

Multimedia Information and Technology Digital

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Welcome to the August 2005 issue of Multimedia Information & Technology. Click on the headings in the sidebar or the page links, or scroll through the issue.



This issue contains an update on the continuing saga of the *bfi*, first published in the Summer 2005 issue of Archive Zones, the quarterly magazine of the Federation of Commercial Audiovisual Libraries (FOCAL).

It is reproduced with the permission of all parties involved. For further information visit the FOCAL website at www.focalint.org

Film and Video News covers some of the work of Geoffrey Jones, who died in June 2005, as well as the usual releases.

The two feature articles are David Sloan's exposition of the basic principles of designing accessibility into websites, and Keith Buckman's report (see below left) on the redesign of a media arts centre at Royal Holloway College.

Ken Cheetham investigates Linspire 5, a Linux-based piece of operating software (right), while book reviews include the 2nd edition of Peter Brophy's introduction to academic libraries, a book on teaching information skills, Margaret Oldroyd's book on developing library staff, and Olwen Terris on cataloguing digital material.



Technology, contributed by Jane Rowlands, covers the automatic calibration of electronic whiteboards, Text-to-Speech technologies, developments in the Highlands and Islands and a portable projector.



The news column reports on the National Gallery Exhibitions, the European Digital Library, the Peoples Archive and Xrefer amongst other topics.

Bibliolinks completes this issue with a list of relevant publications in the multimedia and digital information fields.

Watch out for details of our [management training workshop](#).

The images in vol 31 no 3 are by courtesy of the *bfi*, the National Gallery and Neil Smith of Royal Holloway College.

MmIT does everything it can to ensure that all the links work, but cannot guarantee they will continue to do so. Please let us know if you find any dead ones.

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National Gallery Exhibitions

The National Gallery's latest press release covers the major exhibitions up to October 2006. In the Sainsbury Wing *Rebels and Martyrs: The Artist in the Nineteenth Century*, exploring the idea of the artist as a visionary outsider battling against a philistine and hostile society, continues until September 10th 2006. The key works of many of the most important 19th century artists are on display, including Delacroix, Courbet, Manet and Degas.

Later, in the year, *Rubens: A Master in the Making* runs from October 26th until the 15th January 2006. The exhibition tells the story of Rubens' rise from the pupil of a minor painter in Antwerp to the "most successful international artist of his time."

Some of the work on display will reflect the transformation in his style influenced by his stay in Italy, and the increasing sophistication of "his understanding of the human body in action."

In 2006, the programme continues with *Americans in Paris 1860-1900*, from February 22nd until May 21st. This exhibition tells the story of the 19th Century American fascination with Paris as the centre of the art world. Well-known artists such as James McNeill Whistler, John Singer Sargent and Mary Cassatt are included.

The Sunley Room Exhibitions include, starting on December 7th this year, *Tom Hunter: Living in Hell and Other Stories (Above)*. This exhibition includes about 20 new works supplemented by some earlier material which are photographic workings of old paintings. The newer works focus on Hunter's life in the London Borough of Hackney. The exhibition closes on March 12th 2006. Full details from www.nationalgallery.org.uk

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The National Digital Library

In response to the trends in digital collection development, Lynne Brindley, the Chief Executive of the British Library announced that the BL would implement a strategy to create the National Digital Library by 2010. The library intends to develop its stewardship of the nation's digital resources in the same way as it has maintained the physical collection.

The new three-year plan will lead to the creation of the "infrastructure to store, manage, preserve and provide access to digital material . . . [within a framework of legislation] . . . in cooperation with publishers, other libraries and with technical partners."

The library will build on its existing work in collecting digital information and digitising its own resources and in the development of new tools to meet the needs of researchers "in the digital world . . . [while] continuing to guarantee that both text-based and digital research outputs are preserved and available."

For further information contact Ben Sanderson at ben.sanderson@bl.uk

Google Sitemaps

Google have announced Google Sitemaps, a free online service which enables webmasters to automatically submit web pages to Google. It is a collaborative programme with webmasters. Its purpose is to provide Google with more information about web content, so that users worldwide can enjoy improved search results.

The initiative is part of Google's effort to create innovative web search technologies which will make finding relevant information faster and easier. Now webmasters can tell Google about all their web pages, prioritise them and let Google know when pages are updated so that indexing can be completed faster.

All webmasters, irrespective of the size of their output, can use the service, which can be found at <http://www.google.com/webmasters/sitemaps> where webmasters can sign up for the service.

Xrefer and Paratext

Xrefer and Paratext, who publish online reference databases, have now integrated the Xreferplus Ready-Reference service with Paratext's premium bibliographic database, Reference Universe.

The integration will provide subscribers with a single point of access to Xrefer and Paratext's databases. The new resource will also integrate local print collections with full text electronic databases.

The full story is available online at www.xrefer.com/news/index.jsp?m=2

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The European Library

The European Library, whose website can be found at www.TheEuropeanLibrary.org was launched earlier this year. Over 11 million digital records and objects from nine of Europe's National Libraries are now available free to all users.

The European Library portal is the result of a project led by the British Library, in collaboration with a number of the major European national libraries.

Owned by the Conference of European National Librarians, the project libraries were joined by the Bibliothèque National to create an operational unit.

Using an innovative portal, The European Library exists to make available the knowledge, information and culture of all Europe's national libraries. It has started with nine of the 43 members of the Conference of European National Librarians (CENL) and more of the member libraries will join during the rest of this year.

Peoples Archive

The People's Archive has introduced a new section on medical biographies. It includes Harold Lambert, who was Professor of Microbial Diseases at St. George's Hospital and Medical School in London. During his career he admitted the last registered case of smallpox in the United Kingdom and saw the early years of the AIDS epidemic.

The database contains much information reflecting his intelligent, thoughtful and considered views on his career and subjects such as patient care and the doctor-patient relationship. Go to www.peoplesarchive.com/browse/movie

Documentary maker Albert Maysles and cinematographer Walter Lassally have been added to the film section. Maysles was at the heart of the Direct Cinema movement which revolutionised the making of documentaries in the 1960s before he went on to make three of the most important documentary films of the late 20th century – Salesman in 1969, Gimme Shelter in 1970 and Grey Gardens in 1975.

Walter Lassally's career began in England working with the Free Cinema movement. Here he shot iconic British films such as A Taste of Honey (1961), The Loneliness of a Long Distance Runner (1962) and Tom Jones (1963). In Greece he won an Oscar for Zorba the Greek in 1964.

Peoples Archive is a subscription-based site. Information on how to subscribe is available on the Peoples Archive website at www.peoplesarchive.com/subscriptions/.

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New Ideas in Management From MmIT

The development of digitisation and the growth of hybrid libraries open up the management of information services to new ideas current in mainstream management theory and evident in practice in other knowledge-based sectors and areas of the creative industries.

The Multimedia Information & Technology Group is running a management workshop on new ideas in library management on the 20th October 2005 at Cilip Headquarters. The day will be highly participative, including opportunities for group and individual working.

The workshop will identify the major changes in contemporary information services organisation, and explore the implications of these changes for information services managers and staff.

Of value to practising managers and anyone interested in management education and development, by the end of the day participants will be able to

- Identify the major changes taking place in libraries and information services
- Demonstrate an understanding of the implications of these changes for organisational structures, leadership, motivation, key aspects of human resource management, and personal and professional development
- Create a plan for translating these ideas into achievable actions in the workplace

Topics to be covered include:

- New metaphors for organisations
- Creativity
- Learning
- Elite teams
- Creative abrasion
- Organisational redundancy
- Player managers
- Networked organisations
- White space-black space and chaos
- Dynamic communications
- New ways to think about change
- New Leadership

The inclusive cost is £120/£140 for group members or non-members. Details and booking forms from lyndon.pugh@virgin.net

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Accessibility and Multimedia: Oil and Water or Salt and Vinegar?

David Sloan Multimedia Access Group Dundee University

Web accessibility for disabled people is currently a hot topic, but when it comes to multimedia and accessibility, is this a realistic proposition, or a hopeless ideal? What can multimedia producers do to contribute to digital inclusion?

The issue of making content on the Web accessible to disabled people has never been more prominent. On the one hand, the spectre of legislation such as the UK's Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) looms large over e-content developers and multimedia producers.

Despite the uncertainty surrounding the technical implications, it is undeniable that technology, and the Web in particular, offers enormous life-enhancing potential for many people. This is especially so for those for whom independently performing everyday tasks, such as managing their finances, shopping, communicating with friends,

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finding the latest news, or receiving an education, is hampered by a sensory, physical or cognitive impairment. The business case for web accessibility is also widely promoted. Here the basic tenet is that if a website's potential audience – and hence potential customer base – can be widened by taking a design decision which will make it easier for disabled people to use the site, then that is a decision worth taking.

This unprecedented awareness of the need to consider disabled people when designing web content is supported by an increasingly rich collection of resources. These are aimed at supporting web developers and authors in their quest to create more accessible web sites.

Provide a text equivalent for every non-text element. This includes images, animations, applets and programmatic objects, sounds (played with or without user interaction), stand-alone audio files, audio tracks of video, and video

At the centre are the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), developed by the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

The 14 guidelines and 65 checkpoints of the WCAG provide a sound foundation for web developers to develop a working knowledge of accessible web design, and offer a framework on which web site evaluation methodologies and automated accessibility checking tools can be based.

Some aspects of the WCAG have their critics, and at the time of writing, Version 2 of the WCAG is being prepared in an attempt to address many of the issues surrounding Version 1.

Many web site authors, particularly those new to the subject, may also face significant challenges in interpreting and implementing the guidelines along the way. Yet at the very least, the WCAG provides a clear and well-recognised path towards making websites accessible.

Unfortunately, when it comes to online multimedia, the WCAG are significantly less focused, and an initial inspection of the checkpoints will reveal only three which appear to refer directly to multimedia. One of these includes multimedia amongst a wider list of web page elements:

- Provide a text equivalent for every non-text element. This includes: images, animations (e.g., animated GIFs), applets and programmatic objects, sounds (played with or without user interaction), stand-alone audio files, audio tracks of video, and video.

Two checkpoints specifically address the use of multimedia:

- Provide an auditory description of the important information of the visual track of a multimedia presentation.
- For any time-based multimedia presentation (e.g., a movie or animation), provide synchronized equivalent alternatives (e.g., captions or auditory descriptions of the visual track) with the presentation.

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In each case, the instruction is to provide text or audio alternatives to the multimedia content. Unfortunately, this has often led to the perception that accessibility is a case of “provide all information in text format”.

This philosophy has in turn been distorted and stretched to such extremes that one might sometimes think that the use of graphics and colour, let alone video, audio and interactive animated media, is prohibited because of poor accessibility.

This is partly an unfortunate side-effect of the vocal, although entirely necessary, campaigning of organisations demanding improvements in web accessibility for blind and severely visually impaired web users.

These are people who cannot see web content, and must rely on screen-reading software to read textual content aloud, or information provided via a dynamic Braille display device. This group of web users has traditionally been amongst the most excluded when it comes to web sites, so understandably the specific barriers faced by blind web surfers have become particularly worthy of comment and attention, sometimes at the expense of the needs of other disabled web users.

As a result, many people involved in digital media production may feel alienated by the concept of web accessibility for disabled people, in that it is incompatible with exciting, rich and stimulating multimedia. Previously well-regarded work may suddenly seem to be under an accessibility microscope, and to some producers, to continue using it will shortly be followed by a summons to court on a charge of unjustified discrimination.

For any time-based multimedia presentation (e.g., a movie or animation), provide synchronized equivalent alternatives (e.g., captions or auditory descriptions of the visual track) with the presentation.

There is also a perception that when it comes to multimedia, accessibility is “too expensive” or “not worth the effort”. In making a case for a European Centre for Accessible Media, Kevin Carey pointed out that the effort required to provide analogue broadcast media with the necessary features to make that media accessible to people who cannot see it, or cannot hear it, has historically been perceived as unjustifiable on cost-effect grounds, particularly as the

likelihood of the programme in question being repeated would have been extremely low. And after all, is not the real quality of multimedia the ability to present rich information and experiences through the dual sensory channels of vision and hearing?

Multimedia is an enabler. It is hard to argue with the assertion that the power of multimedia is in its ability to create exciting audiovisual experiences. But to boil down accessibility to “do x for people who cannot see” and “do y for people who cannot hear” is a gross oversimplification which leads to misconceptions, and ultimately to frustration, amongst those whose professional life is geared towards providing exciting, stimulating and valuable experiences through rich media. It is true that some effort is required to create proper access to multimedia for people with hearing and visual impairments. It is also worth emphasising that for many people multimedia is a solution to the problem of accessibility.



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Why? Because for many people with online accessibility problems, the overwhelming factor is the difficulty of reading and processing text. That reading difficulty may be due to dyslexia, which statistics indicate is by far the most frequently identified disability amongst students in higher education in the UK (not that most people with dyslexia would ever consider themselves disabled).

It is vital to provide an auditory description of the important information of the visual track of a multimedia presentation.

It might also be due to reduced short term memory, or a mild learning disability. For all these people, arguably the most inaccessible way of presenting information online is through a long page of text.

The solution is to use multimedia. Think about a video clip of a doctor consulting with a patient, and how that can illuminate a textbook which would otherwise provide a dry, textual description of correct consulting techniques.

Think about how understanding of information presented as a series of numbers relating to projected economic growth over a period of time could be enhanced when presented as an interactive animated bar chart.

Think about a transcript of the text of Martin Luther King's address on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in 1963, and compare that with an audio recording of the real thing. For people who can hear, which experience would be more exciting, more worthwhile, more accessible?

Just making the decision to use multimedia to enhance or illustrate text is in fact a very important move towards accessible web content design. It is something that is not easy to encapsulate in a guideline, although the W3C have tried in WCAG checkpoint 14.2 (which is given the lowest of the three priority levels allocated to each checkpoint):

- Supplement text with graphic or auditory presentations where they will facilitate comprehension of the page.

There is an art, a degree of subjectivity and creativity, and, let us face it, talent, in producing a stimulating video clip, piece of interactive animation – or even a photograph – which effectively conveys what might take a thousand words to describe.

“Provide a text alternative for graphics” does seem a more simple design guideline, but in reality “provide an illustration for text” is equally important.

Fulfilling this guideline requires imagination, creativity and good judgement in terms of what is illustrated, and how. It is also worth repeating that thoughtful use of multimedia to provide web content is a valuable exercise in inclusive digital media design.

If a media clip which can enhance the message or experience exists, it should be used.

Dos and Dont's

Never rely on the end-user being able to perceive colour, or distinguish between colours

Where text is used, allow users to enlarge text size, or change its appearance to improve readability or comprehensibility

Keyboard operation of multimedia applications and media playing devices is essential

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Thus, multimedia producers should not feel marginalised by the drive towards optimally accessible web resources, but see themselves as providing a vital role in this initiative. As Slatin and Rush, in their book *Maximum Accessibility*, put it: "In comparison to analogue, digital media makes it easier and quicker to produce even rudimentary accessibility solutions which can be reused."

These solutions can also be adapted, without relying on the admittedly scarce professional support that exists. Considerate media design can help overcome these impairments.

To make multimedia content accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing requires an equivalent text alternative for all spoken and other important non-spoken audio. Most readers who watch television should be familiar with this solution, seen in the form of synchronised text captions displayed at the bottom of the screen.

A word on terminology is appropriate here. Almost every other country in the world describes this phenomenon as a caption. Yet the UK continues to use the term subtitles, when in fact subtitles are a solution to a completely different problem. Subtitles provide a translation of the spoken content of a video clip for an audience which does not understand the language used in the clip. This overcomes the cognitive impairment of not being able to understand what is heard.

Captions, on the other hand, are much more than just a text version of spoken content. There is a great deal of other sound information which helps make a video clip, such as background noise, off-screen noise, or music, which is important to scene setting or conveying tone.

Yet, in the UK, the broadcasting community has confused things horribly, simply by using the term subtitles to refer to on-screen text, regardless of whether it is for people with hearing impairments or as a translation of the spoken language.

Captions can be added to digital video manually, using an open language which is known as Synchronised Multimedia Integration Language (SMIL). This provides a way of associating a media clip with a text file containing caption text and timing information indicating the point when each caption should be displayed.

The media-playing software can then process the SMIL file to play the media clip and, if the user so requires, display the synchronised captions at the same time.

In other words, it provides closed captions. This task can be time-consuming and tedious, so to help things, various software packages now exist to automate the task.

Perhaps the best is the free Media Access Generator (MAGpie) software, from the National Center for Accessible Media, based in Boston, Massachusetts. It allows easy creation and time-stamping of caption files for QuickTime, Real Media and Windows Media files. More recently versions allow caption files to be added to Macromedia Flash content.

Adding captions requires some familiarity with the vagaries of the media player in question, but, whatever the method, the task of adding captions to digital video is significantly easier than with analogue media, and has a greater potential for reusability.

Multimedia for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing

There must be an equivalent text alternative for spoken and non-spoken audio – either via synchronised captions or an HYML transcript

For users of sign language, the automated creation of a signed animation (an avatar) is developing

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A less attractive alternative to synchronised captions is to provide an HYML text transcript of the media clip's spoken, and important non-spoken, sound information along with the clip. This could appear on the same web page on which the clip appears.

It can clearly be a good first step to take, given that a transcript may have been produced as part of the production specification in any case. With a pre-existing transcript, the task of creating captions is made much easier.

Multimedia for the Blind or Visually Impaired

Video must be supplemented by audio descriptions

Multimedia offers a rich and more human sound track for screen readers

Audio descriptions can describe specific visual events but must not obscure or degrade the soundtrack

Transcripts are the most appropriate alternative to audio-only recordings, and are also necessary to make the video content accessible to people who are deaf-blind – those who can neither see nor hear it.

The downside of a transcript is obviously that a sighted person with a hearing impairment is then denied the visual experience provided by the video.

Some deaf people, in particular those who were born deaf or became deaf at a very early age, may use a sign language as their primary communication means. As a result, they may have difficulty reading captions.

It is possible to combine a video of a signer translating with the video clip to be translated, but this can be technically challenging, as well as requiring the filming of the signer. Technology for automated creation of a signed animation (an avatar) based on the content of textual captions is at an early stage, but shows some promise in helping to improve accessibility for this group.

For people who are blind or have a severe visual impairment, the challenge is to ensure that visual information is made available in an accessible form. People with no functional vision are likely to rely on a screen reader to read all on-screen text as synthetic speech.

Multimedia offers an innate capability to provide a rich and more human spoken soundtrack. This allows the screen reading software to take a rest. It does, though, require video to be provided with supplementary audio descriptions.

It has been argued that blind people are far less inconvenienced when watching a television programme without audio descriptions, in comparison with a deaf person watching a television programme without captions. Indeed, according to the Royal National Institute of the Blind, 94% of blind and partially-sighted people watch TV on a regular basis.

Even so, audio description is a vital component of accessible multimedia. It involves recording snippets of spoken information which describe specific visual events.

These are crucial to an understanding of what is going on, but someone who cannot see the video would not be able to detect them simply from listening to the soundtrack.

These descriptions play at appropriate times, supplementing the video soundtrack.

Multimedia for the Physically Impaired

Use adapted keyboards, voice recognition software, a gesture recognition device or a gaze-controlled device

Remember that resource design which demands fine mouse control is likely to present many people with serious, if not insurmountable, barriers

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Clearly, synchronisation is important here, in order to ensure that the descriptions do not obscure the main soundtrack, and aid rather than confuse understanding.

Again, the use of SMIL and authoring software can help ease this task: for example, audio description synchronisation is another feature of MAGpie. Media player support for audio descriptions is, however, inconsistent. At the time of writing, no version of Windows Media Player can support multiple audio tracks. This makes "closed" audio description provision impossible.

There are additional principles to be followed in making multimedia optimally accessible for people with visual impairments. Most of these involve standard techniques which apply to all web and software interfaces. For example:

- Multimedia content should not rely on the end user being able to perceive colour, or distinguish between colours, in order to understand what is going on.
- Where text is presented, allowing users to enlarge the text size, or change its appearance, can improve readability and comprehensibility.
- Keyboard operation of multimedia applications and media playing devices is essential. People without any functional vision cannot see a mouse pointer on screen, so the keyboard must be used to control the computer.

It is undeniable that technology, and the Web in particular, offers enormous life-enhancing potential for many people.

This is especially so for those for whom independently performing everyday tasks, such as managing their finances, shopping, communicating with friends, finding the latest news, or receiving an education, is hampered by a sensory, physical or cognitive impairment.

The business case for web accessibility is also widely promoted. Design decisions can increase the use of the site.

Anyone with a physical disability which affects their ability to use a mouse will rely on an alternative input device.

This may be an adapted keyboard, or perhaps voice recognition software, or a gesture-recognition device, or a gaze-controlled device.

In every case, resource design which demands fine mouse control is likely to present many people serious, if not indeed insurmountable, access barriers.

Clearly, synchronisation is important, in order to ensure that the descriptions do not obscure the main soundtrack, and actually aid rather than confuse understanding.

More information about multimedia and accessibility is available from a number of sources. Joe Clark (<http://joeclark.org>) has produced a body of work on improving the levels and quality of multimedia accessibility.

The Digital Media Access Group at Dundee, together with partners in the Learning Development and Media Unit

at the University of Sheffield, have developed the Skills for Access web site which is at www.skillsforaccess.org.uk. This site was launched in May of this year.

Useful Sources

Media Access Generator (Magpie), free from the National Center for Accessible Media in Boston, Mass.

Dundee University Digital Media Access Group

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While primarily aimed at the e-learning community, the site presents information, advice and links to further resources on a wide variety of relevant topics. A key aim of the site is to practise what it preaches, so the use of multimedia is widespread in supporting case studies which focus both on disabled people and their experiences of using multimedia, and on media producers and their recollections of specific projects.

Multimedia accessibility is not an oxymoron. It is a tool for making the Web a more inclusive place. At the same time it is necessary to offer alternatives for people who will not be able to access the information or experience provided by the multimedia resource.

This could be achieved through adding accessibility features to the resource itself, or making sure the information and experiences the multimedia provides can be accessed by alternative means.

Media producers also have a responsibility to develop sound working practices in which good accessible multimedia design becomes second nature. Accessibility is, after all, a process and not a product.



The Skills for Access website, demonstrating a number of the aspects of good practice referred to in this article, and developed jointly by the Digital Media Access Group at Dundee University and the Learning Development and Media Unit at Sheffield.

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New Recorder from JVC

Portable Document Cameras

Affordable Projectors

Compact Printer

Text-To-Speech

Walk and Talk

A new technology launched recently has consigned the manual calibration of interactive whiteboards to history.

PolyVision has introduced Lightning, the only calibration-free interactive whiteboard currently available (above). This offers a solution to one of the biggest and most frustrating problems experienced by teachers using whiteboards. The new range is equipped with the patent-pending Lightning technology which completely eliminates the need for manual calibration.

Calibration is required to enable a whiteboard to work properly with a projector. Almost 60% of teachers questioned in a major survey at this year's BETT show said that calibration is the most frustrating issue they face in using interactive whiteboards, as it is the most time-consuming aspect of setting up the equipment.

37% of respondents said boards needed to be re-calibrated between one and six times each day. This level of user dissatisfaction reflected a strong need, and inspired PolyVision to create the world's first calibration-free interactive whiteboards, reducing set up time from an average of three minutes to mere seconds.

With a simple push of the projection button on the Walk-and-Talk interactive whiteboards or the projection icon on the TS interactive whiteboards, calibration occurs instantly.

Apart from the initial setup, if a projector is moved or knocked during a lesson, it is necessary to re-calibrate the whiteboard. This interrupts the session, distracts the students and teacher, and wastes valuable lesson time as the projector is realigned and the whiteboard surface touched at up to 16 different points before the session can be resumed.

President and CEO Mike Dunn said that "Polyvision had listened very carefully to teachers' views on the use of interactive whiteboards." Staff had also observed "teachers panicking and fumbling to get their interactive whiteboards set up before a presentation." PolyVision's response was a product which removes yet another barrier to interactive whiteboard use, and eliminates the frustration surrounding calibration.

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The whiteboards are available in two versions – Walk-and-Talk Lightning and TS Lightning, and will be on the market in the Autumn of 2005.

Polyvision Corporation specialises in visual communication products which enhance the way in which people learn, work and communicate. It is a part of Steelcase Inc, a company creating work environments which integrate architecture, furniture and technology. For more information about Polyvision and Lightning, go to www.polyvision.com and visit Steelcase Inc at www.steelcase.com

Cheap Holographic Storage Cards

A Japanese company is developing a holographic data storage system that will store up to 30GB on media costing less than £1.

Optware says that the Holographic Versatile Card (HVC) will be ready towards the end of 2006 and it expects to charge around 100 Yen (currently around 51p) for the translucent cards. Card readers, however, are expected to cost nearer £1,000 while read-write devices may be up to five times that price.

The launch of the first products is due to coincide with the standardisation of the technology. Initially each HVC will be approximately the size of a credit card.

Drives will be a similar size to those used for other storage systems. In the longer term, smaller HVCs may be developed to fit in portable and other small devices.

The cards use collinear holographic technology, developed by Optware themselves. This uses a single lens and laser beam for both reading and writing. Hologram data is recorded in either longitudinal or lateral directions, and the reader or read-writer moves both the medium and the optical head horizontally in order to pick up specified holograms.

Prototypes were first publicised back in 2004 – Holograms make light work of 300GB – by Optware, which became one of the founders of the Holographic Versatile Disc (HVD) Alliance.

For more information on this development, go to www.optware.com

New Recorder from JVC

JVC's SR-DVM70EU recorder has three-in-one video recording incorporating MiniDV, HDD, and DVD and is packed with a stunning range of professional features. Additional to its triple recording capabilities, the SR-DVM70EU has a 160 GB high-storage capacity hard disk for extended recording times. It also enables mass duplication with high-quality picture and audio.

The SR-DVM70EU is an ideal tool for editing live programmes and recorded DV footage, as well as for dubbing, archiving and duplication, maintaining high, all-digital image quality at a recording speed of up to 8x real time.

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When dubbing, the deck analyses content as it is recorded, and assigns optimum bit rates to ensure picture quality. The deck features selectable recording times and data rates. A video output terminal with a BNC connector guarantees reliable and secure connection to other professional equipment. DVD format signals are recorded directly to the hard disk drive for enhanced digital-to-digital recordings with zero loss in quality. The SR-DVM70EU's MiniDV deck is also capable of playing back DVCAMTM tapes which have been shot on the small DVCAMTM cassette. The current pricing for the SR-DVM70EU 3-in-1 recorder is listed at £1,330 or €1,995 plus VAT. Go to www.jvc.co.uk

Portable Document Cameras

AVerMedia Technologies Inc has recently unveiled the new AVerVision 300i, an addition to the award winning AVerMedia Vision series of portable document cameras. The AVerVision 300i offers an array of high-end features capable of ensuring a lively and easy to plan interactive learning experience.

3D Objects or documents can be displayed in ways which help make interactive learning a reality. The tool is said to be user-friendly and saves time on staff training thanks to a clear and simple control panel which displays graphic icons to help users understand the function of each button.



The Vision 300i is capable of displaying 640x480, 800x600 and 1024 x 768 output resolutions on LCD/DLP projectors, offering exceptional quality. The VGA connection allows users to connect to any monitor and projector, and the addition of the DVI output means the Vision 300i can be used with high resolution projectors for higher bandwidth and clearer images.

Furthermore, the inclusion of S-Video and Composite outputs offers users extra connectivity to display on a TV. Presenters can easily switch display devices via the user-friendly front panel.

The Vision 300i's built-in LED Lamp illuminates documents and objects, providing essential light in poor conditions. The inclusion of an Automatic White Balance (AWB) control function ensures that only the relevant amount of light enters the camera, maintaining perfect image quality.

The 8x digital zoom capability enables users to easily focus on any document or 3D image.

The patented Laser Positioning Pointers also provide four reference points on each corner of the viewing area, so that document or object repositioning is not needed. With a built-in 850,000 pixel CCD Progressive Scan Sensor, users can easily display 10-12pt small texts through LCD/DLP projectors or VGA monitors.

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The Vision 300i also incorporates a new freeze function which enables presenters to change documents or objects underneath the lens without changing the projected image ensuring presentation transitions are smooth and easy.

Image capture and playback capability is provided via a built-in storage facility, which is capable of holding up to 80 JPEG images. The document camera can function as a PC camera with image files transferred through the USB connection. Utilising this function, users can easily download image files to a computer and use them for documentation, archiving and distribution via emails. Presenters can capture JPEG images and make video clips which are compatible with other software such as ACDSee and Windows Media Player. For further information go to www.avermedia.com

Intrallect and Highlands and Islands

Leading e-learning software developer Intrallect is making it easier for the umbrella group of colleges under the University of Highlands and Islands (UHI) Millennium Institute to share valuable learning resources.

Intrallect offers software tools, including the world-leading intraLibrary, for the current and next generation of e-Learning systems. The tools capture and store e-learning content, separating the content from any specific technology – thus increasing the longevity and flexibility of the valuable knowledge and skills encapsulated.

The institute comprises 14 independent institutions which come together in a partnership to deliver higher education to the Highlands and Islands region. Teaching and research materials have to be created and moved between the partners, and used in online and face-to-face environments. To achieve this the Institute is using intraLibrary, Intrallect's market-leading Learning Object Management System, to allow the use, reuse and sharing of learning objects across the college network.

John Casey, Learning Materials Manager at UHI said: "The UHI is using intraLibrary to support the sharing of modular teaching materials in order to cut the costs of developing new courses. It is currently developing workflow models and metadata profiles." Casey added: "The new licensing capabilities allow us to develop an intellectual property framework integrated into the use of the repository supporting our institutional e-learning strategy." Go to www.intrallect.com

Hewlett Packard's New Compact Printer

Hewlett Packard have announced their new compact printer, the HP Photosmart 335 Compact Phot Printer. Weighing only 1.4 kg, this portable printer will print anywhere and produce excellent results.

Compatible with all major cards, and with a usb port for connection to any Pictbridge-enabled camera or Bluetooth enabled camera phone, it is simple to use and is available from this month. Go to www.hpstore.hp.co.uk

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Affordable Projector from Mitsubishi

Mitsubishi Electric's Visual Information Systems division, one of the world's leading manufacturers of display products, has launched the EX100U, its latest portable DLP projector, as part of its fully comprehensive range.

The EX100U has been specifically designed to be an easy to use, affordable DLP projector, built "filter free" to reduce maintenance requirements. It also has the added assurance of Mitsubishi's comprehensive three-year loan replacement warranty, which is applicable to all business models.

Equipped with a host of features, the EX100U is suitable for almost all applications. It boasts:

- XGA resolution
- 2000 ANSI lumens of brightness
- 2000:1 contrast ratio
- Lamp life of up to 3000 hours when used in eco-mode
- Connections for up to two computers and two video playback sources

The EX100U uses the latest DLP chip technology, and has been designed with an optical engine which is sealed and protected, therefore removing the need for an external filter. This feature will help to dramatically keep the cost of ownership down by reducing the problems often associated with clogged filters, such as overheating lamps and premature failure.

Alistair Duthie, Divisional Manager said, "We are pleased to be able to offer another high quality projector, which is economical to use. This I believe demonstrates our commitment to providing reliable solutions to suit a host of requirements and budgets".

Go to www.mitsubishi-presentations.com

The Sony FWD-42PV1 – Plasma Power

The latest Sony public display combines what is an attention-grabbing image quality alongside the versatility, stylish design and long product life of Sony. The FWD-42PV1 is a wide screen plasma display which is designed to be noticed.

The outstandingly bright and clear picture characteristic of the new display is ideal for digital signage applications, public entertainment or any situation where the aim is to get the message across.

Clarity comes by courtesy of the latest generation plasma screen with a native WVGA (852 x 480) resolution. The panel works in concert with next-generation scan conversion silicon, which tailors a wide range of input signal types to the screen itself, ensuring crisp, readable images every time.



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The display can handle computer inputs from VGA to UXGA resolution, and video signals up to 1080i (50 or 60Hz).

Superior brightness and contrast are inherent properties of the screen itself, which is rated at a noteworthy 500cd/m² for brightness and a very high 10,000:1 (dark room) contrast ratio. A specially engineered anti-reflection coating provides the finishing touch, reducing surface reflection and showing off the brightness and contrast advantage to full effect.

Eye catching design

The new screen technology includes improved phosphor and protection layers in the cell, which contribute to the above average panel life of 60,000 hours.

Versatility

Robust construction

Multiple screen saver functions including picture orbit, picture inversion, variable background, all white and auto-dim help ensure a long and trouble-free product lifespan.

Speedy and simple set up

Fast and easy video wall creation

Combine all this with a low power consumption of just 260W (sub-1W in standby), and it is easy to see how the FWD-42PV1 makes a strong case for itself in terms of low total cost of ownership as well.

Optional side-mounted speakers

The design is as eye-catching as the screen, and features key elements like a narrow bezel, essential for video wall arrays.

The cabinet is robustly constructed yet the whole unit weighs only 29kg, partly because it measures just 12cm deep. A choice of silver or black allows customers some flexibility in selecting the finish.

A core part of the FWD-42PV1's appeal is its versatility. In addition to fixed HD15 RGB/Component and DVI-HDCP inputs, the display is supplied with S-Video and Composite inputs on a removable module. This can be exchanged for other options, including 5-way BNC or a pass-through for connecting multiple monitors in an active loop.

A second slot lets users install a network card. With this option, up to 255 displays can be controlled centrally, greatly simplifying the management of larger deployments.

To make setup as speedy and simple as possible, the FWD-42PV1 is supplied with the RM-980 remote commander. This allows direct access to all the key functions. The remote can even be used to select and control an individual display in an array, by using its ID-mode and numerical keypad.

Alternatively, the monitor can be configured using a multilingual graphical on-screen menu. When required, the remote can be used to disable the physical control panel on the monitor itself, including the On/Off function.

For fast and easy video wall creation, there is a Multi Display Setup function, allowing the user to set the zoom factor, the number of screens in the array and the location in the wall of each individual monitor. When audio is needed, users can rely on the inboard amplifier to deliver 2x 7W of clean, punchy sound.

Better still, the optional SS-SP42FW speaker set mounts at the sides of the cabinet and delivers great sound from a compact but stylish format which matches the overall design of the display. Go to www.sony.co.uk

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Text-to-Speech Technologies

ReadSpeaker XT offers the latest in text-to-speech technology for anyone on the Internet, regardless of their computer, browser, operating platform and connection speed.

ReadSpeaker aims to make the Internet accessible for people with dyslexia, learning difficulties and low vision while also appealing to those who prefer to listen as well as read Internet content (see also David Sloan's article on multimedia and disability).

An increasing number of sites, including the British Museum, have either adopted ReadSpeaker or are planning to do so in the near future. Using the new version of ReadSpeaker XT, any website can be speech-enabled with a natural-sounding localised voice.

Maintaining its unique approach to spoken web content, the XT version incorporates ReadSpeaker's tried and tested server-based platform with a brand new interface. The software makes it possible for users to

- Control how a web page is read: users can decide how text and links are read within a web page. For example, text can be highlighted as the user listens to the page and the user can tab through links and listen to them as they go along.
- Personalise the interface: the layout of the function panels can be changed, with a choice of text or images for each button.
- Make use of one of five different reading speeds.
- Select a text-only version of a web page if preferred, with the ability to customise font, font size, background colour and images.
- Sound files can be saved in MP 3 format: if a museum, for example, has a speech-enabled website a prospective visitor can create an audio guide on an ipod or MP3 player and listen to it on a subsequent visit.

ReadSpeaker XT can read all file formats, and works on any browser with connection speeds of 33.6Kbps and above. The new version has already been released in Sweden, and will shortly be available in the UK. MmIT tried it, and was impressed with the potential. Carin Lennartson, UK director of ReadSpeaker said:

A new digital divide is being created by people who find it difficult or impossible to use the Internet, and adding speech is a real breakthrough in making websites more user-friendly and less intimidating.

Go to www.readspeaker.fr/en/index.php

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edited by Lyndon Pugh

[Developing Academic Library Staff for Future Success](#) (Oldroyd, M., Ed. Facet Publishing 2004 isbn 1856044785)

[The Academic Library](#) (Brophy, P. Facet Publishing 2005 isbn 1856045277)

[Teaching Information Skills: Theory and Practice](#) (Webb, J., and Powis, C. Facet Publishing 2004 isbn 1850645137)

[Cataloging and Organizing Digital Resources: A How-To-Do-It Manual For Librarians](#) (Mitchell, A. M., and Surratt, B. E. Facet Publishing, 2005. 236pp, 1-85604-556-0)

Developing Academic Library Staff for Future Success

I found the contributions in Margaret Oldroyd's edited collection of essays to be uniformly useful, and it is invidious to single out for praise any of the contributions from a group of people who between them cover the entire spectrum of staff development in academic libraries. In keeping with the usual tenor of this column therefore, some will be singled out, excessive praise will be avoided and stars will be awarded on a curmudgeonly basis.

The collection covers all the key areas, and covers them well. It is a good mix of theory and practice, and the practical managerial experience of the contributors comes through quite clearly. In one way or another, at least half of the text is concerned with identifying change in academic libraries and their parent institutions. (Incidentally, why are things these days always drivers and not causes?)

This background is soundly analysed, and there follows a series of chapters which look in a more focussed way at the key issues of changing roles and staff development needs in the context of delivering learning support, the implications of increasing flexibility in working situations, VLEs, cooperation and the place of staff development in human resource management.

The book's general targets are a number of potential reader groups, and there is something in it for managers, prospective managers and students.

Having cleared the decks, the first contribution by Sally Neocosmos of York University offers a strategic overview of development needs. Placed in the context of changes in higher education which provoke questions about workforce issues such as recruitment, staff development in general, IT strategies, equal opportunities, diversity and management development, her solution is to absorb development into strategic planning, and to link it to organisation development.

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This is a good start, the issue is clearly put and soundly argued. However, the approach stimulates a criticism which I think applies to much of what is said here, in that it does not go far enough.

Incorporating staff development and learning into business plans, strategic plans, policy documents, information strategies and the like will not embed organisational learning and development into the fabric of an organisation.

Taking a systems approach, and approaching learning and development as an organisational subsystem which forms part of the life support system of the library, and is as important and integral as any other subsystem, is the only way to prosecute systematic organisation development which will underpin the treatment of the issues so clearly articulated throughout this book. Strategic planning is important but will not work on its own.

Sheila Corral analyses the transformation brought about by network technology, and provides a lucid and perceptive discussion of the implications of the growth of virtual learning, and of some developments which potentially bypass libraries. She also discusses changes in the scholarly knowledge system, and provides an interesting perspective on the development of e-science and "the Grid". This is a significantly refined version of other things which have been around for a long time, and obviously has the potential of bypassing libraries as mentioned earlier.

One of the arguments in this contribution is for widening the role of subject specialists. This might be a problem in the light of recent events involving the wholesale culling of subject specialists in favour of digital resources, as well as the dumping of expertise in resource description in favour of deskilling. An imaginative response to things like the Grid would be to suggest that the phenomenon, and others like it, might also contain the germ of an idea about how to organise information services in the cyberworld.

Noon covers management development, and again presents the context well and clearly identifies the factors causing change. He makes two important points, if I understand him rightly. The first is that our responses at present are not particularly radical, and that we could do better by paying heed to what is being done in other sectors. He also opens up the key issue of succession planning. In libraries we still live in the age of bureaucracies and hierarchies, where the transition to management is a key element in introducing new ideas and containing the worst excesses of the organisational form. How this is done is one of the keys to creating adaptable organisations:

Heads of service develop and select people who closely resemble themselves as a kind of, often unconscious, validation of their own abilities and professional credibility. On the contrary, the real requirement is to design successors in the best interests of the organisation. The nature of the leaders of tomorrow ought to depend on a vision of what is to be achieved by libraries and information services in the future, not on reinforcing the past.

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There are passages in this text which belie Noon's stricture about learning from others. Biddy Fisher provides a cogent argument for convergence as a means of creating the environment in which real development can flourish, bringing with it the need for multi-skilling and teamwork however these are achieved, and however imperfectly we understand them and make them work.

Additionally, she makes two crucial points. First, there is a kind of convergence taking place between the key information-handling skills of the students and the librarian's need for training and development. Second, she is also able to look outside, and comments on the qualitative difference between the media techniques used in the creative industries and those deployed by our own designers of educational materials.

There is a kind of convergence taking place between the key information-handling skills of the students and the librarian's need for training and development. Second, [Fisher] is also able to look outside, and comments on the qualitative difference between the media techniques used in the creative industries and those deployed by our own designers of educational materials.

There may be more than one reason for this, but acknowledging what we can learn, for example, from the way students engage with media games, and the lessons to be taken from computer gaming in general, is a step forward.

Powis, from whom more will be heard later, reviews the development of the teaching/learning role of the academic librarian. I would hazard a guess that this contributor is too young to remember the classic tutor/librarians of the sixties and earlier, the professors who made a decent fist of managing university libraries as well, and the lecturers who ran training college libraries with panache and imagination, teaching not only formally but through the possibly more difficult medium of using books. The day of the talented

amateur in library management is not to be totally dismissed.

I was slightly surprised by what I saw as the restricted view of the learning facilitator in this paper, and I would link this stricture with the earlier comments on how learning can be embedded in organisations.

Powis's partner in crime, Jo Webb, took up the cudgels on behalf of the paraprofessional, correctly identifying the crucial nature of this role in contemporary information services, and reviewing the development needs and opportunities for this sector of staff. Of vital importance, she makes the connections – between development and management styles (and by implication managerial personalities), organisational structures, teamwork, objective setting and the nature of power in organisations.

This is beginning to answer the question posed at the beginning of this review, that of how to embed development and learning in an organisation. White and Weaver, in Chapter 7, add another component, in their emphasis on a culture of training, and raise a huge issue in their reference to "non-essential development training". This is a very conventional and managerial view. In a complex and unstable environment it might be more profitable to blur the distinction between what is essential and what is not. One man's meat is another man's organisational poison.

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Before Margaret Oldroyd pulls everything together, Moira Bent and Phillipa Dolphin separately develop another two key areas: staff development using a virtual learning environment and collaborative staff development.

Throughout this volume there are references to the changing environment, and while both of these contributions actually rehearse issues which have been around for a long time, their treatment in both cases is none the worse for that, and taken together they stand for vital elements in a strategy for development in 21st century libraries.

The contributions in this book are clearly written, well-argued, practical and realistic. They are of genuine value to anyone who needs to understand today's staff development. It is worth four stars. ★★★★★

The Academic Library

Library management in the UK has always suffered from a dearth of good textbooks on academic libraries, both introductory and at the level occupied by successive editions of Bryson. At another level, we have never enjoyed the benefits of having our own Stuart and Moran, and Smith and Baxter et al were a long time ago and mean nothing today.

It is an undoubted fact that we have a thin, although not totally invisible, tradition of writing intelligible management texts in the profession. The first edition of Peter Brophy's book went a long way towards meeting the need for an introductory text for students and professionals entering academic libraries or in the early stages of working in them.

Compared with that, the second edition incorporates a number of changes. Performance management forms a new chapter. Coverage of a number of topics such as accessibility, information literacy, copyright, technological developments, VLEs, managed learning environments and the management of change have been extended and updated. The extensive bibliography has naturally been brought up to date as well.

The book is written in clear language, with a succinct exploration of the important aspects of academic library environments and management, and there are also some sly shafts of humour (not too many) which add to the readability.

The book is a clear and succinct exploration of the important aspects of academic library environments and management. There are also some sly shafts of humour which add to the readability. This is an immaculate introduction to academic library management. It is realistic in its treatment of topics such as budgeting, and sober in its treatment of the difficulties to be encountered in the face of developments like virtual learning environments

and online distance learning.

The book is a balanced account with a good mix of theory, analysis and practical examples. The overall approach is clear, informative and helpful, factual and well-documented.

this is an immaculate introduction to academic library management. It is realistic in its treatment of topics such as budgeting, and sober in its contemplation of the difficulties to be encountered in the face of developments like virtual learning environments and online distance learning. The book is a balanced account with a good mix of theory, analysis and practical examples. The overall approach is clear, informative and helpful, factual and well-documented.

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The early chapters on the higher education background, the history of academic libraries and the place of the library in the institution contain more than enough information and insights to provide neophytes and more experienced practitioners with a good understanding of the environment they are working in, and how academic libraries have arrived at the position they occupy today.

The next chapter, on the impact of ICT, was wide-ranging but I felt that it stopped short. Some discussion of the potential impact of ICT on organisation design, and perhaps drawing on practice in other sectors of the knowledge industry, would have been profitable in the current environment. Here I must admit that it is hard for this reviewer to accept that significant changes in human resource management have been implemented.

Some of the premises put forward are arguable: for example it could be asserted that Dearing in fact had little direct impact on libraries. The profession had to work very hard to find much comfort in it, and it quickly became a dead letter for information services.

Equally, Follett was probably the only official report in living memory to lead to significant change on the ground (in university information services), and in one respect perhaps the most contentious consequence of Follett stemmed from a small passage buried in the report. This produced an unexpected outcome, I feel.

I also had a problem with the models in chapter 3. Even for an introduction, I found them to be over-simplistic for such a complex and uncertain organisational environment in which most libraries are affected by many interrelated characteristics.

Chapter 4, on users, was in many ways a model in itself. In sum it provided a practical and intelligent introduction to what is after all a key topic, and the reference to Ranganathan was a timely reminder of what all libraries are about.

The next chapter, on the impact of ICT, was wide-ranging but I felt that it stopped short. Some discussion of the potential impact of ICT on organisation design, and perhaps drawing on practice in other sectors of the knowledge industry, would have been profitable in the current environment. Here I must admit that it is hard for this reviewer to accept that significant changes in human resource management have been implemented.

Chapter 6 asserts for example that there are shifts in teamworking, but there are also pieces of contemporary and near-contemporary research which failed to find significant evidence of this on the ground, reporting instead a potential misunderstanding of the true nature of teams in organisations.

Even where there is some evidence of change, such as the emergence of the paraprofessional, it could be argued that this is a feature of library organisation which has always been there, and that the blurring of the distinction between professional and non-professional staff has been a fact of life. I suppose it depends on what sort of library people have worked in. I probably worked in the wrong ones.

These arguments are academic ones, and they should not detract from the value of the book, nor the contribution it makes to filling a gap in the professional literature.

When the book moves into resource management and what might be called the technical issues of managing – resource organisation, buildings, systems, services and performance measurement – it is assured and realistic, and makes a sound primer which will certainly add to the existing literature.

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One virtue evident throughout the book is that it does not attempt to say too much. Neither does it complicate issues unnecessarily. This is particularly reflected in some of the closing chapters, where students sometimes encounter some difficulties: management styles, change management and the academic library of the future are dealt with in a straightforward manner.

this 2nd edition will do what it says in the blurb – it is “a worthy and useful summary of the academic library at the start of the new millennium.”

What all this means is that for its avowed readership, this 2nd edition will do what it says in the blurb – it is “a worthy and useful summary of the academic library at the start of the new millennium.”

★★★★

Teaching Information Skills

I feel that I might be becoming an old softie. After an unprecedented awarding of four stars twice in succession, I have to say that *Teaching Information Skills: Theory and Practice* deserves to attract a wider readership than the library profession alone. It is an excellent primer for anyone who has to assume training and development responsibilities, or who lacks experience in the area. Although Webb and Powis focus on teaching information skills, that most daunting and forbidding task calling for the hide of a rhinoceros and the ability to plough on undeterred by the indifference and boredom of the audience, their book has a relevance for training and presentation activities in general.

These authors also have identified a gap in the literature, and filled it with aplomb. They set out to produce a text which is relevant to

our very specific occupational context . . . by combining theory, practice and case studies . . . few titles tried to do what we wanted to. Books about how to teach and support learning tend either to be very practical . . . or theoretical . . . Only Milne and Noone (1996) and Peterson (1992) were written for non-teachers and they do not cover all we felt it would be helpful to say

In this intention, they succeeded in – indeed exceeded – the brief they set themselves, because this is a contribution to the literature right outside their own “very specific occupational context.”

They begin well, with a clear exposition and analysis of learning models, and maintain the standard in their discussion of the practical implications of learning styles. They then move logically and thoroughly through motivation, learning audits, the learning experience, delivery, assessment, feedback and evaluation, teaching teams, and some conclusions. While the treatment does not compare in detail to some other works, particularly on the elements of practical presentation and delivery, it is always sufficient and provides a sound basis for practical learning delivery.

Chapter 3 deals with motivation, and this was the one place where I felt that a more inclusive approach, and a little more theory, would have been beneficial. The core of their approach is to be found in Maslow and Herzberg, which is sound and conventional, and works. However, Hill, for example (1997) offers a much more subtle foundation, and a more overt utilisation of expectancy theory, personal construct theory, and perhaps the work of the McInerneys, little known in the UK, would also have been illuminating. Even so, the practical connection with teaching information skills is well made.

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The coverage of training management issues such as audits and training needs analyses is very sound, and chapter 5, on planning, is also instructive and clear. It is worth noting here that the authors' use of what they call the "journalist's six Ws" is of course a re-run of Kipling's Six Honest Serving Men, proving that in training as in management, there is nothing new under the sun:

I keep six honest serving-men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.
(Rudyard Kipling, Just So Stories, 1902)

I also felt that while discussing planning the authors could have been more expansive on timing, as this is one of the areas where many occasional trainers, and not a few full time ones, experience some problems when things go awry.

The only other caveat I have concerns chapter 6 on delivery. Talking of underpinning good teaching, the authors refer to Ramsden's "assertion that good teaching should be a conversation between the learner and teacher" and go on to say that this encapsulates much of their philosophy of teaching. It is as good a philosophy as any, and better than most, but a conversation is a two-way thing. It is also extraordinarily difficult in the context of this book, because of the often-intransigent nature of the material and the real problem of motivation.

References:

Hill, W. F. Learning: A Study of Psychological Interpretations. Longman, 1997.
McInerney, D. M., and McInerney, V. Educational Psychology: Constructing Learning. 2nd ed., Prentice Hall, 1998.

Here I think the book would have benefited from a discourse on how this conversational approach is itself underpinned by listening and questioning techniques, and how these techniques, essential to the philosophy, can

themselves be learned and deployed in information skills teaching.

There is one small point to cavil over. Some of the case studies might not actually be case studies, but the illustrative material and examples are plentiful and generally good.

★★★★

Lyndon Pugh

Cataloguing Digital Resources

Cataloging and Organizing Digital Resources: A How-To-Do-It Manual For Librarians by Anne M. Mitchell and Brian E. Surratt. London: Facet Publishing, 2005. 236pp, 1-85604-556-0; £39.95.

The authors state in their preface that the book "provides a broad survey of the e-resource management landscape and specific techniques for managing, accessing, and cataloging online information with ease". It claims to address the "fundamental dilemmas that all libraries face" as they confront bibliographic control for online resources – for example how to maintain bibliographic control if the resources are not catalogued, and how to manage the quantity in an effective and sustainable manner.

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Mitchell and Surratt, both practising librarians, are well placed to guide us through these problems. Respectively they hold the posts of Metadata Coordinator, University of Houston Libraries and Electronic Resources Cataloger, Texas A&M University Libraries.

While giving advice on pricing, technical requirements, license restrictions, the acquisition of online resources and how best to integrate them into traditional workflows, the focus is on cataloguing.

The text, unsurprisingly, reflects the cataloguing codes used in the majority of US libraries and those readers who do not use the MARC 21 Format for Bibliographic Data will not find this book good value. The authors note that the Library of Congress, which promulgates the MARC 21 standard, has also issued format-specific guidelines such as Guidelines for Coding Electronic Resources in Leader /06 (LC Network Development and MARC standards Office, 2003) which elaborates on the codified fixed-length fields in the MARC record.

The book gives detailed examples of how to code “born-digital” monographs and serials, resources that are traditionally unpublished (for example electronic theses), e-journals in aggregator databases, websites (including continuously updating websites), and published monographs available on the web (e-books) to MARC 21 standard. The examples are clear, specific and thorough, as in when coding a record for a born-digital, online-only serial the instruction to the cataloguer for the Physical Description field (007) reads “. . . 007 field is also designed so that the character in the first position determines the content in the rest of the positions. The first character known as the Category of Material (007/00), is c for computer file. Specific Material Designation (007/01) is r, indicating that this is a remote-access resource”.

While being the first to acknowledge that a textbook on how to catalogue electronic resources is perhaps not the best format in which to display a talent for spare and eloquent prose, I did find the writing style of this book very tired, and wished (not for the first time) that librarians (those guardians of the English language, so I once thought) could write plainer words. I wearied of the jargon, redundant adjectives, and sloppy phrases. I lost count of how many times the word “dynamic” is used. The authors fall prey to ugly terminology – “ingest” (meaning little more than process), “granularity” (level of detail) and “issuance” (distribution). Cliches like “change is the only constant” irritate, while phrases such as “the management of context-sensitive link resolvers” initially baffle.

Each of the ten chapters has a summary of content, references and a bibliography. The book is well indexed. At £40 for 236 pages with a 3” blank margin on the left of each page, the manual is not a bargain, but it is a good practical guide to cataloguing electronic resources, and for those librarians who already have experience of cataloguing (this is not a book for beginners) and are using MARC21 coding I would recommend it.

★★★★

Olwen Terris
Data Standards Officer
Imperial War Museum

At £40 for 236 pages with a 3” blank margin on the left of each page, the manual is not a bargain, but it is a good practical guide to cataloguing electronic resources, and for those librarians who already have experience of cataloguing (this is not a book for beginners) and are using MARC21 coding I would recommend it

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Turning One Side of A4 Into a Media Arts Centre

Keith Buckman, Coordinator of Technical Services in the Department of Media Arts at Royal Holloway College, the University of London, began a project with a brief plan on a single side of A4 paper, and ended with a major asset in the shape of the Media Arts Centre, opened earlier this year by the Controller of BBC4, at a function attended by leading figures from the media.

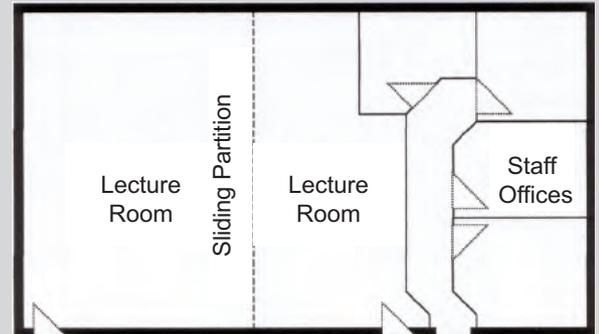


Fig 1 Williams Zone 5 Before Refurbishment

The Problems

- Lack of suitable accommodation
- Insufficient technical standardisation
- Expert operational skills training, but in a generally reactive rather than proactive mode

In May 2002 the Department of Media Arts at Royal Holloway College was crammed into a 1950s utility building, which was in its previous life a chemistry laboratory.

Looking very much as if it should have WW2 heritage status, the 700m² single-story Williams Laboratory provided accommodation for a 60-seat lecture room, two 15-seat seminar rooms, 20 academic, technical and administrative staff, and a location services operation in a cramped office.

Over 250 media practice students had access to 20 video editing and multimedia PCs shoehorned into whatever space remained. They had to use headphones for all sound monitoring because of the space-sharing.

At least there was an excellent purpose-built TV Studio in the adjacent building, and this offered a glimpse of what might be achievable. The popularity and excellent ratings of the courses, combined with a high emphasis on practice, also offered a strong foundation on which to build a development plan for the three years which followed.

The technical plan, approved by the Department Board in June 2002, set out to achieve three main improvements in terms of the effectiveness and resource-efficiency for media practice:

- A better quality operating environment to ensure that designated spaces were fit for their purposes, exemplified good practice and were well organised so that functionally related spaces were in as close a proximity to each other as possible.

The Redevelopment Aims

- An improved operating environment
- Better use of designated spaces
- More flexibility
- Rationalisation of technical platforms
- Proactive training
- The capacity to manage change

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- Standardisation on fewer technical platforms. This was a major priority. At the time, the Department was operating with two different video formats (DV and S-VHS) and four different editing systems (Avid Xpress DV, Avid MC Xpress, Adobe Premiere and an S-VHS linear suite). The PCs offered inconsistent levels of facility and performance. Consequently, students had to book to use specific PCs, and required retraining in unfamiliar applications as they progressed through the course. Media files were also stored on portable drives, and this was a very demanding process terms of operational support.
- More effective teaching methodology, structure and timing of delivery in the context of the academic programmes. While the contribution of the technical support team to operational skills training was impressive, training at that time was delivered somewhat reactively, rather than as an integral part of course planning and delivery. It comprised topic workshops with a limited sense of sequence, progression or defined learning outcomes.

The entire technical team, myself included, enrolled for the Certificate in Teaching Skills Course, run by the College's Educational Development Centre. This new understanding of pedagogy would later serve the redesign of our approach to practice skills training, and also help improve the learning environment in which it takes place.

The technical plan also had to be sufficiently resilient to cope with dynamic changes occurring during the implementation period which, as it turned out, included a significant increase in numbers on both undergraduate and postgraduate courses, and two new course options in creative sound design.

Armed with a 1947 plan drawing of what was then the proposed Williams Laboratory, and 20 years experience of planning University media production facilities, I set about considering how this building could be turned into a media practice facility which would offer a flexible range of spaces.

The structure of the building was made up of a concrete base, a steel frame with sections spaced at approximately 3 metre intervals forming two parallel pitched roofs (effectively two buildings with the intermediate space forming an internal corridor with a flat roof), and a brickwork outer shell with steel frame windows.

Internal areas of varying sizes were formed by single-course brickwork partitions up to about 2.8 metres high. Since its construction, some panel partitioning had been installed above ceiling level, and some spaces had also been sub-partitioned with studwork and plasterboard to form offices and seminar rooms.

Various kinds of ceiling grid had been installed, and quality of sound insulation between adjacent rooms was poor, so an important principle in any refurbishment plan for media production would be to improve the sound insulation performance of the internal partitioning.

The first step was to retrace a plan of the original masonry structure of the building to see how this could be repartitioned efficiently to form the spaces which would serve our needs for the foreseeable future. This was assuming that we could turn all of the Williams building into a practice facility.

Technical Objectives

Standardisation of the acquisition format

Standardisation of the video editing platform

Better access to student files through extension of the LAN

Rationalisation of technical platforms

Proactive training

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The Key Issues

Consultation between the technical team and the practice teaching team at all stages

Careful briefing of students in order to meet legitimate concerns

Making services and facilities available during the refurbishment

Clear planning and timescales

Planning a phased and prioritised approach

Regular monitoring and communication

Flexibility - the unexpected sometimes happened

It was necessary to include a flexible practice teaching space for location recording skills, contemporary art installations, screenings and other events, an expanded location equipment lending facility, multimedia teaching laboratories providing round the clock dedicated PC access, and a number of individual editing rooms, sound recording and other post-production spaces.

Most of the editing rooms would be organised in a cluster for the MA Documentary by Practice course, so that the number of students on this course could be doubled.

It was clear that the northern half of the building offered the greatest potential for development as there were only three masonry walls segmenting the entire length of this area.

The southern half was more complex and had two external access spaces that needed to be retained. It included a number of rooms of about 9m² in area, some of which already served as editing rooms.

This grand plan layout for the building was discussed in detail by the technical team and practice teaching groups

to secure a general consensus on the way forward.

In 2003 the College implemented an estates reorganisation project. One result of this was the transfer of the academic and administrative staff into an adjacent building, so that the Williams building could in principle be designated entirely as a practice facility.

A certain amount of funding was made available to facilitate some improvements, and this enabled the creation of a substantially improved location equipment facility near the main entrance, and the redecoration of the foyer as an initial phase of the refurbishment based on the grand plan.

Editing workstations were moved into former staff offices, reducing the number of rooms forced to accommodate more than one workstation.

At the same time we began to build up a picture of what might be if only we had the funding to initiate a more substantial refurbishment.



A Documentary Camera Workshop in the New Practice Teaching Room

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Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) funding in 2003 helped the College to allocate a project budget of £320K. This included £150K for building refurbishment to create the spaces needed, and £170K for equipment to facilitate an unprecedented level of technical standardisation and some increase in capacity. The main technical objectives were:

- Standardisation on DVCAM as the acquisition format. Sony PD150s already filled the role of stock camcorder, but only five DVCAM decks were available for the PCs, which had to be moved whenever students needed to digitise footage. The established principle was to offer a dedicated DVCAM deck for each editing room, and two designated PCs in each multimedia laboratory to be used for digitising, allowing other laboratory PCs to be used for editing only.
- Standardisation on Avid Xpress PRO as the video editing platform. The MA Documentary by Practice PC rooms had already been upgraded to Xpress PRO. Extending Xpress PRO to all PCs would enable significant efficiency gains in terms of training and technical support.
- Extension of the LAN environment to enable all student media files to be served centrally. Building on the existing facility, which comprised a single Avid LANShare EX server, a second server would be installed to offer the potential to serve forty workstations.

The workplan for the grand design was readdressed in order to accommodate changes which had been implemented since phase one, notably the need to serve a larger postgraduate contingent and a new undergraduate sound design option.

Again, this was discussed in detail by the technical team and the practice teaching staff, before the general principles of the scheme, especially in terms of how much space to allocate to particular functions, were approved by the Department Board.

During the summer term in 2004, briefing sessions were run for all first and second year students, to explain the changes being planned for next session, and to invite questions about any concerns, which in fact were surprisingly few considering the scale of the project.

In addition to refurbishing the Williams building, capital project funding was obtained to upgrade the studio video system to digital. Both projects would enable us to re-launch the department's technical facilities as the Media Arts Centre, a concept which had fallen into disuse. The TV studio project would run in parallel with the Williams refurbishment, but apart from our own involvement with design consultation and some stripping out, the supply and installation would be completed by one specialist contractor, so this was a relatively self-contained component which was completed successfully on time and on budget.

For the Williams refurbishment, it was vital that our technical support team was able to offer a fully-supported operational facility by the beginning of the 2004-5 academic session, so a project completion date was set for 24th September 2004, in time for student induction the following week. Working back from this completion date, we set out the following planning schedule (presented on the next page in reverse sequence):

Some Lessons Learned

Better risk analysis e.g. to protect equipment still in use during building

Prepare for the unexpected eg. the acoustic problems

Make early contact with suppliers

Prepare tight briefs for suppliers and subcontractors

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1. Final contingency time (1 week)
2. Staff training (2 weeks)
3. Systems installations (2 weeks)
4. Delivery of all new equipment and software (1 week)
5. Building works completion required by 13th August
6. Contingency for completion of building works (1 week)
7. Building works contract (10 weeks commencing on 7th June)
8. Clear existing equipment and furniture from designated areas and store in TV studio
9. Services to remain open and available to UG students until end of term (4th June)

The summer recess offered a narrow window of opportunity to complete the work. The construction part of the Williams refurbishment was overseen by a project surveyor from the College's Estates department.

The schedule was considered to be tight, but was accepted as being just about achievable in the time allocated. Weekly project team meetings monitored progress and ensured that necessary details were communicated to the respective contributors, and understood. The works schedule also included upgrades to the network infrastructure, fire alarm and security systems.

A phased approach was adopted so that selected zones would be given higher priority for completion. In this way, the new postgraduate editing rooms, which in any case required the most construction work, were started first, then the middle areas for the laboratories and transfers

rooms, and finally the practice teaching space. This would allow flexibility in terms of scheduling clearance and installation tasks across the start and completion of the building contract.

Throughout the project, facilities had to be available for the MA Documentary by Practice students who were completing video dissertations for submission in early September. This meant that the southern half of the building had to remain in active use by students and technical staff while building work was in progress. As this was a less than ideal arrangement, efforts were made to communicate plans to students before work commenced and to invite any expressions of concern.

The actual disruption was very limited and there were no major operating failures, but the equipment did become very dusty and the existing LANShare server needed a thorough clean when it was taken off-line to be reconfigured to run alongside the new, second server. Ideally, further measures to reduce the risks would have been taken, but this would have required setting up a temporary facility in a location outside the Williams building. This was simply not possible to do within the scope of the project.

When the area designated for conversion to a practice teaching/contemporary art space was stripped out, it became apparent that opening the room to ceiling height, as originally specified, created poor acoustic conditions and would make teaching extremely difficult.

So the scheme had to be reworked to retain both the ability to suspend exhibits and be able to run teaching sessions and screenings without encountering acoustics problems.

It was fortunate that savings in another part of the budget allowed for the installation of a high-level suspended ceiling and, when combined with carpeting, this considerably reduced the excessive reverberation. Some roof trusses were left partly exposed and, when painted and combined with scaffold poles to suspend lighting and exhibits, offered an interesting architectural feature.

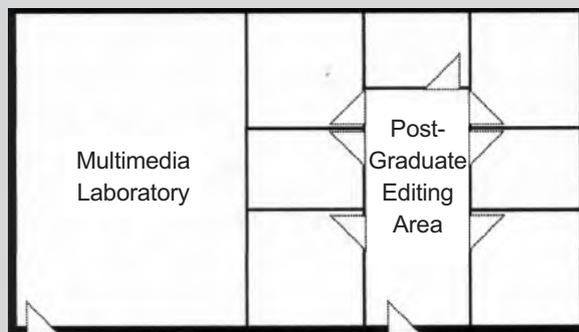


Fig 2 Williams Zone 5 After Refurbishment

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Dimmable halogen lights were also installed in the ceiling grid, to offer an alternative to the fluorescent lights and increase the room's flexibility. One result of this was that lighting workshops can now use a range of ambient lighting conditions which might be encountered on a factual location shoot.

Apart from this negotiated adjustment, the remainder of the building contract went according to plan and, while there were some minor items outstanding after the completion date, they did not impede progress on the internal installation tasks.

Proof of the effectiveness of the new internal partitioning came when the fire alarm system was tested. The bells could not be heard in the editing rooms when sounded at the minimum legal level, and so flashing lights had to be installed.

Perhaps the least successful task was the installation of two data projectors and a sound system towards the end of the building schedule. This was expected to be a relatively small scale activity, and so was left to the supplier. Unfortunately, the work was again subcontracted to an apparently untried party, and it was below the expected standard. This required some remedial work which was not finished in time for the start of teaching. The problem underlined the need for earlier contact with suppliers and the writing of a tighter brief, even with such a relatively small scale component and a trusted installer.



A Student on the MA Documentary by Practice Course Using Avid Xpress Pro in a Post Graduate Editing Room

What Was Less Successful

the installation of two data projectors and a sound system towards the end of the building schedule. This was expected to be a relatively small scale activity, and so was left to the supplier, who subcontracted it to an apparently untried party . . . and it was below the expected standard. This required some remedial work which was not finished in time for the start of teaching. The incident underlined the need for earlier contact with suppliers and the writing of a tighter brief, even with such a relatively small scale component and a trusted installer.

Nevertheless, given the potential for this scale of refurbishment project to drift beyond completion and into the new term, the majority of tasks were successfully completed on time, all the new spaces were usable from the first week of teaching, and most of the new equipment and software was up and running.

The refurbished Media Arts Centre was officially opened on 16th February 2005 by Janice Hadlow, Controller of BBC4 and a graduate of Royal Holloway College, who also gave a fascinating guest lecture about history on television.

The opening event was well attended by notable contacts in the industry and higher education, and also key staff within the College. It was especially important to invite, and say thank you to, everyone involved in the success of the project, including the building contractors, the equipment and systems suppliers and installers, and colleagues in the central services who advised, supported, signed forms, did the cleaning, and and so on.

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In addition to an excellent digital TV studio, the Media Arts Centre now offers users 40 internally-networked workstations across two multimedia laboratories, 13 editing rooms and a sound studio, a total of 5Tb media storage, Avid Xpress PRO, Steinberg Wavelab, Adobe Photoshop and Encore for all, and Steinberg Nuendo for third year sound design. Students also enjoy the use of a versatile practice teaching space and a comprehensive location services facility.

The new facilities have made a significant impact on the quality of our practice skills training. We are now able to offer a higher level of hands-on working while at the same time demonstrating concepts by projecting the software application and camera displays on large screens. Being easier to access and support, the laboratories and editing rooms offer an excellent environment for learning media skills through workshop presentations and project work.

Managing all student media files centrally has reduced operational demands, allowing the team to focus on the more pedagogical aspects of support in an anticipatory way. For example, prepared clips can be stored on the LANShare in designated folders for use in editing and sound production exercises. Examples of a student's work in progress can then be called up and presented direct from the server to relevant peer groups.

This allows more convenient access to useful teaching material, and saves on tape and DVD production until the final version output is needed. While the Autumn term was especially demanding because of the need to extend Avid training across all three years of undergraduate and also postgraduate students, there is no doubt that this investment will be of great benefit, supporting a sharper focus on the conceptual aspects of student work rather than retraining on unfamiliar products.

The real proof of success will be in the quality of practice work achieved in 2007, when the full benefits will be seen, but I am certain that we have built a solid foundation for excellence. Sometimes, a side of A4 can achieve amazing results.



Avid Xpress PRO Training in a New Multimedia Laboratory



Film and Video News The Films of Geoffrey Jones

[The Rhythm of Film](#)
[On and Off the Rails](#)

[Plus Gallivant](#) [London and Robinson in Space](#)

[Looking for Langston](#)

[Movemail Releases](#) [Powell and Pressburger](#)

[Imagenet](#)

Geoffrey Jones's *The Rhythm of Film* was released by the *bfi* on the 27th June. Geoffrey Jones died on the 21st June at his home near Llandovery, at the age of 73 and after a pioneering career as a maker of award-winning short films since the 1950s.

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Born in London of Welsh parents, Geoffrey trained in interior design, graphic design and photography at the Central School of Art. Inspired by a childhood fascination with film, he eventually joined the Crawford International advertising agency, where he completed a critically well-received commercial for Martini. Later, he progressed to work for Shell and BP among others, and was responsible for innovative work with animated shorts.

The Rhythm of Film includes some of Jones's best remembered British Transport Films commissions – especially the Oscar-nominated *Snow* (1963), *Rail* (1967) and *Locomotion* (1975). The first of these is a depiction of work with animated shorts.



Rail (Geoffrey Jones, 1966) courtesy of the *bfi*

The selection on *The Rhythm of Film* DVD is completed by *Trinidad & Tobago*, *Shell Spirit*, *This is Shell*, *Seasons Project*, *A Chair-a-plane Kwela* and *A Chair-a-plane Flamenco*.

Critics have made the point that Jones had not made a film for a quarter of a century, but this DVD released by the *bfi* offers further recognition for what was a masterful career in making industrial shorts. Stephen Moss explains this, in what was probably Jones's last interview (*The Guardian*, 24th June 2005) by referring to the film maker's great artistic courage and integrity in "wanting to work for himself, make decisions for himself." Moss also spoke of Geoffrey Jones's transformational skill with film:

What could have been dry-as-dust subjects became, in Jones's idiosyncratic treatments, vivid and personal.

Other experts have commented on his ability to marry music and images, and *Locomotion*, for example, is marked by its use of rhythm. There may be no better explanation of Jones's inspirational approach to his work than his own words to Moss:

The mainstream is crap. I would never have made a film in my life if I had not been mesmerised by film as a child. It was absolute, total magic.

Extras on the DVD include

- A filmed interview with Geoffrey Jones at home, in which he describes his career and working processes
- An illustrated booklet with background information and credits

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Volume One of the British Transport Films Collection, **On and Off the Rails**, was released at the same time as *The Rhythm of Film*. The first of three double-disc sets, this release represents one of the most important resources in the *bfi* National Film and Television Archive.

Entertaining and informative, it is crucial for film and transport enthusiasts and historians, representing as it does a view of a Britain which has disappeared. *On and Off the Rails* has a running time of over four hours, and represents the work of the British Transport Film Unit over a period of 37 years, from the establishment of their own in-house production and distribution unit in 1949 until its demise in 1986.

For 25 years, the unit was led by Edgar Anstey, and the first release contains much of his pioneering work. Over the years, the unit won over 200 awards. This record included an Oscar gained in 1966.

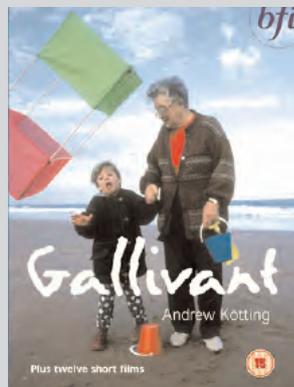
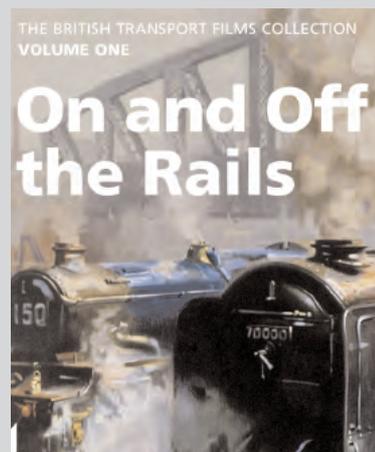
Some of the classic productions included in this release are *Blue Pullman*, *Snowdrift at Bleath Gill*, and *John Betjeman Goes by Train*. Films new to the series are also included – *The Diesel Train Driver*, *On Track for the Eighties*, and *This year – London*. Disc 1 with the title *On the Rails*, also includes

- Elizabethan Express
- Train Time
- Rail 150
- Cybernetica

Off the Rails (Disc 2) completes the release with

- Under the River
- This is York
- The Great Highway
- A Day of One's Own

The discs are accompanied by an introductory booklet and film notes by BTF historian Steven Foxon.



Gallivant (coll. to gad about or to wander) is the record of a trip around the coastline of Britain. Andrew Kötting's film is the story of his 85-year old mother Gladys's adventures with her granddaughter, who is eight.

The film charts the story of the burgeoning relationship between the two, who hardly know each other at the outset but gradually develop a powerful bond. The little girl, Eden, has a condition which affects her speech and movement, so communicates in sign language.

The characters in the local communities the two pass through add a counterpoint through their eccentricities, bizarre behaviour and quirkiness, and the old lady is suitably "opinionated, bursting with anecdotes and contradictory reminiscences".

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Gallivant (left) made its premi re at the Edinburgh Film Festival and won the Best New Director Award for K tting. Extras include

- Visionary Landscapes: a new two-screen film reworking Super 8 outtakes from *Gallivant*, made in collaboration with Jeremy Finer
- Two illustrated booklets, the first containing an essay by Iain Sinclair and film notes by Andrew K tting himself. The second contains the original treatment for *Gallivant*.

London and Robinson in Space were issued together by the *bfi*. Both by Patrick Keiller, the films are the story of a journey undertaken by an unseen researcher and his companion, who narrates the tale. *London*, an essay in the form of a journal, was shot in 1992 and relates a fictitious trip through the city against the backdrop of the events of that year. It is full of insights into the city and its mysteries, and pinpoints the beginning of the "fall of the House of Windsor".

Robinson in Space is a journey around England. The duo are commissioned to investigate "the problem of England" on behalf of an advertising agency. "Beautifully framed images and deadpan narration contribute to an unpredictable exploration of the cultural and economic landscape". A colour booklet contains

- Two essays – The Secret City by Mike Hodges, and *London: Necropolis of Fretful Ghosts* by Iain Sinclair
- Conversations between Patrick Keiller and the historian Patrick Wright



Looking for Langston

Isaac Julien



Looking for Langston is a critically acclaimed and controversial work by Isaac Julien which is the first of three DVDs released by the British Film Institute (*bfi*) as part of its major initiative Black World. This runs for six months from June 2nd and is supported by the Arts Council England.

In this lyrical and poetic consideration of the life of revered Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes, award-winning British Filmmaker Isaac Julien invokes Hughes as a black gay cultural icon. The backcloth of the film is an impressionistic, atmospheric setting which parallels a Harlem speakeasy of the 1920s with an 80s London club.

Extracts from Hughes' poetry are interwoven with the work of cultural figures from the 1920s and beyond, including black poets Essex Hemphill and Bruce Nugent, and photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, constructing a lyrical and multilayered narrative. Julien explores the ambiguous sexual subtexts of a period of rich artistic expression and the nature of black gay desire.

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Black World seeks to place black creativity at the heart of world cinema by celebrating revolutionary black filmmakers past and present, as well as highlighting the new talent and innovation emerging today. It is a fresh and inspiring cross-cultural film programme which aims to promote awareness of the artistic, cultural and political context in which black cinema has emerged and how it continues to shape contemporary British film, video and music culture. On July 25th, *bfi* also released *Burning an Illusion* (1981), directed by Menelik Shabazz, and Horace Ové's *Pressure* will be released in September.

The Hughes DVD includes a number of interesting extras:

- Commentary with Isaac Julien and Nina Kellgren, who was the Director of Photography
- The short film *Portrait in Blue: Essex Hemphill*, by Isaac Julien. released this year
- *First and Last Words: Essex Hemphill and Larry Duckette in Conversation*. This is an audio recording of a 1990 radio programme.
- Photo gallery
- 48-page illustrated booklet containing essays by Henry Louis Gates Jr., Armond White, bell hooks and others. Also in the booklet are an interview with the director, reviews and biographies.

Isaac Julien was born in 1960 in London, where he currently lives and works. He graduated from St. Martin's School of Art in 1984 and founded Sankofa Film and Video Collective. As a critically acclaimed filmmaker and theorist, Julien's work breaks the barriers between documentary and fiction in order to explore perceptions of black identity.

More information on Isaac Julien can be found at www.isaacjulien.com

The releases reported here are available from the *bfi* at £19.99.

For details, email jill.reading@bfi.org.uk or on the website at www.bfi.org.uk/video



For June/July *Moviemail* releases highlight the centenary of the birth of Michael Powell, with extracts from an article by Ray Durnat (quoted in the box on the next page from *The Life and Spirit of Michael Powell (1905-1990)*, at www.moviemail-online.co.uk/powell) and some Powell and Pressburger releases on DVD.

The Edge of the World has been previously featured in *Multimedia Information & Technology* as a *bfi* release (vol 30 no 1 February 2004). This film explores the dilemma of inhabitants of a remote island in the Shetlands who face the possibility of a forced move to the mainland as their livelihoods become more precarious on their beautiful but isolated location. This was Powell's first independent production and stars Niall Macginnis, John Laurie, and Finlay Currie. Depopulation and changes in the fishing industry are handled in a superbly filmed and edited production. *The Edge of the World* is available on DVD or in VHS format.

The Red Shoes stars Moira Shearer and Anton Wallbrook, and has a place amongst the great films of British cinema. In it, Powell uses music, art and cinema to create a work of "such beauty and intelligence that it caused Scorsese to name it as one of the five greatest films ever made." First released well over 50 years ago, the film is an adaptation of a Hans Christian Andersen fairy story about a ballerina who has to choose between her love for Marius Goring and her dancing career under the control of the impresario played by Anton Wallbrook. The film was photographed by Jack Cardiff and won Oscars for its design and score. The dancing scenes benefited from superb special effects and the film itself is said to have influenced Gene Kelly's *An American in Paris* as well as the careers of other artistes.

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Autumn Tale directed by Eric Rohmer is set in the Rhone Valley and was the Silver Lion winner at the Venice Film Festival. It is the story of a match-making shop owner who sets out to find a husband for her friend, a local wine grower who is widowed. The DVD also contains an interview with Eric Rohmer, and the Theatrical Trailer. The cost is £16.00 on DVD only.

Among the foreign releases listed by Moviemail in their summer catalogue are films from Italy and France. Visconti's *The Leopard* is once again available, charting the fate of an aristocratic Sicilian family in the midst of political turbulence (DVD at £12.99) and *Les Vacances De M. Hulot*, also listed previously in *Multimedia Information & Technology*, is available as DVD or VHS at £12.99 and £9.99 respectively.

Three of Powell and Pressburger's classic wartime films are also on offer. *A Matter of Life and Death* (starring David Niven), *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (with Roger Livesey as Clive Candy) and *I Know Where I'm Going* (Wendy Hiller) are available for £12.99 on DVD. All of the films listed here can be ordered online at www.moviemail-online.co.uk or by telephone at 08702649000

Imagenet alerted us to the success of Hayao Miyazaki's *Howl's Moving Castle* at the last night of the Sydney Film Festival. *Howl's Moving Castle* is another sophisticated animation from Japanese anime master Hayao Miyazaki (Academy Award®-winner for *Spirited Away*).

Miyazaki's most complex fantasy to date eschews straightforward narrative and moral reductionism for a multi-layered and equivocal approach that reflects the contradictions of real life. Miyazaki exerts a strong command over a wide-ranging story line and skillfully seduces the viewer into deciphering the subtle motivations of the characters. His early films like *My Neighbor Totoro* explored the mindscape of being young – all of youth's dreams, hopes and disappointments.

Later works like the marvellous *Princess Mononoke* added social and ecological themes. *Howl's Moving Castle* is another creative step forward. The story and characters are so intricately constructed that they defy analysis in terms of dramatic conflict. There are no heroes and no villains – everyone is muddling through in a world divided by both magic and war.

Imagenet updates cover a wide range of releases and their website at www.imagenet.com makes a large number of images available to subscribers.

Further information on this service can be obtained from customer-services@image.net

Powell's best-known films are spectacular, sensual, fanciful. The others are quiet, retiring, almost secretive, disappointing even, until odd details tease your mind, and gradually their simplicity reveals their depths

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The *bfi* is the Archive . . .

Balancing the historical tension between preservation and access . . . The danger is you acquire too much – a pattern repeated the world over

In recent issues of Multimedia Information & Technology, the news columns have carried several reports of the changes taking place at the *bfi*. This is a topic which has implications for subscribers and MMIT group members. The following feature originally appeared in the Summer edition of Archive Zones, the quarterly magazine of the Federation of Commercial Audiovisual Libraries (FOCAL). It is reproduced in its original form with the permission of all parties involved. For further information visit the FOCAL website at www.focalint.org

Q 1. Given the *bfi*'s financial imperatives – characterised by the creation of a new *bfi* Trading department – is there a risk of subordinating the national heritage to the *bfi*'s short-term aims?

Every cultural organisation in the world copes with the fact that in real terms, budgets go up at a much lesser rate than allows them to do everything they aspire and need to do. We have to balance the responsibility of looking after our national heritage collections while making them available and accessible in a meaningful way.

Our number one priority is the Archive and that is accepted by the UK Film Council, their board, the *bfi* governors, the DCMS and the Treasury. In terms of improving our finances we want to run ourselves more economically and generate more monies ourselves. We are doing this by strengthening the Development team and we have also put in place a Trading arm which is charged with making more of what we already do; we're not changing our cultural remit. We produce some of the greatest DVDs and books and we are not going to swerve away from that but we do believe we could be more professional in the way we get those out to market and seek the revenue back.

We've also got some additional help from government in terms of a modernisation grant for changing working practices and training, which was a vote of confidence from the DCMS. We are really looking at all our policies and the way we do things. We've introduced protocols for the way we look after the collection. The collection policy needed re-visiting and that's just about to go out for massive international consultation. We're also establishing a very high level advisory group of experts which will report to the governors and oversee the continued development of the Archive.

Q 2. From its history, size, heritage importance, commercial value and international status, the NFTVA dwarfs any other individual activity of the *bfi*. Do you not see an absurd disproportion in diminishing it to a subsidiary department of a department?

The Archive has not been directly represented on the management board for some time. However, the Archive is not a separate entity; it informs everything we do, whether it's education, DVDs or a programme at the NFT. The *bfi* is the Archive; it is what the *bfi* does, looking after film heritage, making it accessible and interpreting it on a day-to-day basis.

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Q 3. How far have you progressed in technical research and specifications for the storage facilities you would ideally require?

We are clear about the environmental conditions that we expect to store our collections in for them to be safe and to delay deterioration. We have conducted a major benchmarking exercise supported by interviews with all the key organisations that are doing research in this area. The technical specifications are for storing deteriorating materials at minus 5° C; nitrate and master materials at 5° C and viewing copies at 15° C. We will have three distinct kinds of collections and care for them appropriately.

There are other archives who are going through the same challenges as us, such as The Library of Congress and the Danish Film Archive who are all set to go this route. The Institute of Image Permanence in America has done the most research in this area. We don't want to be doing anything where we haven't checked and double-checked. We're looking at technical research and specifications and we're shortly meeting with experts from the Museums and Libraries' Association, The Institute of Image Permanence and the Imperial War Museum to discuss the findings from the peer review that we've conducted. We're also introducing protocols which previously weren't in place including collections care standards, routine inspection and the monitoring of collections.

Q 4. Have you yet costed these facilities for one of the largest collections in the world? Critics would like to see more detail than simply "£8 million over five years". By what date will the NFTVA be in proper storage?

We are talking about two distinct things here: a short term aim to house the collections in stabilised environments within existing storage; and longer term plans for new state-of-the-art storage facilities.

The nitrate collection at Gaydon was in a vulnerable situation. We have now refurbished the vaults and stock will all be transferred and safely housed in the refurbished vaults by the end of this year. At Berkhamsted there are three large vaults which no longer provide optimum storage conditions; they are too humid and they are not cold enough. These vaults will be upgraded by 2006.

For the longer term we're talking to a range of potential partners to find storage solutions together and to a range of experts to help us come up with costed options regarding our storage needs. For this full options appraisal we need to establish the state of the collections and identify how much material needs to be stored at each temperature, then we can look precisely at costs.

Q 5. Does the *bfi* plan to abandon "preservation by duplication" as a means to ensure survival of the collection, despite its use by all other archives and commercial companies?

We are not going to stop duplication but duplication is not our only preservation strategy. We have different ways of dealing with different elements. For example it does not make sense to duplicate small gauge films, 16mm or used prints. What we want to do is get the best pre-print materials available.

We have a finite amount of money each year and we have to make a critical decision on how to spend that money in an accountable way. By the end of the year our new curatorial team will have drawn up plans which will show which material we will focus on over the next two years.

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Q 6. What are your plans for developing digital facilities, given the disparity between the unreadiness of the technology for archival use and the enormous collections of digital material the NFTVA already holds?

This is a live issue which we are already dealing with as half of our collections are television and more than half of our non-fiction collections (the biggest part of the archive) are on video. We have plans, like any organisation has, for how you check and copy material, depending on what you think is going to be the rate of loss. It's one of our activities that works most effectively.

We are just in discussions with Ofcom about going forward with the television archive. None of us knows the long-term future of digital media but the checks and balances are there to ensure we don't lose material and we are able to copy it if there is a problem.

With regard to film to digital: at the moment we're only using digital for restoration and access purposes, not for conservation.

Q 7. Are you confident that you can build and maintain a curatorial unit with adequate qualifications for this role of national cultural importance without significant replacement of current staff?

There is a long-standing issue about how we manage our collections – we haven't had any deep programmes of research or interpretation of material. Instead, the decisions we've made have been driven mainly by technical considerations, rather than considerations about the content of the collections. This is our heritage and we need to take our curatorial view and research and interpret the collections to understand them and give access to them. We need to build a curatorial team to do this. We have some very strong pockets of knowledge already and we're also developing staff knowledge and bringing in new skills.

Darren Long has been appointed Head of Collections and Information and will lead in defining and delivering the strategic priorities for the library and archive collections in terms of preservation, conservation, collections management, acquisition and developing public access.

Nigel Algar has been appointed Senior Curator (Fiction) and will lead and manage a team of curators to develop, interpret and care for the fiction film collections for the nation.

William Fowler has been appointed Artists' Moving Image Curator and will build the collections of work by British film and video artists.

Robin Baker has been appointed Collections Curator Mediatheque and will work with the Archive's curatorial team to produce content for the *bfi*'s planned mediatheques.

However we have yet to appoint a Head Curator who will take forward our ambitions for our curatorial team and for growing and developing our collections and we're starting another recruitment search for this person now.

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How to decide which film to work on is a curatorial decision to do with setting priorities. These decisions might be based on whether the material is unique, how rare it is, what the subject is, who the rights holders are and whether any other archives hold copies. There are many decisions to make. We don't want to make decisions on a purely technical basis.

The greatest responsibility we have as a national collection, similar to the British Museum or the National Gallery, is to make the decision as to what to acquire. We have an Acquisitions Board to help us in this, which meets quarterly. The danger, of course, always is that you acquire too much, not that you acquire too little. The other thing is you spend so much time responding to people trying to give you material . . . that you don't pro-actively ensure you've got the material you ought to have and that is the pattern that is repeated the world over.

Another of our aims is to bring the library and the archive back together. We want to raise our game in terms of research and find academic partners so we can really start to bring in other people to work with us to research our collections.

Q 8. Do you have doubts about maintaining the NFTVA's 67-year loyalty to FIAF? Do those doubts relate to the demands of the FIAF code of ethics, which might be opposed to the *bfi*'s commercial ambitions?

No – the *bfi* has reconfirmed its membership of FIAF.

Q 9. How will it be possible adequately to service increased access with this reduced technical staff, without lowering standards of care? Will there be adequate staff to carry out the essential precise examination of all material designated for discarding?

Yes. Whilst there has been a reduction of 17 posts overall, technical skills have been retained. In addition, we are investing £70,000 on staff training and development to create multi-skilled flexible teams.

Q 10. Would it any longer be possible for the NFTVA to undertake a restoration project of the complexity of Mitchell and Kenyon?

Most definitely. We had a core group of eight people who worked on Mitchell and Kenyon, two of those have died, one has left which leaves five staff who are very skilled at their job. It is simply not true to say those staff would be incapable of doing this work. If any material comes in that requires step printing we can do step printing; if any material comes where we would need specialist equipment we would acquire the appropriate equipment. It is true that there are still vacant technical posts but we decided not to make appointments until we got through this restructuring period.

Q 11. Does the abolition of the cataloguing department seriously risk impairing the accessibility of the collections?

We're not abolishing cataloguing – we're merging cataloguing and acquisitions into a team. A curator has to say what we're bringing into the collection, why we're bringing it in, where it's from, why it's important to us, where the rights lie and what it is.

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Q 12. How grave is the very apparent risk that the needs of access will now take priority over the fundamental duties of preservation?

We want people to see films but the long-term heritage and care of the collection is paramount. There has been a historical tension between preservation and access requirements and in the end it's a question of curatorial judgement to balance these two requirements of a publicly funded collection like the NFTVA.

In the past access has been controlled by preservation rules which have meant that master material can only be accessed a fixed number of times. We prefer that the curator makes these judgements on the basis of risk to the material. For example if the material were unique or very fragile we would want to copy it before providing access. However, the number one consideration has to be the long term care of the collection and not to do anything that would compromise the collection.

Q 13. In caring for a major national cultural heritage, is it good policy to embark upon a course of action with this degree of uncertainty about its rightness?

Certainty is a relative term. We are as certain as we can be with the information available. In the past decisions were made about film preservation when it was assumed that nitrate was less stable than acetate. However, we now know that this is not true but we can only make decisions on the best information available at the time.

We try to minimise risk by making sure that at every step of the journey we double check our decisions with external parties who have expertise in these areas. The biggest travesty would be to do nothing as that is definitely the way to ensure the collections are put at serious risk.

Linspire 5: Linux-based Operating System Software

Ken Cheetham Learning
Development Coordinator UWIC

Linux is a computer operating system, just as Windows 2000 Pro and Windows XP are for PCs and OSX is for an Apple Mac. The main difference between these and Linux is that no single organisation controls Linux; it is known as an open source operating system (OS) which can be custom-configured by anyone.

It is offered for sale, or made freely available, by developers who provide custom installation tools and configurations, and bundle these with their own selection of applications and utilities. Many of the applications may also be customised, as they will tend to be open source as well. The whole bundled package is known as a Linux distribution.



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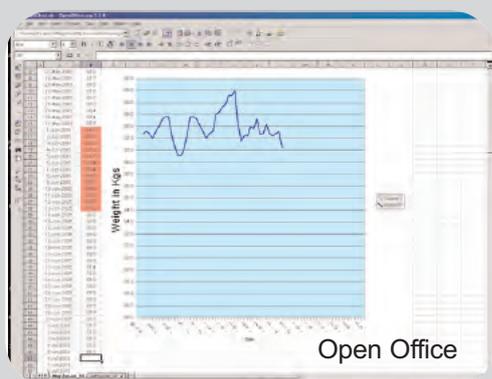
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Linspire 5 is such a distribution, and may have been met with before under the rather unfortunate name of Lindows, but it has changed considerably. Other distributions which may have been encountered are Fedora, Lycoris, Mandrake, Suse and Xandros, each with its own particular balance of features.

Clearly, the differences between distributions will tend to reflect the aim or emphasis chosen for any particular bundle. Typical, inclusive functions may be general office functions, sending and receiving



email, Internet browsing, managing pictures from a digital camera and so on. Any good distribution should have all of this functionality and a great deal more besides. Using Linspire does not mean it is necessary to run Windows, and there could be lots of excellent reasons to change. We are going to take a close, but practical, look at Linspire to see what it offers to an ordinary user, to assess its functionality in everyday tasks and to consider its value for money.

Linspire is a complete operating system and more, as it comes with an integrated office suite, a Web browser, an e-mail client and instant messenger.

Who can run it? The answer is that anybody can run it really – it does not require the skills of an IT specialist either to install or to configure it. That is taken care of by the package itself via a few simple questions as installation proceeds. There are some computer system requirements of course, and the basics are:

- PC with minimum 800 MHz (1GHz is recommended)
- 128 MB of RAM (256 MB is advised)
- Hard drive (4GB free space required)
- Super VGA (1024 x 768) or higher resolution video card and monitor (3-D graphics accelerator card required for some games, screen savers, and so on)
- CD-ROM or DVD drive
- Keyboard & mouse
- Linspire-compatible sound card and speakers or headphones
- Internet access requires Linspire compatible, minimum 56 Kbps modem and/or an Ethernet card for Internet/ LAN connectivity if required.

System Requirements

1GHZ PC 256 MB RAM
4GB on hard drive
Super VGA (1042 x 768) or
higher resolution video card
and monitor
3-D graphics accelator card for
some games
CD-ROM or DVD drive
Linspire-compatible sound
card, speakers and head-
phones
Linspire-compatible 56Kbps
modem and/or Ethernet card

Linspire can be installed to the hard drive or run from the CD. The latter option means that it can be tried out without reformatting the hard drive or giving up an existing OS installation.

The whole package can be downloaded from the Internet, or purchased on CD-ROM from the distributor or IT retailers. A visit to the distributor, Phoenix Global Software, at <http://www.phoenixglobalsoftware.co.uk> will provide as much information as you may need, or you may contact them directly at Suite 26, Hurlingham Studios, Ranelagh Gardens, London, SW6 3PA, telephone 013 2784 4880.

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I would not want to download the package via a 56Kbps modem, but it would be fine on Broadband and no time at all for a potential educational use with access to Janet.

Linspire is almost, but not quite, free. UK customers can have it for just £49.99, which includes the complete operating system and integrated package plus one year of CNR Service – CNR stands for click and run. CNR Warehouse is Linspire's innovative software library, from which users can download and install more than 2,000 additional Linux programmes, including full office and productivity suites, games, multimedia players, photo management software, accounting tools and many more. CNR Warehouse uses one-click technology, allowing users to download and install software automatically with a single mouse click. More information about CNR is available at www.linspire.com/cnrservice.

Linspire's principal features are extensive:

- Office functions: fully integrated office suite, Open Office 1.1.3, address book, calendar, reminders included
- Internet functions and email: Hot Words integrated search feature, automatic spell-checking in all web applications including email, mail manager for email, pre-configured firewall, new web browser and instant messenger, enhanced virus resistance and optional VirusSafe service
- File types supported: QuickTime, Windows Media, Flash, Java, Real, .doc, .xls, .ppt, .mp3, .pdf, .mpg, and many more
- Multimedia: Music Manager, Photo Manager and Real Player 10, supports video and sound with real-time mixing
- Hardware support: easy plug and play support for removable media, hardware diagnostic reporting, improved laptop support for WiFi profiles for mobility, Intel Centrino compatible
- Security: encrypted wallet for storing passwords and other personal information
- Interface: Graphical user interface includes a themed Linspire environment, tutorials are accompanied by spoken narration

Key Features

Easy installation

Inclusive functions

Easy to use

Inexpensive

Many programmes

Attractive, customisable screens

User friendly

Handles all applications

Good for inexperienced users

Use for learning environments
small office, home office
and the home itself

Excellent help

Let us start with a look at the system I used for this review: a 3.2GHz processor, 1GB DDR400 SDRAM (used for a lot of photo-editing), 120GB 7,200 IDE hard disc, 128MB graphics card, multi-format DVD writer/CD-RW drive, 56Kbps modem, 19-inch TFT monitor running at 1280 x 1024, keyboard and mouse, on-board sound, 250GB USB2 removable hard drive, 4-colour inkjet printer, flatbed scanner, on-board LAN adaptor; a typical, modern machine.

Only the network (LAN) adaptor could not be tested as the machine is not networked. It took me less than 20 minutes to be up and running and everything worked, with no specialist IT support being required.

The desktop screen is rightly acceptable, as wallpaper may be changed to accommodate personal taste and desktop icons may be added or taken away depending on working preferences.

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In fact, users could assume they are looking at a Windows desktop, and I suppose this might be intentional, in order to help sell the package in part on the basis of familiarity. Certainly, there is no steep learning curve either for beginners to computing or to those experienced users making the switch.

I have never used Linux before, so I had no idea what to expect from Linspire. I was surprised to identify icons which were not copies, but were entirely familiar – the Recycle Bin or Trash Can, or an email icon for example. Appearances apart, it is the usability of individual components as well as the whole that adds to the attraction.

The email spam filter quickly learns which emails you consider to be bad, making an effective spam tool. It is part of the web suite optimized for convenience and usability. The tabbed web browser, Mozilla, with pop-up blocking, speeds up surfing, minimizes unwanted distractions and helps to keep the desktop free from muddle.

Hot Words searching is simple. Hover the mouse over any word and it will turn yellow. Click the word and a context menu is displayed permitting searches of auctions, books, catalogues, directories, news, even on-line shopping and more.

MailMinder enables automated alerts to individual email messages at pre-set times, so when necessary an appointment can be scheduled in the calendar and the email can be sent again at a later date, as a reminder.

Open Office is a robust office suite which includes applications compatible with Microsoft's Excel, PowerPoint and Word, so that existing documents created in those applications can be readily opened, edited and saved (.xls, .ppt and .doc file formats). It also contains a drawing package for 2-D and 3-D objects, providing ready-made shapes, lines and freehand drawing, as well as text boxes.

None of the document formatting was lost in the examples I tried. Data sources and charts from Excel, for example, were reproduced faithfully.

So, there should be no problem if a document from one of those Microsoft applications is received and has to be edited in Open Office.

LPhoto is another very welcome feature which offers support for many digital cameras. It only allows minor image editing, like red eye removal for example, but it is functional in what it sets out to do.

Should it be necessary to use an image editing application with more of the functionality of Photoshop, but not at that price, a visit the CNR Warehouse Multimedia & Design category, selecting Image Editing, is all that is needed to pick up a copy of Gimp. A single click on its button will download this application and install it automatically.

For and Against
Very user-friendly
Easy to instal
Excellent help available
No steep learning curve
Effective anti-spam software
Fast surfing with Mozilla
Compatibility with Microsoft
Functional widely-compatible image editing
Good for the technically challenged
Good plug and play support
Needs to win support of software developers and hardware manufacturers

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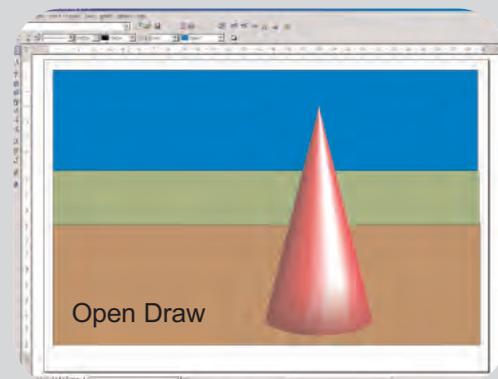
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Also, I am involved with students, academics and service personnel in a university currently dedicated to vocational courses, and my particular concern is always for the end-user.

I am constantly surprised by users who declare that they cannot programme their video recorder, but less surprised by those who have difficulties with computers and computer applications. I suspect that the Linspire OS and its incorporated applications would be a boon to technically-challenged computer users, and might very well encourage a growing confidence in the use of such tools in the learning environment, as well as in small-office and home-office situations and of course the home itself.



The real problem for Linspire will, I think, be in persuading users, particularly large users, to switch. After all, with Microsoft Windows installed on just about any new PC on the market, and prospective buyers seeing that inclusion as being free, what weighty persuasion might effect a switch?

Linux developers may well need to persuade software and hardware manufacturers, for example, to produce Linux-based versions of their packages and drivers, although it is true that Linspire has exceptional USB Plug & Play support, being able to detect and install, for instance, hundreds of printers from manufacturers such as Canon, Epson and Hewlett Packard. That persuasion will be the steepest curve of all.

Linspire is an excellent package and it really does deserve my recommendation. One final point to make is that in spite of its ease of installation and use, help is still at hand should you be one of those users who still cannot programme their video recorder. You will find it at www.support.linspire.com.

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