature. Attendees come with backgrounds in computing, psychology, literature, sociology, engineering, law, medicine — many different fields. We invite your participation. Hypertext '96 will provide a forum for presentation and discussion of exciting and original developments in hypertext and hypermedia through several different technical formats: papers, panels and perspectives, demonstrations, posters, courses, technical workshops, and doctoral consortium.

**Topics include**

Large-scale distributed hypermedia (including WWW applications) . Collaborative hypermedia systems . Integration and open hypermedia architectures . Techniques for generating, recognizing and visualizing structure . Theories, models, and frameworks . Hypertext rhetoric and criticism . Empirical studies and hypermedia evaluation . Workplace deployment . Hypermedia interfaces to data bases . Structuring hypertext documents for reading and retrieval . Information design . Hypertext writing — fiction, scholarship, and technical . Innovative hypertexts and novel uses of hypertext and hypermedia . Underlying technologies (persistent object stores, link services, databases, information retrieval, versioning, access control)

**Panels and perspectives**

Panels and perspectives represent an opportunity for lively exploration of current issues and emerging opportunities. Panels provide an interactive forum that will engage the panelists and audience in lively discussion of important and often controversial issues. Perspectives include (but are not limited to) briefings that describe unique and significant applications of hypertext in industry, scholarship, and the arts.

**Demonstrations**

Demonstrations allow attendees to get first-hand views of innovative hypertext technology and applications and talk informally with system developers and authors. Presenters should be individuals who have been directly involved with the development of the system, and who are aware of the novel ideas embodied by their system.

**Posters**

Poster presentations enable researchers to present late-breaking results, significant work in progress, or work that is best communicated through conversation. Poster sessions let conference attendees exchange ideas one-on-one with authors, and let authors discuss their work in detail with those attendees most deeply interested in the same topic.

**Courses**

Courses precede the conference and allow attendees to become familiar with basic principles of the field, to receive technical training in a hypertext-related area, or to explore advanced topics in depth. They are taught by experts in the area and cover topics at beginning, intermediate and advanced levels.

**Workshops**

Workshops provide an opportunity for a group of up to 20 participants to discuss issues in both research and applied areas for one or two days. Workshop attendance is normally by invitation, based on the attendee's response to a call for workshop participation. In general, the organizer drafts a call describing the workshop, and invites participants based on submitted position papers. The organizer should also develop an agenda in advance of the event. Keep in mind that workshops are different than paper sessions in that ideas are not to just be presented; they are to be discussed.

**Doctoral Consortium**

Doctoral students in an advanced stage of their studies (beyond proposal stage) are invited to apply for participation in this event. About ten students will be invited to participate. At the Doctoral Consortium meeting, each student gives a research presentation to the other attendees and the review committee. Advice is given on the research and social events are planned for the group. To apply, submit a CV, a letter of recommendation from your advisor and a technical paper to either one of the coordinators.

**Important dates**

- 15 aug 95: papers due . proposals for panels, briefings, workshops, and courses due . doctoral consortium applications due

# Conferences

- 15 oct 95: notification of acceptance for papers, panels, briefings, doctoral consortium, workshops, and courses
- 1 dec 95: proposals for posters and demos due . final versions of accepted papers due
- 15 jan 96: notification of acceptance for posters and demos

**Further details**

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email: *ht96-info@cs.unc.edu*

# DL'96

**1st ACM International Conference on R&D in Digital Libraries**
**March 20 - 23, 1996**
**Bethesda, MD, USA**

Co-location: DL'96 follows immediately after Hypertext'96, held at the Hyatt Regency in Bethesda on March 16-20. DL'97 should be co-located with SIGIR'97, held in Princeton, NJ.

**Topics include**

Authoring and electronic publishing . Intellectual property rights . Publisher plans and concerns . Economic and social implications and issues . Collecting, capturing, filtering . Cataloging, indexing, preserving . Distributed data, knowledge and information representation and systems . Handling of graphics, gis, multimedia information . Hypertext and hypermedia systems (especially including www) and support . Visualization, browsing, searching and interfaces . Networked information discovery .

Information storage and retrieval . Architectures, reference models, standards . Modeling and simulation . Networking systems, protocols, security

**Important dates**

- Oct 15, 1995: Papers due to Program Chair
- Dec 1, 1995: Authors notified about PC decisions
- Jan 1, 1996: Papers due to Program Chair
- Feb 15, 1996: Deadline for early registration discount
- March 20, 1996: Hypertext'96 closing, DL'96 reception
- March 23, 1996: Post-conference workshops

**Further details**

Edward A. Fox (Program Chair)
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email: *fox@vt.edu*
web: *http://fox.cs.vt.edu/DL96/*

# SDAIR '96

**Fifth Annual Symposium on Document Analysis and Information Retrieval**
**April 15 - 17, 1996**
**Alexis Park Resort, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA**

The purpose of this symposium is to present results of state-of-the-art research and to encourage the exchange of ideas in the general field of automatic extraction of information from images of printed documents. Papers are solicited on all aspects of document image analysis and information retrieval, both theoretical and applied, with particular emphasis on:

**Document Analysis**

High-Accuracy Transcription . Postprocessing of OCR Results . Keyword Search in Textual Images . Multilingual OCR, Language ID . Geometric and Logical Layout Analysis . Recognition of Forms, Tables and Equations . Models of Document Image Degradation . Methods for Performance Evaluation

**Information Retrieval**

Full-Text Retrieval . Retrieval from OCR'ed Text . Image and Multimedia Retrieval . Text Categorization . Retrieval from Structured Documents . Language-Specific Influences on Retrieval . Evaluation of IR Systems . Text Representation

**Important dates**

- Papers Due: September 30, 1995
- Notification To Authors: December 1, 1995
- Camera Ready and Machine Readable Copy: January 15, 1996

**Further details**

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Information Science Research Institute
4505 Maryland Parkway
Box 454021
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email: *sdair@isri.unlv.edu*
tel: (702)895-4571
fax: (702)895-1183

# Global complexity

**Global complexity: Information, chaos and control**
**ASIS 1996 Annual Meeting**
**October 21 - 26, 1996**
**Baltimore, Maryland, USA**

Research in chaotic systems has uncovered order in the midst of disorder - information hidden in noise - and spawned complexity as a field of study. Complexity theory explores interconnectedness, coevolution, structure and order that produce spontaneous self-organizing and adaptive systems that balance precariously on the edge of chaos. From Mandelbrot sets and fractals to economics, there is a tantalizing similarity to evolutionary patterns and emergent phenomena.

As an emergent and interdisciplinary field, information science should profit by exploring complexity. From the bits transmitted via an information channel to the less well understood transfer of knowledge

# Conferences

and wisdom, there are patterns. Are they global?

The ASIS 1996 Annual Meeting will consider the complexity of the working world of information professionals as well as theoretical perspectives involving the nature and use of information.

**Topics include**

Generation and dissemination of information. How do individuals and organizations produce and recognize informative materials using multiple technologies and myriad, networked resources? What can be learned from parallels with the incunabula period of printing, when proliferation of documents led to higher literacy?

Information organization and access. It has been said that traditional publishing guarantees some quality precisely because of its time lag. With information being provided instantaneously, can we assure quality without tacitly endorsing censorship? How can multiple organizations be created, maintained, and made useful? If interfaces evolve to cope with complexity, what will be the roles of intermediaries?

Social implications of complex information systems. When anyone with a file server on the Internet can look like a multinational conglomerate, will Davids slay Goliaths? What will promote innovation, and how will it be recognized? Who will own what, and how can information producers protect themselves? Will traditionally underserved groups find access to complex information resources?

**Important dates**

- Paper proposals/abstracts due: December 15, 1995
- Complete papers due: February 15, 1996
- Camera-ready copy due: June 1, 1996

**Further details**

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Executive Director, American Society for Information Science
8720 Georgia Avenue, Suite 501
Silver Spring, MD 20910
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# The wonderful world of the Internet

## Internet bank established

The First Bank of Internet (FBOI) provides transaction processing services for Internet electronic commerce. Purchases over the Internet can now be made without exposing personal credit card information. Vendors can now sell products on the Internet without the restrictions imposed by credit card use. Users have an FBOI-procured Visa Automated Teller Machine (ATM) card. The card is prepaid and PIN protected. The safety of FBOI is ensured because access to ATM funds without possession of both the ATM card and the Personal Identification Number (PIN) is not possible. The Visa ATM card is not a credit card. It is cash. The ATM card will be used as a cheque account. Using an ATM card allows consumers to set aside dedicated funds for Internet data purchases. It provides a safe, secure way to transfer cash from consumers to producers. In addition, consumers can reclaim their funds at any time using an ATM.

The consumer first places an order with a vendor. The consumer then sends to the vendor or FBOI an e-mail 'cheque' for the purchase of the program/file/data product. The vendor sends FBOI an e-mail 'invoice'. FBOI will reconcile the transaction and send e-mail transaction receipts to both the vendor and customer. Cash will be taken from the customer ATM account and credited to the vendor for later payment. FBOI charges a 5% vendor commission per transaction.

Ed's note - This piece, as with many others, was produced by editing a press release. There has been some discussion, for instance in comp.risks, about the possible pitfalls of such a scheme. It almost goes without saying that anyone considering jumping aboard any electronic cash scheme should do some serious research first.

## Netscape to include Topic search engine

Netscape are planning to embed Verity's Topic search engine in its servers and will also resell Verity's Topic Agent Server technology. As well as being a stand-alone application, Topic is already used in many well-known software products including Adobe Acrobat and Lotus Notes. Topic Agents allow users and on-line providers to filter incoming information against interest profiles and send automatic alerts via personal HTML pages, electronic mail or fax. Topic objects also allow information to be automatically categorised and browsed by subject area.

## Shout it across the rooftops

I probably shouldn't do this, but what the hell. If you want to see an example of how you could present yourself to the world via your Web home page then take a look at *http://www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/~moffatd/*. Mark Sanderson confessed that he had been thinking of putting a nice photo of *his* fiancee in his home page until he realised what his reaction was to examples like this. Mark has, however, sneaked his loved one in with the pictures of his pals in the mountains so if you want to take a peek and then perhaps write to Mark telling him what a fab fiancee he has, look at *http://www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/~sanderso/*. She is in the section marked *climbing* and, by the way, that picture of his *best day out on the hills* - it's not him at all, the fraud!

There are many Web catalogues around nowadays but certainly one of the strangest must be the Mother-of-all-Bulletin-Board-Services which can be found at:

*http://www.cs.colorado.edu/homes/ mcbryan/publi_html/bb/summary.html*

It consists of a somewhat quirky and idiosyncratic collection of categories. Along with quite sensible-looking categories such as Accounting and Agriculture are total wierdies such as *Affordable Nutritional Products*, *All About Signs* or the absurdly-named *AIRLAUNCHERS, Snow avalanche, Hangup relief-U/G mines*.

Much of this quirkiness comes from the fact that the content, including the categorisation, is controlled by, well, anyone who wants to really.  Unfortunately this results in huge amounts of Cybercrap including an 'Agents wanted' category which contains a couple of 'Make money fast' type ads, followed by a jumbled assortment of other stuff with titles like 'The', and four links to *The NEW Professional Face Muscle Enhancement Exercise Beauty Manual*'. This last entry seems to appear in most of the categories at least once or twice and what's more, it's always flashing on and off in that diabolical way that Netscape must wish they'd never invented.  In fact, half the links on any one page seem to flash on and off which, coupled with a horrendous notion of layout, surely makes this the worst collection of Web pages in existence.

# You are being Formed

NISS, not quite the same as BIDS, is making the Times available almost a day after publishing, while the CD-ROM version might be months old.  Plus it is available to the whole higher education community while many organisations might not want to subscribe to the CD-ROM.  However, the WAIS interface is pretty gruesome in comparison with what one would expect from a decent CD equivalent, though this might in part be the vt100 access generally available form telnet.  X sessions are an improvement but with network access and response time penalties.

Other JISC services such as Mailbase are open and free to all higher education institutions.  JISC has a data sets policy, with an ambitions expenditure programme, though what will appear remains an open question.

EARL is currently free, as is the BL OPAC, but whether this will remain the case is also open.

Meanwhile Dialog and paper publishing must have suffered.

But also suffering are the users.  Navigating your way through this space is mind boggling in its complexity.  My guess is that most users don't know that the British Library doesn't buy published books, it isn't a public library, and therefore wont have much US published material.  Don't be surprised.

Information Gateways such as SOSIG (*http://sosig.ac.uk*) are a step forward, but they are at the level of a central service and so will not be able to point to local resources.  If a medical one is developed, there will be an iggy world which will generate new levels of complexity for people like me who are mainly concerned with developing countries.  But SOSIG also fails at rather more simple levels - it doesn't tell you how many hits you've achieved.  There is an awful lot more to be done.

Every player in the value chain is trying to realise their assets and leverage the value of their contribution (or whatever business school jargon seems appropriate at this stage).  What actually seems to be happening is the most impressive enclosure movement since the highland clearances. Whole acres of public property are being turned into private spaces through intellectual property rights positions, and bodies with enough power to act, such as JISC, SCONUL, committees or professors, HEFC etc. are stunningly quiet.  The HEFC research design exercise which started this note collects data on forms of all our output yet fails to build a database of the intellectual record from which we could all benefit.

But in the meantime, communities are being created where the preservation of the intellectual record might be of little importance.  When scholarship was the privilege of a minority, keeping control of it was realisable.  In a massified society it might be neither necessary nor possible.  Perhaps UKOLN is asking the wrong questions?

BCS

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