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From the Reference Desk

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From the Reference Desk

Column Editor: **Tom Gilson** (College of Charleston) (gilson@cofc.edu)

ATG is breaking new ground again. In the never-ending battle to fit news from throughout the library and publishing worlds snugly within our covers, we are introducing this **NEW COLUMN**. **From the Reference Desk** will be devoted to reviews, news and an occasional interview relating to the world of reference and reference publishing. Issues like publishing criteria for reference materials, the impact of the Internet on reference, publisher-librarian relations, as well as others, will be grist for the mill. **Tom Gilson**, Head of Reference Services at the College of Charleston, has volunteered to edit the column, and would welcome review copies of reference books, suggestions for "hot topics" and perspective interviews, as well as, any news/gossip, readers think worthy of mention. It is an exciting time in reference for both publishers and librarians.

More than ever, the amount of and demand for reference information seems overwhelming. Couple this with the multiple access and delivery formats now available via new technologies along with the continuing vitality of the book, and the need to provide reference materials and services becomes an increasing challenge. Thoughtful discussion among professionals is essential in meeting this challenge and ATG is developing this new column to provide a forum for concerned reference professionals. Enjoy! — KS

Kinder, Robin., ed. *Librarians on the Internet: Impact on Reference Services*.

New York: Haworth, 1994.

(Published simultaneously as
The Reference Librarian, Nos. 41/42)

Reviewed by **Tom Gilson**

Given the accelerated nature of technological change, books dealing with the Internet have one marked similarity. Such books are out of date by the time they are published. However, this does not imply that books on the Internet are without merit. *Librarians on the Internet: Impact on Reference Services* is a collection of essays which tries to give a sense of how reference librarians are integrating the Internet into their professional lives and into the services which they offer.

The editor has divided the book into five sections. The first section briefly covers the basic capabilities of the Internet like EMail, Listservs and FTP, as well as, the specific tools which can be used to search for information like Gopher and Veronica. (Recent developments like Mosaic and Netscape are not mentioned.) The second section deals with specific Internet sources in areas like the sciences, economics and presidential politics. The next section attempts to measure the impacts of the Internet on reference by emphasizing the opportunities the Internet offers for librarians to play an expanded role in "connecting people with information." Articles in this section also cover the challenges the Internet presents to librarians in providing individual user services, bibliographic instruction, and staff training.

The fourth section deals with the issue of evaluating Internet

resources and offers both criteria and caveats in developing an evaluation process. This is probably the weakest section of the book. Only three articles are devoted to evaluating Internet resources and one of those is an NREN Update for 1993. The quality of the information available via the Internet and establishing ways for librarians to evaluate this information are issues which need to be addressed by the profession. More theoretical thought and practical research should be devoted to this "quality" issue.

The last section offers specific examples of how some libraries have utilized and integrated the Internet into their overall services. Developing campuswide information systems, electronic text projects, melding the Internet into a library networked environment and using the Internet to deliver commercially available databases are some of the examples cited. This collection is by no means comprehensive, nor does it claim to be. It is, as editor **Robin Kinder** says, "simply a point in time," of a work in progress. As such, this book can serve as a starting point. It is a collection which raises more questions than it answers and begs further research. The ever-evolving nature of the Internet calls for such collections to be published on a regular basis. **Haworth Press** should consider making a collection like this an annual event either as a special issue of *The Reference Librarian* or a separate monograph (or both).

Federal Executive Directory.

Carroll Publishing. ISSN: 0270-563X. 1995.

Reviewed by **C. Michael Phillips**

(College of Charleston) (phillips@cofc.edu)

Carroll's **Federal Executive Directory** is composed of four color-coded sections. The directory even looks user-friendly without opening the cover. The first section, in tan, is an alphabetical listing which supplies telephone numbers, agencies and cross-references to line numbers in the organizational listings of the white and green pages. The last section, in blue, is a keyword index that also supplies cross-references to the white and green pages.

Obviously, the white and green pages are the heart of the directory. The white pages organize U.S. courts, cabinet agencies, administrative agencies and other quasi-governmental agencies in a reporting-type hierarchy. Congressional offices, committees and delegations are listed in the green pages. In both the white and green pages, lines are numbered sequentially to facilitate referencing from the tan and blue sections. First and last line numbers on a page are given at the top of the page and individuals are listed by title, name, room number and phone number. When available, fax numbers and email addresses are also listed.

What more can be said about a directory that organizes federal executives in an easy-to-use fashion, updates completely every two months, saves staff time or telephone calls to locate the right person and currently sells at \$197 for a year's subscription in print or floppy disk format? Buy it!

Did You Know?

Keeping up with all the new Home Pages available via the World-Wide Web can be a daunting task. So, here are a few you might want to take a look at:

<http://lycos.cs.cmu.edu/>

The Lycos Home Page: Hunting WWW Information. Considered by many to be one of the best search engines available for searching the WEB. Gets a lot of traffic, so give it a try off peak hours.

<http://akebono.stanford.edu/yahoo/>

Yahoo Home Page. A general Internet directory divided by broad subject categories. A fun place to browse. Also offers keyword searching. Another high traffic item.

<http://carl.org/refsrc.html>

Provides access to selected sources and information like the **CIA World Fact Book**, **Zip Code Directories**, **foreign currency rates** and **stock quotations**. Also provides links to a variety of gophers.

<http://Thomas.loc.gov>

Congress' Home Page offering full text of all versions of House and Senate bills. Searchable by keyword.

<http://cancer.med.upenn.edu/>

Oncolink Home Page. Provides both information on a variety of issues related to cancer as well as links to other relevant databases.

None of the brief explanations above does justice to the Home Pages cited. You could spent hours on any one of them, and still not view everything that these Home Pages contain. So, if you haven't already, invest a little time in exploring. It is well worth the effort!! ☛

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It can then be saved or printed which is done within the prototype software. This insures that the user has authorized access and a valid subscription.

When there is no institutional subscription to the electronic format, the user can place the request for the article electronically within the prototype and have the document delivered electronically to a local printer on the requester's LAN, or sent via mail or fax. The more traditional alternative of going to the library to obtain a print copy is also available.

Since both publishers and libraries want predictability in revenue and expenditures respectively, the economic model is based on an annual subscription price with unlimited viewing. Printing rights are a point of discussion and will be determined by the individual publishers.

The schedule . . .

Installation of ISI's **Electronic Library** prototype will begin in North America in August 1995. European sites will be added in January 1996. Initial plans call for an eighteen month test beginning with the actual usage of the prototype. Recommendations for future developments will be determined during the pilot.

Reports on user behavior will be totaled for all sites and shared with publishers and pilot sites. Journal usage based on viewing, saving and printing article images will be collected along with demand for document delivery for the publishers. Each site will receive user behavior and journal usage reports specific to their location.

Additional news releases will provide updates on planned developments. Any questions about the project can be directed to **Jacqueline Trolley** through the Internet (jtrolley@isinet.com) or by phone (800-336-4474 x 1449). ☛

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