# AusSI Web Indexing Prize 1998

## Dwight Walker

This year's AusSI web indexing prize attracted entrants in a range of new categories, including search engines, and genealogy and law sites. The importance of metadata is discussed.

What is a Web index? This question has come up more this year. We had entries from such diverse areas as government search engines, genealogical names lists, virtual libraries of links and annotated link lists. The common thread seems to be an organisation of links or jump stations that lead a reader to the information they are after. This is enhanced with a well-designed interface for the reader to work with. Search engines do not generally come into this category, though now, with metadata searching being available, the two are starting to overlap.

## Metadata

This year metadata came to the fore in many of the entries especially government search engines. The winner this year, Tasmania Online, used the power of a search engine with embedded metadata indexing to create a search facility or index that allows a user to find exactly what they are after. It also is much more transferable. Say the index grows, or is merged with another index, there is less chance of having to reindex or reconstruct an ever-growing resource in HTML.

As in all things to do with the Web, size is very important. An index needs to be scalable. Increasing website complexity makes indexing larger and larger sites or groups of links almost formidable. Using the power of a search engine with well designed meta tags just may well be the way to go, especially if the Web publisher is able to get the resources to do it right across their range of publications.

There is an opening for development of editing tools here for librarians or Webmasters. Currently the larger organisations hire programmers in Perl or C to develop elaborate database search facilities for the Web. It is all inhouse. Later, smaller outfits may be able to purchase a product that an indexer or librarian could use to gather and organise links for a website in their charge.

Full details of entries are on the AusSI website:
http://www.zeta.org.au/~aussi/prizes/webindresults98.htm

## Winner: Tasmania Online — State Library of Tasmania, Hobart

http://www.tas.gov.au/
Lloyd Sokvitne (manager and meta data developer),
Liz Holliday (editor of the subject index and business guide's Javascript) and Elizabeth Louden (cataloguer)
tol.editor@central.tased.edu.au

The impact of this three-way approach to indexing their area of interest — Tasmania — was quite effective. Firstly, they indexed Tasmanian websites that were emailed to them into distinct categories — a normal back-of-book style index. Secondly, they inserted meta tags into all the Tasmanian state government websites, as well as thousands of non-government websites, and then pointed a search engine at them to crawl over and index them automatically. This allowed users to search any Tasmanian government Web page using metadata — not straight brute force like most search engines use.

Thirdly, their site had excellent navigation, allowing the casual user to browse or wander around the site and find information quickly and easily. They well deserved their award, which we will be presenting to them at the AusSI 'August Indexer' conference in Hobart in August 1999.

## 2nd: Case-in-POINT — Acxiom Corp/ Marisol Productions, Mass., USA

http://www.acxiom.com/caseinpoint/cip-ix-home.htm
Marilyn Rowland (indexer, Marisol Productions), Janet Smith (Web publisher, Cross World Network, Inc.) and Axciom Corp. (author of Case-in-POINT)
mairsol@marisol.com

This was a professional index to hundreds of business articles. Features included a central well-constructed subject index plus keyword cross-references at the bottom of each article to allow users to look up related articles. Its main strength was the use of indexing structure in a Web environment. Better design of the way the keywords were listed on the Web page would have really helped.

## 3rd: Screen Network Australia — Australian Film Commission, Sydney

http://www.sna.net.au/
Peter Langmead (p.langmead@afc.gov.au)

This was a database driven index of links to the Web. Their topic was Australian film and TV websites. They had a broad spectrum of sites in their database. The reader could drill down to two levels by expanding a term in the index. In the actual directory there were annotations of the links to allow the reader to pick the most relevant link under a particular topic.

## Entrants

### Search engines

This group of entries were ideal examples of how search engines are becoming more and more user-friendly. Their results are not just dumped at the user but can be filtered and searched by key words. This is a far cry from the time when the user would get 100,000 hits. Now the results are sorted and the data are much easier to master and get used to working with. These sites had the ability to search for a keyword right through a long document

jumping from one occurrence to another through the document to give the reader an insight to the relevance of the hit.

At this stage the amount of controlled vocabulary is increasing but there is still a need for more metadata. The government is starting to move in this direction, I believe — so we may see a full text database which is very different and easier to search in the near future from AUSINFO.

AGLS (Australian Government Locator Service) is the standard for metadata fields that Australian government websites are moving towards in the coming year.
See http://www.naa.gov.au/govserv/agls/ for the manual developed by the National Archives of Australia and Office of Government Information Technology.

## AUSINFO, Canberra, Australia

Bruce McLeod (brucemc@ausinfo.gov.au)

SCALEplus — David Grainger, Manager of Electronic Legal Publishing, Attorney Generals Dept

OSIRIS — Jeremy Gregson, Manager of Internet Publishing, AUSINFO

Media — Jeremy Gregson, Manager of Internet Publishing, AUSINFO

Federal Government Search Engine — Jeremy Gregson, Manager of Internet Publishing, AUSINFO

### Index 1: Australian Government Media Releases Search Engine

URL: http://media.fed.gov.au/

### Index 2: SCALEplus Australian Law Search Engine

URL: http://scaleplus.law.gov.au/

### Index 3: Commonwealth Government Search Engine

URL: http://www.fed.gov.au/search

### Index 4: OSIRIS - Industrial Relations Search Engine

URL: http://indrel.ausinfo.gov.au

This was a striking entry. AUSINFO submitted the above four different search engines of Australian Government websites. All of these used extensive hypertext programming to enable the reader to do keyword searching of large government databases on the Web.

They also added value by emailing regular search results — users could store a regular search and have the results emailed to them daily. The government sites are moving. to using metadata in the near future. Currently they index their sites using Dublin Core metadata standards. These are very powerful search engines that, with suitable tweaking from an indexer or librarian, could really deliver information to narrow niches in the near future. Another area of interest was how they kept up to date with the latest government websites. A major problem in Web indexing is the shifting sands of websites. Most of it was word-of-mouth or checking for the existence of new domains or URLs.

## Genealogical sites

There were quite a number of genealogical sites this year. Genealogical indexes are very different from subject indexes in back-of-book indexing. This was reflected in the content of the indexes in this section. Most of them were lists of names and their family connections.

How they organised the family links between names and the general design of the site were the most important criteria in judging these entries. At this early stage, most genealogists did not group names or put some extra value on the data to make it more accessible — e.g. lists of names in a particular area or period in time or related to some event or industry. We will see more of these kinds of sites in the future.

Some sites were embellished with, for example, stories about people in the American Civil War. This may be where genealogical indexes will move in the future — a push towards local history from the raw data of genealogical records.

### Strays in Tasmania — Tasmanian Family History Service

Meryl Yost, Launceston (yostie@speed.net.au)

http://www.speed.net.au/~yostie

A straight-down-the-line list of names and dates of strays in Tasmania.

### Convicts, Characters and Cads — the ancestors of Scott and Fiona Brown Scott Brown

(sbrown6@metz.une.edu.au)

http://www.uq.net.au/~zzsbrown/family/

A very large index of thousands of names, all with a very good computer-generated index of links to each other. This would prove very helpful to genealogists all over the world.

### Tall Trees Family History — Western Australia

Carolyn Harris (Tall_Trees@Bigpond.com)

http://www.users.bigpond.com/Tall_Trees/

This site had a well-organised list of links to genealogical resources such as births, deaths and marriages registries, overseas research centres and books.

### Milton Ulladulla History Site

Cathy Dunn (cathyd@shoalhaven.net.au)

http://www.shoalhaven.net.au/~cathyd/

This had several names lists plus some local history.

## Law sites

There were some very good indexes to full text sites of law materials on the Web:

### Law Pathfinder

University of Sydney Law Library, NSW, Australia

Colin Fong (cfong@library.usyd.edu.au)

http://www.law.usyd.edu.au/~library/pathfind.htm

This site has a very full and extensive online commentary to law resources throughout the world and focussed on Australian jurisdictions, as well as an online help sheet for academics and solicitors needing to keep abreast of developments in law in Australia — a very useful tool for those seeking to find information in their sphere that is aimed at the right level and is reliable. The Law Library staff have checked out the quality of the links, which makes their site a valuable resource in the legal world.

## The Canadian Internet Law Resource Page

University of Ottawa Law School, Canada
Michael Geist (mgeist@uottawa.ca)
http://aix1.uottawa.ca/~geist/cilrp.html

This has some very choice online links to full text Canadian legal materials — a gold-mine for any lawyers in Canada or those interested in international law. Michael Geist found them by a lot of searching!

## Virtual Libraries

There were some very effective and well researched virtual libraries this year:

### Virtual Library of the Australian Institute of Alpine Studies

Internet Weavers
Joanne Hooper (johooper@netweavers.com.au)
http://www.environment.gov.au/environment/bg/alpine/

As part of the Australian Institute of Alpine Studies' Website, this jewel had many very useful links for researchers. They were aimed at an international audience. The number of links was not great but they led onto many other very useful and carefully selected sites — a springboard to good quality materials on alpine studies worldwide; good for researchers.

### Guide to Internet information sources for Australian journalists

University of Queensland Library, Australia

Belinda Weaver (b.weaver@library.uq.edu.au)
http://www.uq.edu.au/~mlbweave/

A well selected group of categories in which annotated links of the instant facts and figures that journalists are always after could be readily found. A very good site for quick retrieval of quality information.

## Personal Home Pages

### Bicycle Fish

Grace Newhaven, Adelaide (gloria@cobweb.com.au)
http://www.cobweb.com.au/~gloria/index.html

A group of links and stories about bicycling — the efforts of one person — a real mixture!

---

### Judges

Dwight Walker, WWWalker Web Development
Maureen Henninger, Continuing Education, School of Information, Library and Archive Studies, University of New South Wales
Kerry Webb, Internet Columnist, inCite Magazine, Australian Library and Information Association

---

*Dwight Walker WWWalker Web Development, PO Box 288, Wentworthville, Sydney, 2145, Australia*
*http://www.wwwalker.com.au*