Rumours from Paddington

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The Online Information conference and exhibition took place at the beginning of December in Olympia, London. It was the event's Silver Jubilee. Strange to think that the first event took place before the Internet was a household word and before the PC revolutionised desktop access to computing. Learned Information did a great job organising a lively and interesting few days. The product presentations, running concurrently to the exhibition were jam-packed. Speakers included Jenny Walker from ExLibris, Amanda Spiteri from ScienceDirect, Simon Jennings from the Resource Network Centre, Kings College, Tim Owen from the Library Association and Tim Ingoldsy from the American Institute of Physics. Gary Price (ex George Washington Library) and Greg Notess (Montana State University) the tireless pair of librarians come Web-search-Gurus were both involved in the information master classes and keynote seminars.

BioMedCentral, the publishing company committed to a policy of free access to scientific research has announced that it will introduce a processing charge for articles published in its online journals starting January 1st 2002. I guess it is hard to sustain a completely free model ad infinitum.

BioMedCentral has also announced that it will be collaborating with The Scientist to produce "the most widely distributed life science magazine in the world." The serial-entrepreneur, Witak Tracz Chairman of the Current Science Group, the company behind BioMedCentral, is said to be delighted about the prospects of this collaboration.

The JISC-funded six month project INSPIRAL is now finished and a full report available at http://inspiral.cdir.strath.ac.uk. The project's remit was to identify and critically analyse the issues that surround linking virtual learning environments (VLE's) and digital libraries. The focus was on the institutional and end-user perspectives. The dynamic Sarah Currier INSPIRAL research Fellow at the University of Strathclyde and her Research assistant, Sharron Brown, worked non-stop for the past six months holding focus groups, conducting online research and generally wading through the issues new and exciting area has brought to the surface. Their analysis is to provide JISC (the Joint Information Services Committee) with priority areas for strategic planning and investment.

London has been gripped by "The Lord of the Rings"mania (the film was released on Dec 19th) following the recent "Harry Potter" hysteria. The British Library satisfied appetites for anything related to the famous books by running a Tolkien exhibition until the end of January. The exhibition displayed a trove of Rings memorabilia including the first illustrated edition of J.R.R Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy and rare first edition copies of "The Hobbit" as well as letters and notes from the author to his grandson.

The British Library have also announced that they have completed stage one of their project to put online the 1.5 million Union Catalogue of Books records, listing stock held by the British Library's Document Supply Centre. This means that the DSC's pre 1950 records, 450,000 in total, are now available or the British Library Public Catalogue and can be searched via the Library's Website.

The host for the 2002 UKAIS conference is the School of Information Management, Leeds Metropolitan University. This conference is the premiere event in the Information Systems calendar within the UK and attracts leading academics and researchers from the UK and overseas. There is a call for papers via the Website http://www.lmu.ac.uk/ies/ ukais/callpapers.htm.

Chris Martinlade, Subject Advisor, Derbyshire Business School and UCR Committee organized a stimulating afternoon discussing eBooks and their future at the University of Derbyshire at the end of November. Speakers included Louise Edwards Head of Management Information Resource Centre, Cranfield School of Management and member of JISC eBooks Working Group and Penny Garrod, Public Library Networking Focus UKOLN - UK Office for Library and Information Networking.

The Library Association in London also held a seminar on eBooks and publishing recently attended by 50 librarians from throughout the UK keen to learn about the latest developments. Louise Edwards from JISC was speaking again (she must be exhausted!) as was Suzanne Wilson-Higgins, Commercial Director, Lightning Source Ltd, Christine-Love Rodgers Assistant Librarian Learner Support, Open University and the omnipresent Anthony Watkinson, Consultant, Visiting Professor in Information Science, City University.

And finally, the news from xrefer on platform One, Paddington Station is that we have now released xreferplus (Dec 7th) and are welcoming our first flurry of libraries as subscribers.

We also welcomed the Queen in the station a couple of weeks ago. Quite unexpectedly she arrived in Paddington to take a normal passenger train to Wiltshire. Mind you, she was traveling first class!