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services have begun to help stabilize the Net itself by applying their tools and skills to Net traffic problems. All the services have begun using the Web as a commercial location. A few traditionals have even made the move with some prospect of success at increasing business in a Web environment. Looking at the product design and marketing strategies for most of the new Web versions from the traditionals, however, you would have to assume that most only hope to defend existing markets.

Once again, as we said a year ago in the editorial to the 1996 "all-technology" issue, searchers must look to the Newbies, the Net-born vendors, for the future of information services. Enjoy the traditionals while you can. Sad though it makes me to say it, until I see action by the traditionals that commits them to more than just repeating their quarter-century-old accomplishments in corralling the knowledge lodged in print into a digital venue, until I see them step up to today's and tomorrow's challenge of dealing with the archiving and accessing of massive Net- and Webborn knowledge, until I see them recognize that what people will pay for today and tomorrow differs from what people would pay for yesterday — until I see those signs, I cannot hold out hope for their extended future.

This may sound strange, but I still don't think it's too late for the traditionals to act - even now. As the Internet and its Web grow and grow (some experts expect it to reach hundreds of millions of people before 2010), more and more people wrestle with more and more data. Exhaustion and frustration are powerful forces for yanking money out of people's pockets - and the Internet has brought a lot more pockets into play. However, people who come to advanced information through the Net and its Web will not pay for solutions to print data handling. That's like trying to sell well-building to people with poor plumbing. (No one's that thirsty.) Netters will only pay for solutions to Net or Web knowledge and then only for value that matches their perceptions. These days even traditional online's traditional market - information professionals - have become Netters.

There was a wonderful line in a Clark Gable/Doris Day movie, *Teacher's Pet.* As I recall, the line went,

A Sad Day at Searcher Magazine

We've got some bad news and some good news. Sadly, Aggi Raeder, the loyal and wonderful columnist who produces the monthly Internet Express column, has decided to hang up her mouse. Aggi has opted to accelerate her retirement process and give up her column writing duties. No more early morning calls, no more last minute importuning for just one more Web search, no more looking out the door for the FedEx driver while Aggi re-checks site addresses one last time.

That's the bad news. The good news is that Aggi has introduced us to a wonderful replacement, Irene McDermott. Irene's first Internet Express column runs in this issue — an insightful, searcher-oriented review of the new Netscape and Microsoft Internet browsers. Irene's commitment to the magazine appears very genuine. She has already purchased a new computer just to make sure her working environment matches the ones of our readers. Since Irene works at the University of Southern California's Leavey Library, she can also write from the perspective of someone free from modem-only limitations in Internet access.

By the way, if any *Searcher* readers care to get in touch with Aggi Raeder, we have included her contact information one last time (sigh) in the Contacts section. Her e-mail address is aggi@netcom.com. Don't lose hope. We may still see Aggi's name in the magazine again. As *Star Trek* movies scorn the power of death, *Searcher* Magazine laughs at notions of retirement — especially when the target still lives in the editor's home town.

"There may be some things more painful than the truth, but I can't think of any." That's how I feel telling the truth as I see it here. But searchers and their vendors have to see the truth before they can change it.

...bq



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"It Was Here a Minute Ago!": Archiving the Net

by Susan E. Feldman President, DataSearch

The urge to archive — to save, to store, to preserve for posterity — is endemic to our profession. Enter the shifting sands of the Internet, with its here today, gone tomorrow contents. We find a world frustrating and confusing in which materials which may have some lasting intrinsic value are treated as disposables. How do we as a profession use our unique skills to choose what is worth saving and to preserve it? How do we preserve the invisible? How do we do it fast enough so that we don't lose years of materials while we discuss the problem?

Before we start, let me clarify the topic of this article. There are all kinds of archives on the Internet. In fact, the Internet itself has become an archiving device, one which publishers have begun to use for their products, in particular scholarly publishers with products such as Elsevier Science Direct, library vendors such as OCLC with Electronic Collections Online, and libraries themselves such as the JSTOR consortium effort at the University of Michigan. In most cases, however, these archiving activities - important and revolutionary as they are to the future of information service - still focus on reproducing print products in a digital venue. This article's primary target is the more amorphous material - the Web- or Net-only material. In some cases, e.g., e-zines or Webzines, the sources overlap, which explains some of the overlap in this article.

What Is an Internet Archive?

Good question. I ran across several archival flavors in the course of gathering information for this article. "Archive" is a very handy term to apply to any collection of resources, even a virtual collection. For instance, several sites labeled "Software Archive" or "Math Archive" (http://archives.math. utk.edu/archives.html) concentrated on creating links to useful materials stored elsewhere. These meta-sites seem more concerned with facilitating access to materials than with preserving them. Other sites, such as the Internet Archive, try to collect everything on the "public Web," but have not yet made the collection accessible. Organizations such as OCLC are more concerned with creating access to materials than with storing actual materials. However, their shared cataloging represents resources which their member institutions do preserve.

For the purposes of this article, we distinguish an archive as a collection of material which someone has vowed to maintain for the foreseeable future and that offers some kind of access to the collection.

What Should We Preserve?

The short answer is preserve whatever you can, particularly if no one else is preserving it. Efforts to preserve electronic materials range from the "preserve everything and then we'll decide" mentality of the Internet Archive to the extremely selective approach of OCLC. The situation with the Internet frankly does not differ philosophically from what has happened historically to materials in more traditional formats. The difference lies in what technology has made possible.

Technically we can now record practically everything which appears on the Internet, barring private sites, materials on intranets, or materials separated from the user and the Web crawler by some barrier such as a registration box, query screen, or other CGI script. Anything on the public Internet, though, is fair game, technically if not legally. This situation works pretty much like

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"...preserve whatever you can, particularly if no one else is preserving it."

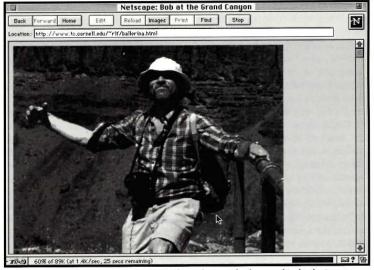
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FEATURE — "ARCHIVING THE NET"

anything which an organization or individual stuck in a box in an attic 100 years ago and/or bequeathed to a historical society and thus preserved for posterity in an archive. This appeals to the "preserve first and decide on value later" mentality.

Archivists and librarians differ in deciding what to preserve and on other issues such as whether to organize materials so that they conform to some sort of standard subject or topic outline. Archivists want to preserve the social history, not only the materials, but the way in which individuals kept them. These purists feel that the method of keeping may shed some light on individuals and their times. Librarians perceive all information as existing on a single continuum, and believe in grouping materials in a single subject hierarchy. They aim to create an information service that can give their clients anything and everything pertaining to a subject in one place. Archivists don't throw things out. They preserve small things which might become sociological clues. Librarians learn selectivity in library school. They seek the best, organize it, and - ideally - create common access through a single access system.

Even within the library community, though, decisions on what is valuable differ according to the "mission" of the library. Do you have a corporate library? Then anything relating to the company is important, down to the smallest brochure or newspaper advertisement. Public libraries try to find a representative sampling of all subjects, usually for the educated laity, but they also tend to specialize in the history and culture of their own area. For example, my public library has an excellent collection of books and materials about the Finger Lakes area of New York State, including local wineries, the early film industry, and lists of local restaurants. Their how-to-do-it collection is outstanding. Even though Cornell University exists in the same town, professors wanting to make snowshoes come to the public library for the information. Cornell's mission, in turn, emphasizes both breadth and depth in



Some people post their vacation pictures on the Web. Does this have archival value?

scholarly knowledge on a research level.

The answer, then, to the question of what to preserve, if not everything, is to select what is valuable to your own organization, preserve it, create easy access to it, and maintain the collection. That is what libraries and information professionals do, and we do it well.

If librarians let what people want to access influence their selection procedures, how can they ever support "full" archiving? Because, though we all preserve different things, we expect other librarians and other archivists to cover what we miss. Out of the concatenation of multiple resources emerges the huge single archive. Cooperating to create single access points to multiple sources using standardized formats, e.g., through union catalogs, OCLC, RLIN, or Z39.50 Web- based public access catalogs, all goes to create the great archival edifice of modern libraries.

In general, although archivists and librarians may disagree on fine points and definitions, most information professionals define something as worthy of preservation

- if it is the best, or one of the best, of its kind.
- if it is of generally high quality or from a reputable source.

 if it is unique, the only one in existence, the last known copy.

Selection criteria differ considerably, but quality, high content value, and uniqueness generally count.

Existing Archives or Internet Preservation Projects

Several groups have already begun to create archives, or to lay the groundwork for them. These projects all share two common viewpoints. They seek to preserve information currently on the Internet. They plan to make their collections publicly accessible.

1. The Internet Archive [http://www. archive.org/]

"We just think it's worthwhile to do, and if we all wait for complete consensus and everybody to agree, then another 10 years will go by and it won't be saved." — Brewster Kahle

Squarely at the save-it-all end of the archive spectrum sits the Internet Archive. Started by Brewster Kahle, well-known for his creation of the WAIS (Wide Area Information Server) architecture, the Internet Archive plans to save everything it can from the Web. In addition, they store postings from Usenet newsgroups and a few FTP sites.

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