Bet You Missed It -- Press Clippings -- In the News - - Carefully Selected by Your Crack Team of News Sleuths

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RISKY BUSINESS
by Sandra Beehler (Lewis & Clark College)

Japanese entrepreneur Masayoshi Son lost most of his multi-billion dollar fortune when the dot.com bubble burst, but going bust has not diminished his eagerness to pursue risky visions. He spent more than $2 billion building an Internet network that offers high speed (12 megabits a second) DSL access to ordinary consumers in Japan at very low cost. Along with Internet access, he offers voice-over-IP (in direct competition to telephone companies) and is poised to deliver TV and video-over-IP services. Already deeply in debt, Softbank (Son's main holding company) has had recourse to some suspiciously creative accounting and been forced to sell off some of its more lucrative holdings. Son may be setting the pace in this game, but there is doubt as to whether he can stay the course.

See — “Fat Pipe Dream” by Brendan I Koerner in Wired, Aug 2003, p. 84-86.

EIGHT YEAR CAVE QUEST
by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

It took eight years to overcome floods, drought and bush fires, but Paul Tacon and colleagues at the Australian Museum in Sydney finally reached Eagles Reach at Wollemi National Park in New South Wales to document 4000-year-old cave drawings first discovered by a bush walker. Accessible only on foot over mountainous terrain, the 203 images include charcoal drawings of kangaroos and lizards, and depictions of half-human, half-animal creatures.


LAVA LAMP LOTTERY
by Sandra Beehler (Lewis & Clark College)

Lotteries, polling, simulation, encryption—all make use of the mathematical phenomena known as random numbers. Generating a sequence of numbers with no recognizable pattern may sound easy—and indeed it can be done with a pair of dice—but skyrocketing demand in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has fueled the search for ever more efficient random number generators (RNGs). Currently many RNGs use some source of white noise as the base for their sequences. In 1996 Landon Noll, a cryptographer at Silicon Graphics, introduced a system based on Lava Lites (lava lamps). This year Noll and fellow expert Simon Cooper came up with an even more sophisticated RNG called LavaRad, which employs a webcam with its lens cap on, and which they are giving away at www.lavarad.org.


STOP THE STRUGGLE
by Sandra Beehler (Lewis & Clark College)

The coming to power in 1989 of Liberia’s Charles Taylor marked the beginning of fighting that has spread from Liberia to surrounding West African countries of Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, and Guinea. The French stepped in to maintain a fragile peace in Ivory Coast, likewise the British intervened in Sierra Leone; Guinea’s government managed to sustain itself. The article presents a strong argument for U.S. intervention to get rid of Taylor before the continuing bloodshed in Liberia again spreads to the entire region. In fact, Taylor and Liberian forces loyal to him have been the instigators of much of West Africa’s recent struggles; it is time for him to face the consequences of his deeds.


Endnotes
4. Ackerman, L.G. “Is Age an Appropriate Criterion for Moving Journals to Storage?” Collection Management 26:3 (Fall 2001) 176-177, 189.
5. Ackerman, J.9 Also discussed in Alexander, Julie S. “Highlights of the ALCTS CMDS Collection Management Issues for Offsite Storage Discussion Group.” Library Collections, Acquisitions, and Technical Services v. 23 no 1 (Spring 1999) 129.
8. Hill, 32.

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to obtain archived versions of electronic titles in the event the vendor loses licensing rights or no longer does business with the library. The existence of a statewide organization with an archive of a substantive number of titles helps to mitigate this concern—with out such a capability, the attractiveness of ending print subscriptions might diminish. Some libraries also are concerned that patrons may not have access to a full run of journals, either because electronic copies are not browseable in the stacks, or patrons comfortable with the Internet will not browse hard copies of journals. Concerns with offsite storage center on browseability and on concerns that delays in obtaining articles might deter patrons who might otherwise have used the articles. Nevertheless, feedback has been largely positive. Libraries responding to the survey frequently noted that the most frequently expressed concerns about titles were that patrons wanted more titles and/or that they wanted more available electronically—something that these strategies may help to enable.
BLUNDER, BLUSTER AND BUREAUCRATS
by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

Media coverage of the looting and destruction of Iraq's museums and libraries may have obliterated the good news: three weeks before the U.S. attack began, Iraq's Ministry of Culture employees secretly removed over 8,000 precious objects to a secret location, revealed only after the 6th of July to U.S. investigators. The fascinating tale of "misunderstandings, mistakes, surprises and bureaucratic infighting" is revealed in this excellent recounting that chronicles the unfolding of events from January through July.

See — "Mayhem in Mesopotamia" by Andrew Lawler in Science, August 1, 2003, pp.582-589.