

Multimedia Information and Technology Digital

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(below right).

There is also an opinion piece on the proposed reorganisation of the CILIP [Special Interest Groups](#) by Lyndon Pugh.

There are two product reviews in this issue. Chris Leftley went to see [Thunder](#), the last word in virtual flipcharts brought to you by Polyvision, with a price tag to match – only the London Business School can afford it. Ken Cheetham follows up his review of voice recorders in the November issue with a look at related [voice recognition software](#).

As usual [Film & Video News](#) covers [bfi video](#) releases as well as [Moviemail](#) and [Team Video](#) productions. Highlights include the Free Cinema Collection, Ingmar Bergman, Orson Welles' version of *Pickwick*, Jacques Audiard's *The Beat That my Heart Missed and Your MP* and the *Citizenship Video Pack* from Team Video.

[Book reviews](#) are on legal information sources, digital collection integration, portals, an information management research reader and *The Guardian International film Guide*.

Credits: Cover Oleg Tarasov and Dreamstime.com; this page Inmarsat; pp 4 and 5 Sprunt; pp 7-9 Seven Stories; pp 13-16 Museum of Rural Life/University of Reading; p 20 Polyvision; p 23 Genesys; p 37 Diego Cerva and Dreamstime.com; p 26-30 MovieMail; p 30-34 *bfi Video*; p 35 Team Video; p 49-51 Nuance UK.

The main feature in this issue of MMIT is an update on the work of the [Museum of Rural Life at Reading University](#), which also focuses on a project to conserve glass plate negatives once forming part of the photographic libraries of the *Farmers Weekly* and the *Farmer and Stockbreeder*.

The [Genesys online learning system](#) is being used to manage virtual learning on the e-MBA course at the London Business School, covered here by Mark Walker.

The [News](#) column contains its usual mix. [Seven Stories](#) demonstrates a refreshing approach to presenting children's literature, and Ian Jamieson describes how a 1930s theatre in a listed building became a [state-of-the-art multimedia resources centre](#).

The cover feature is a report on the [use of multimedia for communicating at sea](#), describing the Inmarsat system used to communication with global audiences during the Volvo Round the World Race



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A Far Cry From Libraries

There may not be an information service in sight, but the boats in the 2006 Volvo Ocean Race demonstrate some of the best examples of state-of-the-art multimedia communications systems.

Provided by Inmarsat, they are said to be the most advanced yet. Global audiences can enjoy events at close quarters thanks to new technology which captures the detail of the on board action.

A closed online Virtual Private Network is the spine of the system, controlled from race headquarters in Fareham, UK. New Digital Delay recording technologies mean that exciting race developments will not be lost, and will be ready for transmission at 128Kbps via Inmarsat Fleet ISDN.

The punishing race conditions demand the ultimate level of reliability for the terminal hardware, which must ensure that the Inmarsat satellites are tracked on the move, amidst the extreme stresses imposed by the world's oceans.

Inmarsat's flagship maritime terminal is equipped with voice, fax, ISDN data (now up to 128 Kbps) and Mobile Packet Data Service (MPDS). MPDS provides an IP service with similarities to GPRS, and is always available. Fleet F77 also provides a Distress capability for use within the GMDSS (Global Maritime Distress and Safety System), giving priority voice access to rescue coordination centres around the globe. A high quality (3.1Khz) audio channel is also available for VOR media interviews). Smaller backup facilities operate at lower power levels.

Enhanced Group Call – EGC – provides for the distribution of distress, weather and operational information. The Fleetnet function supports cost-effective text communications for general use and for tracking purposes, with the position updates displayed on the Virtual Spectator software which is at <http://www.volvoceanrace.org/virtualspectator/>

Every week, each VOR boat is obliged by race rules to send 20 minutes of edited video footage, 15 still images as JPEG files of various sizes, automatic position updates and interviews using the Fleet F77 and F33 terminals.

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At the heart of the boats' communications lies Livewire's Media Desk hardware. This integrates the various Inmarsat systems as well as UHF for inshore racing. The Media Desk acts as a hub for the cameras and microphones around the boats, and incorporates a user-friendly terminal for coordinating scheduled interviews, linking by IP with the race headquarters, and editing live-action video footage from the race.

Each yacht has seven fixed cameras, a newly designed Head-Cam, and five microphones. The main camera fitted in the stern and looking forward, is a roll compensated day-and-night camera with a powerful infrared illuminator installed alongside. The second auto-horizon camera is mounted on the mast and provides a clear view of the cockpit. The dome camera, mounted on a spreader, can pan and tilt to provide an overview of all the on-deck action.

Four of the cameras are below decks. A diary camera is mounted in the Media Desk, with another in the navigation area. Each of these has an integrated microphone. The accommodation camera, fitted with an infrared illuminator, is mounted in the steps to the crew quarters. The final fixed camera and microphone for the video diary can be found in the toilet.

A new, advanced delay recording system (DDVR) enables crew members to hit one of many crash buttons situated at various points around the boat, and retrieve the last 2 minutes of video, constantly buffered to solid-state memory on every boat. This means that exciting live-action events need never be missed.

A waterproof microphone is mounted with the mast camera to provide atmospheric background sound, and a powerful microphone mounted on the hatch will capture a wide range of above and below deck sounds.

Network access onboard is through Wi-Fi. The unit also integrates email and secure Internet (IP) communications between the race boats and head office.

Virtual Spectator's Volvo Ocean Race raceviewer software employs Inmarsat C position reports to track the progress of every race competitor, and positions are dispatched automatically every 15 minutes. The software also provides an advanced simulation, which displays a representation of global weather and sea conditions through different timesteps.

The high-profile footage broadcast to global audiences is sent as a data file via Inmarsat. In this format, a 3-minute clip might take an hour to transmit, depending on the compression and quality required. Videoconferencing can be used to provide live footage, using Fleet F77's 64K or 128K ISDN service.

In addition to the delivery of race updates, the onboard videoconferencing equipment is also valuable for remote medical assistance. Medical teams at Volvo race HQ, or Derriford hospital in Plymouth, are able to provide a remote diagnosis using high-resolution imagery transferred via Inmarsat.

All crews receive updated weather reports every six hours, via the Livewire Media Desk using Inmarsat Fleet F77 ISDN at up to 128Kbps.

Video and media files are simultaneously uploaded during this transfer. Meteorological data is delivered in GRIB file format, and contains a forecast of conditions for the following five days, delivered in 3-hour timesteps. Race boats use software such as Maxsea (<http://www.maxsea.com>) or Deckman (<http://www.sailmath.com>) to display the weather data on onboard PCs, and scroll through the forecast. A range of information on boat performance can also be sent.

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Remodelling a Listed Library Building

Ian Jamieson of Sprunt reports on how a 1930s theatre, in a listed building, became a state-of-the-art multimedia resources centre



The architectural practice Sprunt has recently faced the challenge of equipping a 1930s theatre, converted to a library in the 1950s, to meet the demands imposed by 21st Century learning needs in an institution which attaches a high priority to multimedia learning and IT.

The existing library was part of the college's Victoria Centre Campus, built in the 1930s by H. Goodhart-Rendel and listed for its quirky and challenging design. This included polychromatic brickwork and freely interpreted classical details.

In its original incarnation it was a small theatre, complete with stage, proscenium arch, rehearsal rooms, terraced balcony seating and double-height volume. The 1950s conversion added elements such as a library office and a renewals desk, but the sense of the history of the space was very much apparent, as was the contemporary pressure it was under.

Unsurprisingly, the 1950s planners had not envisaged the IT revolution: they had not considered a world where every student would expect and require to work on computers. The area was designed for book-centred learning only, and had neither the space nor the cabling necessary for multimedia learning. There were a few workstations scattered about the library, but provision was clearly insufficient for the college's many students, and extensive recabling was required.

Given that the space was undergoing its second major redevelopment in only half a century, the previous redesign provided a clear lesson that things in the world of education can change beyond anticipation. From the outset, we decided that whatever solution we provided would be demountable, so that, should it be necessary at a later stage, the space could easily be returned to theatrical use.

We had to work with due awareness of the building's heritage and listed status. Whatever alterations we proposed would have to sit within the fabric of the building. With an eye on the modernity of the proposed change of use – and the originality of Goodhart-Rendel's design – we explored a number of options. We wanted to maintain the sense of space, light and levity, although it was clear that to create floor space meant including a mezzanine level of some kind. We also wanted to create a contemporary structure which would improve the environment and meld with the original design concept.

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Our solution had to be innovative: a semi-glazed mezzanine floor, galleried over the existing learning centre on a lightweight steel column grid, and set back from the street-facing wall by 2m, so that it almost floated in the air. It is completely demountable, to allow the college flexibility of use over the decades to come. We edged the new floor with detailed glass and steel balustrading and created an open, contemporary steel staircase leading up from the original learning centre level.

Working on a project of this kind, one discovers layers of old technology in the course of a sensitive modernisation which reflects the history of the space . . . the physical and conceptual learning landscape has been changed by multimedia, and will change again

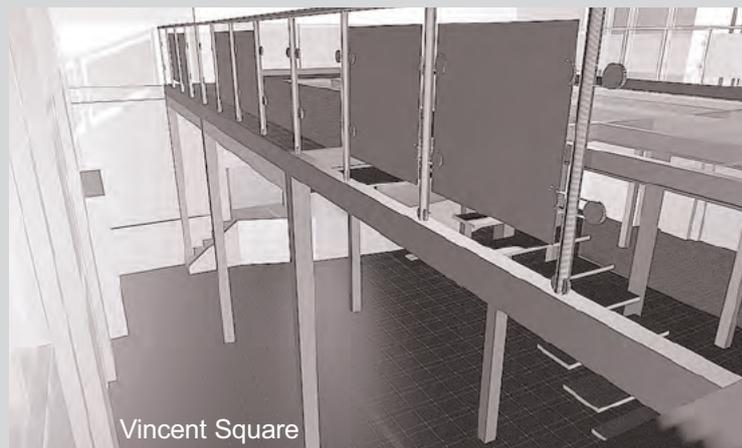
The glazed panels within the floor serve a number of functions. They increase natural lighting throughout the space, create a sense of levity and airiness, and update the architectural logic of the original 1950s design. We worked with steel fabricator Bailey Fabrications and glazing specialists Roger Wilde Ltd. to ensure the safety and aesthetics of the design: glass which is to be used as flooring has to be laminated, non-slip, and meet

stringent British Safety Institute standards as to its load. Not every panel within the floor is glazed, however, and this creates a satisfying chequerboard effect. The glazing was also interesting from a multimedia perspective. IT and multimedia are so often confined to a closed classroom or laboratory context that it was pleasant to design an open space for multimedia use.

Throughout the space we were keen to preserve the sense of openness and maximise natural light. We installed glazed partitioning in the mezzanine and ground floor space; and we maintained the integrity of the original grand, diamond-glazed windows.

Throughout the process, we remained aware that we were adding another layer to a space which had already seen a number of incarnations, and we were keen to preserve original features. We built a mezzanine floor over the area which had been the theatre's stage, and retained back stage features such as lighting supports and electrical equipment. These dated from the 1950s, and were, quite literally, museum pieces – even the projection booth was antiquated. We also restored and protected the original proscenium arch.

Working on a project of this kind, where one discovers layer upon layer of old technology in the course of a sensitive modernisation which still reflects the history of the space, is always chastening. One realises quite how the physical and conceptual learning landscape has been changed by multimedia. With this comes an awareness that the landscape will change again.



Vincent Square

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The Old and the New at Seven Stories

Innovative Multimedia Tells Seven Stories

Jennifer Dixon reports on the establishment of a national centre for children's books – a place where children's books are collected, explored and celebrated, in a Grade II listed Victorian flour mill in the Ouseburn Valley area of Newcastle.

Seven Stories showcases original manuscripts, books and artwork from some of the most renowned children's books, with a focus on work from post-war Britain.

The centre aims to make literary collections accessible to a wide audience and encourage creativity through hands on experience, via its various workshops and interactive story activities. The collection is the foundation on which Seven Stories rests, providing a home for the many manuscripts and illustrations from Britain's leading children's writers and illustrators, which otherwise may have been showcased abroad.

One of the most interactive areas at the centre is the The Engine Room, located on the first floor, which takes exhibition themes and invites visitors (of all ages) to explore their own creativity through play and hands-on exploration.

Here, visitors using sound pods which were designed bespoke for the centre by Tiger AV, can record the creative process involved in making a children's book.

Children's literature has a vital role to play in supporting every child's development, intellectually, artistically and emotionally.

Seven Stories allows both physical and intellectual access to literature and this is a key aim of the centre's activity, which is spread over seven storeys of the building. We worked closely with Tiger AV whose creative approach helped us to make the experience of this unique cultural experience possible.

(Mary Briggs, Chief Executive)



Seven Stories storyrecorder

Tiger AV also worked creatively to develop an AV suite in the Artists Attic, a small space located on the seventh storey, where visitors can meet writers and illustrators and explore the art of book and story-making.

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Visitors using headphones in a display area

A number of ideas were investigated in order to work around the original low beams, and to overcome the lack of natural lighting. In the Attic there are now a number of projectors which display various themes by different authors. These can be used in a flexible way to make the most of the space and the resources.

Tony Crossley, Technical Director at Tiger AV, said:

“The centre thrives on being able to offer exhibitions and visuals which make the original manuscripts come alive, and multimedia was fundamental in making this happen.

It was important that the design was simple to use, yet durable enough to be used all day, every day. We designed a sound pod system which presents audio instructions to the visitor via headphones. They then record their own story into the microphone, with the option to re-record and play their story back via a listening booth. The stories are stored on a flash card, which is swapped each day, and the contents are then archived, with the option of future broadcasting.”

Mary Briggs concluded:

“It’s been a fantastic journey with amazing people on board. Today, the dream can be shared with everyone, and the excitement and joy of children’s books is available here and now for the first time in the region and the country.”

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Slow Death for Cilip Special Interest Groups?

Lyndon Pugh writes in
a personal capacity

As this issue goes to print we are waiting for the results of the consultation, to end on the 5th May, on the reorganisation of Special Interest Groups, so events of the next few weeks may lead to at least one red face connected with MmIT. Some of the blogs covering this topic have reflected a healthily irreverent view, and raised a number of questions which need answers irrespective of the outcome of the review.

The latest response from the Group Review Working Party reflects an unhappy volte face. The recommendation that the “present array of Groups is left to market forces and organic change” is disappointing when set against the original statement that “no change is not an option”. So is the view that there is no appetite for radical change.

Considering this latter issue first, there is a difference between the absence of a significant response to a questionnaire and a lack of opinion and sentiment over the nature of the beast that Cilip has become. The evidence from the vigorous and sometimes withering online contributions is that there is considerable grass roots discontent with things as they are. No amount of huffing and puffing, locking keyboards on to upper case and deploying rashes of exclamation marks on blogs will alter this. It was once said that an exclamation mark, which is akin to laughing at one’s own jokes, should be used once in every 100,000 words. Some of the responses to comments on the blogs looked like the electronic equivalent of green ink from DISGUSTED OF TUNBRIDGE WELLS.

It was once said that an exclamation mark, which is akin to laughing at one’s own jokes, should be used once in every 100,000 words. Some of the responses to comments on the blogs looked like the electronic equivalent of green ink from DISGUSTED OF TUNBRIDGE WELLS

The fact that the rank and file in general are unresponsive does not mean that they do not have a view of the present situation, nor that they would reject radical change accompanied by dynamic leadership. They will also vote with their feet if we continue to let things wither on the vine.

Even writing without the benefit of a detailed examination of the infamous questionnaire, it is of course quite likely that a different set of questions would have produced some interesting, and perhaps uncomfortable, responses and given the lie to the view that there is insufficient support for change.

The other problem with “organic” and “natural” evolution is that it could in practice tend to follow the prejudices and balance of power of committees and officers, rather than the so-far unknown preferences of the membership.

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The initial presentation of the options by the working group was alarming, and this was heightened by the reworking. There is still no evidence of an exploration of the full range of collaborative relationships between groups where common ground could be identified. There are imaginative and participative ways in which organisations can be changed.

It is also simplistic, and maybe deliberately so, for the working group to say that things should be left to the market, when Cilip controls the major market force itself. The capitation allowance they set governs the ability of any group to continue to provide basic services to members.

While we can accept that this will not be reduced in the short term, the long term holds no such assurance.

The problems with Cilip are those of accountability – one of the official justifications for group mergers – and relevance, which is surely reflected in the continued decline in membership and the disenchanted comments on the blogs.

The way in which the review has been handled does little to inspire confidence that the problems will be solved. The inconsistency already referred to, between the initial assertion of the working party that there was no option but to change, and the present support for what is in essence no change, is obvious.

It is also possible to criticise the apparent missed opportunity of considering a fuller range of collaborative relationships between groups where a mutual interest could be identified.

All of this is unfortunate because, on balance, the proposal to cluster or merge groups is correct in principle. What is sadly lacking is proper investigation and execution.

Cilip's present difficulties are intertwined. Accountability, governance, relevance and the financial models are part of the same organisational stew which has led us to where we are now. It is not immediately clear how the proposals will improve accountability on their own. Merging groups alone, or even groups developing forms of collaboration short of mergers, will actually guarantee nothing. The structures which emerge could be as centralised as the Church of Rome.

The question of the groups is a vital one, because in many, if not most, cases they are one of the few things which remind members of Cilip, but there is also the larger issue of governance, which is related to the matter of the future of the SIGs.

Unless all the dimensions of the problem are seen in relationship to each other, the result will be more of the same decline. To prevent this, it is not enough to take a look at governance, groups and the financial model as separate issues. Their interdependence must be seen.

clustering, mergers, do nothing for accountability, and do not guarantee that people will see the relevance of Cilip or the groups. What counts is how much power Cilip is willing to cede, and this is where the governance issue is relevant. The only way to achieve real accountability and relevance is to decentralise and this means changing our ways.

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There are a number of models falling short of full mergers. Collaboration and cooperation can be achieved within other frameworks, and there are also some existing examples of comparatively successful devolution to regions and other national units. Forms of federation might also be considered. It would be useful to obtain some idea of the level of input into the deliberations of the working party from those groups, such as Multimedia Information & Technology, which have successfully set up devolved operations.

To leave it to the groups themselves to look at possible mergers and rationalisation is like asking the question "How long is a piece of string?" The presentation of a range of alternative structures would be helpful.

On their own, clustering, mergers, federal arrangements and so on do nothing for accountability, and do not ensure that people will see the relevance of Cilip or the groups they belong to. What counts is how much power Cilip is willing to cede, and this is where the governance issue is relevant. The only way to achieve real accountability and make Cilip relevant is to decentralise it, and this means changing our ways.

The old argument about moving out of London is a diversion. It is a separate issue and there are strengths in both positions. Emotionally and psychologically there is great attraction in moving against the London-centric structures we have, but far more important is the question of how the structure is actually altered, and whether it will reflect the key principle that the top of an organisation, or put it in a better way, the centre should only do what the periphery or the grass roots cannot do for themselves.

If we applied this to what goes on in Ridgmount Street, and linked it with the creation of centres of devolved power and decision-making based on groups, new formulations and geographic entities for example, we might end up with something closer to the membership, and far more responsive.

We could have an organisation with a much smaller centre, and one more in line with our diminishing resources. The prospect of wielding more influence might also flush out a few more activists. As things stand, few groups can fill committee vacancies adequately or persuade people to get involved in other ways.

The initial presentation was alarming, and this was heightened by the reworking. There is still no evidence of an exploration of the full range of collaborative relationships between groups where common ground could be identified. There are imaginative and participative ways in which organisations can be changed.

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Without any real information on the proposed financial model, other than the assertion that it will not immediately lead to a cut in funding, it is not possible to come to any judgement on the validity of the recommendations.

Given the circumstances under which Cilip currently operates, with a declining membership overall and with a number of groups – if not most of them – reflecting this decline in their own membership, it has to be assumed that the capitation allowance from Cilip is a vital factor.

The level at which this is fixed will control the “market forces” and eventually the viability of the groups, through regulating the funding. The argument that a reduced fixed sum and higher capitation will stimulate increased membership is disingenuous. Market forces and reliance on organic change – which might not mean what the working group thinks it does – will ensure that membership will continue to decline unless Cilip makes itself more relevant to members through changing its governance. With capitation exerting a major influence, and larger market forces ensuring a continued decline in membership, the outcome is obvious.

Eventually, the only way in which many groups will be able to continue to offer adequate services to members will be through the creation of a smaller number of larger groups, so that the reduction in capitation will be at least partially balanced by an increase in group size. So into this equation we should also cast the possible decentralised models.

Without any real information on the proposed financial model, other than the assertion that it will not immediately lead to a cut in funding, it is not possible to come to any judgement on the validity of the recommendations.

Given the circumstances under which Cilip currently operates, with a declining membership overall and with a number of groups – if not most of them – reflecting this decline in their own membership, it has to be assumed that the capitation allowance from Cilip is a vital factor.

The working group suggested that financial support could be given, for a transitional period, to groups considering reorganisation.

The financial incentives available for groups willing to enter into new arrangements should be spelt out.

Any scheme created to support mergers should be combined with the review of group funding, taken into account when capitation allowances are considered, and built into the financial model to provide a permanent incentive for mergers. Groups able to develop serious and robust collaboration, extending as far as actual mergers, should be financially advantaged.

Together with the opportunities for strengthening and extending services to group members which should accrue from mergers, this could remove many objections.

It is therefore vital that the financial model should reflect this degree of sophistication, and should be available for detailed scrutiny before any decision is taken.

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Key Issues

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Governance

Accountability

Decentralisation

Empowerment

Ridgmount Street

The Financial Model

Incentives for Collaboration

The view that there is “insufficient support for imposing a “clustering model” at the moment was also put forward.

While this may be true in the sense that there is a shortage of hard facts about what the membership thinks, there is conversely very little evidence from the membership, as opposed perhaps to some group committees, that group mergers would not be accepted.

It should also be noted again that the statistics presented with the initial report were based on a 13% return. The validity of any assumption based on this could be questioned.

The debate has shed light on the dissatisfaction with the current situation felt in some quarters, and the view that Cilip is not always perceived to be engaging with its membership as powerfully as it could. From this it appears that at ground level there may be a growing desire to see change in the organisation.

Given the background to the review and the current operating situation of Cilip, the apparent absence of support is not an adequate reason for fudging the issue. It could be argued that in this situation Cilip is in need of leadership and direction rather than allowing nature to take its course, with a little help here and there.

The working party rightly argued for the need to make the organisation more accountable to the membership. The proposals will not meet this objective. The groups will face a continuing reduction in funding from the still-swollen but power-retentive centre of the organisation.

Declining revenue and continued lack of grass roots involvement – another major problem as we all struggle to engage people with the work of groups – will still be facts of life. More people might contribute if they felt that the organisation was actually closer to them, and this means stronger groups, which need not be solely based on special interests, with more power.

Championing and vigorously prosecuting a process of organisation development which is based on radical structural change and devolution, and pooling complementary strengths, will create an organisation with greater energy, dynamism and relevance.

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MERL – A Record of Rural Life

Merl has been a trend-setting organisation since it was established in 1951. Amongst the many museums which collected artefacts to do with agriculture and rural life, it stood out because of its specialisation, and because of the encouragement it drew from other European open-air museums also preserving a record of folk life.

MERL drew its inspiration from these establishments, and while it in turn inspired other open-air museums, it still retained its special characteristics. It has been shaped not only by its own ideas, but also through its location as a museum in a university.

Today it is of national importance, as a research centre and repository. Among its recent accomplishments are a Heritage Lottery Fund-sponsored project to conserve the glass plate negatives housed in the archives of the Farmers Weekly and Farmer and Stockbreeder. In this report, MmIT looks back over the history of the museum, reports on the project and updates an account first published some time ago.

The Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) introduced a new strand into Britain's museums when it was founded in 1951. Farming and rural artefacts were to be found in many museums, but a more specialist collection was unusual.

Another novel element was the inspiration that some of the Museum of English Rural Life's founders, such as John Higgs, drew from the folk life and open-air museums which had been developed in Europe. MERL itself developed along slightly different lines, but in its wake numerous rural life collections were created around the country. Some of these were able to create open-air museums, such as the Avoncroft Museum of Buildings, and Weald and Downland Open Air Museum.

The founders of the Museum of English Rural Life were members of the Faculty of Agriculture in the University of Reading. Observing the very rapid rate of change which farming and the countryside had experienced during the Second World War, and expecting that to continue following the passing of the Agriculture Act 1947, they were concerned enough to want to record and preserve something of the past. From those beginnings has emerged a museum with collections recognised as of national importance, with more than 20,000 items in the object collections alone.

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Being a museum in the university has shaped many features of MERL's development. It has been engaged in a wide range of academic activities in research and teaching, and this has influenced the shape of its collections further.

For it soon became more than a museum and collection of artefacts; it amassed a major specialist research library, and became an archive repository of national significance. All these developments together produced a national centre for the study of the history of agriculture and the countryside.

Along the way, the university changed its name from time to time. In the 1960s it became the Institute of Agricultural History and in the 1990s the Rural History Centre. The wheel has turned full circle now, for it is back to being the Museum of English Rural Life.

During the 1950s, the new museum's collections grew extremely rapidly. The modernisation of agriculture which had first prompted the museum's establishment also resulted in there being many farmers wanting to pass on farm wagons, ploughs and other artefacts of the horse-powered age of agriculture.

Alongside these, some personal collections were deposited. One of the early acquisitions was the collection of H. J. Massingham, the writer on the countryside, which formed the basis for the museum's strengths in agricultural hand tools and rural crafts.

As well as collecting objects, staff from the museum undertook field studies into the work of country craftsmen, such as the chair bodgers of the Chilterns. The photographs they took were augmented by the acquisition of the work of other photographers, such as of C. F. F. Snow, and the beginnings of the library. The museum was already establishing rounded collections in its principal areas of interest.

The 1960s and 1970s saw another shift in scale, with rapid building up of library, and especially archive, collections. At first the latter were acquired in modest numbers, and acquisitions arose out of further projects, fieldwork and surveys.

The first of these explorations, into the surviving records of farmers, resulted in numbers of farm accounts and diaries being deposited. Some records of agricultural engineering businesses were added as the result of another survey project.

40 Volunteers

130000 Negatives Treated

National Conservation Award

In Total Over 750000 Images

Dating From 1860

Heritage Lottery Funded

Entire Museum Rehoused

Full Conservation Standards Met

Improved Availability

Better and More Accessible Storage

Multimedia Information and Technology Digital

Volume 32 no 2 May 2006 issn 1466-190X

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As the museum became known for holding archival material, the trickle soon reached full flow, and before long the museum had become a specialist archive repository of some substance. The farm records are still one of the main groups of the archive. There are business diaries, accounts and labour books from about a thousand farms.

Agricultural engineering companies form the mainstay of the collections of business records. Among them are such firms as the Ransomes of Ipswich, and Wallis & Stevens of Basingstoke. Firms in other lines of business represented in the collections include Suttons Seeds, with some documents going back to the 1830s.

The organisations connected with agriculture and the countryside form another major part of the collections. They include bodies such as the National Farmers Union, the National Agricultural & Allied Workers Union and the Council for the Protection of Rural England.

Then there are the photographs. As well as those field work studies of crafts, a complete survey of the estate villages of Ardington and Lockinge in the Berkshire downland helped lay the foundations for what would become the photographic collections.

As with the archive collections, some very substantial resources began to come in during the late 1960s and 1970s. These include the photographic libraries of the Farmers Weekly and the Farmer and Stockbreeder, two leading farming journals. The first of these is still in publication.

There are also many photographs in the business archive collections, and collections of individual photographers specialising in various aspects of farming and topography. In all, there are now more than 750,000 images. The earliest date from about 1860, though the majority are from the 1930s onwards.

Many of the photographs are glass plate negatives: press photographers were still using plate cameras until about 1964. About half the negatives from the press collections are quarter-plate glass, while other collections add several thousand more of various sizes.

The quality of glass plate negatives is very high, but they do need care, and in 2003 the museum was fortunate to receive an award under the Heritage Lottery Fund's Your Heritage scheme. This enabled most of these collections to be conserved.



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The negatives were removed from the various types of envelope in which they had been kept for years, many ever since they had been taken, and transferred to four-flap envelopes of current archival standard. Some received additional conservation, though remarkably only about 1% were in need of much further work.

Some were also digitised for inclusion in an on-line exhibition. This work was carried out by a team of about 40 volunteers who were trained and led by a conservator, Brenda Lee. This was funded by the HLF grant.

So well did the project go that it achieved far more than was originally planned. In all, more than 130,000 negatives were treated. The project was eventually nominated for the national conservation awards, and is a real tribute to the volunteers, many of whom are still working with the museum in different capacities.

The glass negative project came to fit in very well with the much larger project of rehousing the entire museum and its collections. For, after many false starts and difficulties along the way, the new home for the museum was completed earlier this year. A building, part of which dated from the 1880s, and was once used as a hall of residence for the university, has been converted to house the archive and library collections. The facility conforms to full environmental standards. A reading room, conference and seminar rooms are also included in this part of the development. Alongside, a new building houses the collections of objects. This makes it possible for a much greater proportion of the collections to be accessible than formerly, with a mixture of exhibition display and accessible storage.

The new museum is now fully operational. The exhibitions and the library and archive collections are all open from Tuesday to Friday each week from 10.00-4.30. Additional weekend opening of the exhibitions is planned. Go to <http://www.merl.reading.ac.uk>



The Finished Project

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Verbatim FlashDisc

Avermedia

Fujifilm New Blu-ray Media

New Canon Printers

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Technology

Jane Rowlands

Verbatim Ltd have announced the launch of a 16MB FlashDisc. FlashDisc is an innovative storage medium combining a new product with an entirely new flash-based media category. With a retail price of only £13.99 for a 3-pack, the FlashDisc is set to revolutionise the way in which photographs, music and other digital data files are exchanged.

Distinguishable by its rich, vibrant colours, the Verbatim FlashDisc can be used exactly like a USB flash drive, but is more cost-effective for exchanging data for more casual applications. Depending upon the file size, each Verbatim FlashDisc can hold several MP3 files, dozens of presentations or images and hundreds of documents.

Verbatim's FlashDisc is an ideal, low-cost way to transport modest-capacity digital files from one computer to another, or to share files on a disc which does not necessarily have to be returned to the originator. Students will find FlashDisc invaluable, as they can access information at any time, from anywhere. Allocating one FlashDisc for each lecture topic makes organisation easy.

Digital information can be shared easily in a variety of contexts and with a number of uses. Sporting a traditional disc design, FlashDisc features a tough, plastic exterior, a recessed area with a write-on user label and a snap-on protective cap. The FCC/CE-certified, RoHS (lead free) compliant and environmentally-friendly FlashDisc comes with a USB 2.0 compatible interface for simple, plug and play operation.

New FlashDisc From Verbatim – Good for Students

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Based on the same technology as the USB Flash Drive, the Verbatim FlashDisc does not require any application software. To store data, simply plug the FlashDisc into any computer with a USB port, select the files then drag and drop – that is all there is to it. Because FlashDisc is rewritable, files can be erased and reused.

“We’ve brought out this new product for sharing digital files because research shows a significant demand exists for low-capacity storage media at a reasonable cost”, said Hans-Christoph Kaiser, Verbatim Business Unit Manager. “512MB, 1GB and larger USB drives will remain popular, but with FlashDisc we’re providing an entirely new flash-based application at a low cost that’s within everyone’s reach. It offers an ideal solution to everyday needs for storing and sharing electronic data.”

Weighing just over 9 grams, the Verbatim FlashDisc measures 6 cm in diameter and is 0.9 cm high. The drive is fully compatible with Windows® 98SE*/2000SP2/ME and XP systems as well as Mac OS 9.x, 10.x and Linux kernel 2.6.x and higher systems. (*Windows 98SE requires Internet access for driver installation)

Available this month through authorised Verbatim resellers, the suggested retail price for Verbatim’s new FlashDisc is £13.99 for a multi-colour 3 -pack.

AverMedia have launched the new DVD EZ Maker USB Plus. Depending on how and where tapes are stored, the number of times they are viewed and the quality of the tape itself, permanent noticeable deterioration of video tape can begin to set in within 5 years – even if the tape is not heavily used. Loss of colour, static sound or complete tape degradation and failure can occur and data stored on tape can be lost.

The DVD EZ Maker USB Plus is a device which turns material captured in analogue format into digital, and preserves them by burning to DVD or VCD. The product is very easy to use, via a plug and play USB interface and one step installation. The capture card connects to any notebook or desktop PC as well as home video devices such as DV, V8, VHS, DVD or VCD players. It transforms analogue recordings into digital and then records them onto a hard disk drive (16 x burning speed). Editing and restoring degraded analogue videos can also be accomplished.

The capture card also provides a direct to disk function for recording directly from a DV camcorder to DVD without writing to a HDD first. An Auto Calculate feature ensures the highest possible production quality for the available disk space. With just one click of a button users can simultaneously capture and record analogue video to VCD, SVCD or DVD. The bundled software supports DVD VR formats, allowing users to re-edit previously recorded video and re-record onto the same DVD.

The retail price is £49.99 inc VAT, and the device is available now from <http://www.mediaatlantic.com/avermedia>

Analogue to Digital With Avermedia

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Fujifilm Announces Blu-Ray Media Available This Spring

Fuji Photo Film UK Ltd has announced that FUJIFILM-branded Blu-ray media will be available this Spring.

The new discs will be available in 25GB storage capacities both in write-once and re-writable formats, which can be used on BD drives with 1-2X writing speed. With the increasing growth in HD broadcasting anticipated for 2006, and the amount of data exceeding the capacity of today's DVDs, Fujifilm are responding to the anticipated demand for larger optical discs.

Fujifilm launched cartridge-type rewritable Blu-ray discs (23.3GB) onto the Japanese market in 2003. To meet end users' needs, Fujifilm will be marketing larger capacity (25 GB) non-cartridge type Blu-ray discs which conform to the latest copy protection system AACIS (Advanced Access Content System).

Go to: <http://www.fujifilm.co.uk>

New From Canon

Canon have introduced their new R2016i and iR2020i multifunctional printers aimed at the SoHo (Small office and Home) market and general business use. Both feature colour scanning which improves copy quality

Both machines are compact enough for use within small workgroups and are designed for users who regularly need to print shorter documents.

The printers can cope with documents up to A3 size, and print at up to 1200 dpi. Copy speeds for the iR2016i are 16 ppm, and 20 ppm for the iR2020i/ Both can scan and send documents in colour, and fax is optional.

Up to 50 sheets can be stapled, and optional duplex printing and fax are also available. For further information, go to <http://www.canon.co.uk>

GO With Yamaha

Yamaha have announced the launch of their latest mobile recording equipment as part of their new portable GO range.

Both models, the GO44 and GO46, offer comprehensive hardware and software for easy audio and MIDI production on a FireWire-equipped computer.

Supporting the trend towards smaller and more user-friendly devices for recording music, the equipment has been designed to withstand the rigours of mobile use, and will be available next month, with prices yet to be announced. Go to <http://www.yamaha-music.co.uk>



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Chris Leftley went to look at Polyvision's revolutionary approach to "digital collaboration, interactivity, distribution and storage".

The Polyvision Thunder Virtual Flipchart System

The Polyvision Thunder Virtual Flipchart System is shorthand for what is in fact an impressive, dynamic and revolutionary method of providing support for digital collaboration, interactivity, distribution and storage. Thunder represents the evolution of the interactive whiteboard, but it has jumped several generations.

The system was built from the ground up, by observing how people in organisations actually work, how they make notes, how they meet, exchange ideas and so on. Thunder was constructed to mimic the human method of working, and thus will fit quite naturally into the way we handle information, rather than making us conform to the dictates of the technology.

New technologies have to be made simple, or "walk up and use" in common parlance. Polyvision express this neatly with the home made acronym fumifu:

First Use Must Inspire Future Use

In support of this, I can certainly think of products I have tried in the past and vowed never to do so again.

Research by Polyvision indicated that a meeting involving participants in several locations imposed a number of different demands on the technology. These demands included

- An audio stream
- A data stream
- Finally, if necessary, a video stream.



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This is based on the premise that, in most contexts, what someone is saying is more important to participants than actually seeing their lips move.

The research underlying this development also established something which runs counter to the practice adopted by many of us. The information on the flipchart should not be typed.

The argument here is that the scrawled graphic, or anything else which is used to record proceedings as they happen, acts as a trigger. This will be better remembered because it will convey something of the context in which the statement was made, or in which the idea was explored.

By using type, some of this will be lost as the trigger itself disappears in the welter of neatly typed text.

Another feature of flipcharts is that they demonstrate "information persistence". This means that the longer they hang on the wall, the more likely it is that the information on them will be absorbed and understood by the recipients.

The effect can even occur subconsciously. By using Thunder, this persistence can be taken to a new level. The device can accept and retain any digital input, whether it is from a laptop, dvd, scanner, or even a suitably-equipped OHP. Video is also possible, but the disadvantage with this format is that it needs a large amount of bandwidth.

Use by presenters and participants is also straightforward. Standing next to the virtual flipchart, text, drawings, data transfer and a range of other functions can be activated either by using a stylus or just using a finger.

Thunder obviously removes the physical barriers to meetings between distributed teams and other participants. Colleagues in other countries simply log in, download the software client and play a full and active part in proceedings.

Distributed participants can exercise influence or even control proceedings because changes made on remote laptops or other devices can be reproduced in the main location of the meeting. As the recommended minimum set-up of three digital projectors will support six virtual flipcharts, several stages of a project can be worked on simultaneously.

The basic kit is made up of two pieces of equipment, which are

- A Group Input Device
- A standalone Thunder processor and Room Wizard

Participants log in on arrival, and at the end of the presentation the entire proceedings are emailed to all those who took part. The information can also be forwarded to others who did not attend. What is provided is a digital representation of what has been historically an analogue process.

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For some of us, an analogue process is what it is likely to remain for some time, simply because of the price. However, depending on the size of the institution, £42,995 plus installation will undoubtedly be considered worthwhile by many organisations.

Support is being put in place, and the first sales have been concluded in America. Patents have been filed to protect the unique intellectual property contained within the programme. In general, the system is quite simple to use. Even the number of buttons on the remote control has been deliberately restricted to 10.

Given the capabilities of Thunder in the developing context of distributed working, and the sophisticated nature of what it does, it is worth the money for anyone who can afford what is at least a five-star piece of equipment.

Go to <http://www.polyvision.com>

Key Features

Based on how people work and take notes

Heightens "Information Persistence"

Straightforward to use

Removes barriers

Multimedia Information & Technology is published by the Multimedia Information & Technology Group of Cilip, and appears in print and electronic formats in February, May, August and November each year. All enquiries should be addressed to the managing editor, Lyndon Pugh, at 45 Gwenllian Morgan Court, Heol Gouesnou, Brecon, LD3 7EE. email lyndon.pugh@virgin.net or tel/fax 44 (0)1874 610412.

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Achieving a successful balance between work and personal life is difficult in an age of “always on” communication and customer demands. This situation is even more problematic when people take on extra commitments such as study for professional or executive qualifications, or to further their careers.

The London Business School, one of the top five international business schools according to the Financial Times and Business Week, and running one of only two UK MBA courses to gain maximum ratings in assessments, has been looking for ways of reconciling these competing demands on its students’ time. In particular, they wanted to make it easier for students to work on group assignments completed off-campus throughout the year. **Mark Walker** of Chameleon contributes this report.

Genesys Conferencing, a leader in multimedia conferencing systems, has been testing a new collaborative work platform based on audio and web conferencing, for the Business School’s autumn 2005 intake. The programme is already yielding results and is changing the way in which individuals and study groups relate to each other. The platform also has the potential to transform the students’ general study and work habits in the future.

Fiona Lennoxsmith, the senior programme manager at the London Business School’s Sloane and EMBA office explained that like other international MBAs, the London Business School Executive MBA (EMBA) is a demanding undertaking. The course is split into five terms over 12 months, with mandatory group study classes for the first year. The typical students on the course are high-ability executives in global corporations, with the majority of the school’s students already in full-time employment.

During the pilot, EMBA students were able to hold interactive coursework discussions and study meetings with fellow students directly from their computer desktops, at home, on campus or at work. Unlike other virtual conferencing packages, Genesys Conferencing offers users a multimedia approach – audio, web and video conferencing – for real time presentation and document sharing.

Genesys Creates Opportunities for Virtual Learning

The Issues

Work-life-study balance

Difficulties with collaborative learning

Problems of distributed learning

Need to develop tools applicable to work situations as well as to study

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Main Features

Online multimedia platform
integrating audio, web and video
conferencing features
Permanently online – no booking
Global, fault-tolerant, scalable
network
Data centres in Europe, North
America, Asia Pacific
Dial in throughout Europe
Serves all pc applications
Integrated desktop video
Nothing to install on desktop – no
security issues

As well as audio conference calls allowing them to discuss and manage projects, students use the product's integrated document sharing capability to examine course materials and presentations collaboratively. They can share comments and see changes as they are happening.

In addition, users of Genesys Meeting Center's video broadcasting element can also see the participant who is leading the discussion, as if they were in the same room, all via their PC or laptop screens. This is integrated with users' existing computer functions such as email and calendars, fitting into the different routines of the students. The platform also offers whiteboard and online polling functions, again helping users to interact and share their opinions.

Aside from reducing car, train or air travel time, the multimedia conference session charges are cost-effective in themselves. Access to the Genesys Meeting Center is via a freephone number for UK-based students, and is charged at a local rate for students based elsewhere.

The pilot has been running for over six months and is already being used for regular multimedia conference calls.

Ian Gabbie at Genesys Conferencing reported that the use is very similar to that of business users: once participants have been trained, they establish a pattern of daily or weekly conference calls. Some of these can cover extremely sophisticated issues like working through a balance sheet or dealing online with a complex contract, and calls can last for several hours in these cases.

Close collaboration and deeper understanding develops as the use of the system increases. The general advantages of using multimedia conferencing are seen first in the saving of time and the flexibility stemming from the ability to set up regular meetings irrespective of location – at work or at home.

One key issue is that of control, especially in the light of the complexity and length of some of the exchanges. Gianluca, employed by a global communications group, underlined this point by stressing the need for a moderator who can lead the discussion.

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Since the students are already experienced managers dealing with world-wide customers and partners, they are familiar with innovative business applications.

Michael, an EMBA student and a business manager in financial services, saw two main benefits in using the system. He felt that sharing documents or spreadsheets on a regular basis through the multimedia conferencing system makes it easier to deal with queries and problems of understanding.

The system also makes it easier to work through a document collectively, and increase understanding. This represents a considerable advance in the organisation's ability to support collaboration in a distributed environment.

From a learning point of view, Fiona Lennoxsmith summed up the advantages for the London Business School, and for virtual learning systems in general:

The platform has the potential to provide new study opportunities. The audio and web conferencing elements are the most widely used parts, and they help students to organise their coursework and share. The platform has many possibilities for us. It's an exciting pilot, and we hope it will deliver many benefits now and in the future.

The advantages of the system can be summed up as:

- Flexibility
- Visibility
- Sharing
- Cost effectiveness
- Better use of time
- Improved understanding
- Innovative learning methods

Genesys is at <http://www.genesys.com>

Document sharing using multimedia conferencing on a day-to-day basis [makes it easier to] understand and deal with particular queries that people have about a document, or a spreadsheet looking at a company or a division's financial performance.

The Solution

Multimedia conferencing

Integrated document sharing

Whiteboard

Online Polling

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Film & Video News

Moviemail Film First

bfi Video

Team Video

The Beat That My Heart Skipped

MovieMail Film First has released Jacques Audiard's *The Beat That My Heart Skipped*, a thriller set in contemporary Paris. Tom, the anti-hero, works for his father-in-law, evicting in-debt tenants from properties owned by the latter. Although his methods are unsavoury he has another side to his character. He is a pianist and the film charts the clash of two worlds – his unsavoury aggression in the service of his father-in-law and the potentially civilising influence of his interest in music.

Played by Romain Duris, the film is at its most compelling when it portrays Tom's Jekyll and Hyde-like switching between the bullying enforcer and the music student.

Based on the cult original *Fingers*, starring Harvey Keitel and James Toback, the film was originally made in France and runs for 102 minutes. It is subtitled and has a recommended retail price of £22.99.

The DVD includes interviews, deleted scenes and filmographies. Mike McCahill, in the March 2006 issue of *MovieMail* newsletter, describes the film as a gripping story of the carnage left behind in the wake of maturity, and the most arresting, psychologically convincing movie portrait in years of why men wage the wars and wreak the havoc they do.

It is available from MovieMail first online at <http://www.moviemail-online.co.uk>

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Saraband

Saraband, said to be Ingmar Bergman's final film, is also available from MovieMail, and is made up of four actors playing two-handed psychodramas that unroll like scenes from the confessional, or a therapist's couch, the twin poles of Bergman's career.

Dealing in part with the theme of reconciliation, the film tells the story of the reuniting of two former lovers, Marianne and Johan, played by Liv Ullman and Erland Josephson (right) respectively.



The structure of the film depends on four actors playing out dramatic scenes telling the story of the reunion of the former lovers, the granddaughter of Johan, and her relationship with her father Henrik, who is Johan's son.

The film is marked by the sense of intimacy between the viewer and the cast. DVD extras include an account of how the film was made, notes, trailers and a gallery. Priced at £19.99 and released in late March. (Mike McCahill)

The Red and the White



The Red and The White (left), set in Russia in 1919, tells the story of a battle for a piece of land lying between an abandoned monastery and a river.

Notable for its "luminous monochrome photography and brilliantly choreographed long takes", the film is an audacious and impressive but complicated production.

One of the finest and purest anti-war films, there is little to tell the Tsarists from the Bolsheviks, and the deliberate confusion is enhanced by characters who make a fleeting impression before disappearing. While the film is set against the canvas of war, it ignores the conventions of the genre.

The characters, and the causes are unknown, the orders are unexplained, and no goals are set out. Empathy is difficult as characters disappear so quickly, and most of the sound track is made up of commands. Death is random, and the only constant feature is the indifferent river.

Amongst the extras are: *Message of Stones – Budapest*, a documentary by Miklós Jancsó; Restored transfer; Booklet.

The DVD was released on the 27th March and is available for £9.99 online, or £12.99. (Graeme Hobbs)

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Pickwick

Pickwick (left) is Orson Welles' adaptation with James Hayter – later to become the voice of Mr. Kipling for the cake commercials – replacing the unavailable W.C. Fields. With a strong supporting cast making up the other members of the Pickwick Club, the show is stolen by Nigel Patrick as Mr. Jingle.

The dark underside of Victorian England is exposed through director Noel Langley's well-tempered changes of tone in portraying Pickwick's incarceration in the debtors prison. The humour shines through many of the scrapes of the four main protagonists, and in the telling of the breach of promise suit between Pickwick and Hermione Baddeley's Mrs. Bardell.

Throughout, Noel Langley, who also wrote the script for Alastair Sim's *Scrooge*, remains faithful to Dickens's text and characterisation while achieving the necessary compression of the original. Available now at £9.99 or £8.99 online for the DVD, which runs for 105 minutes.

One of the
finest
Hollywood
wronged-man
films ever
made

The Prisoner of Shark Island

The Prisoner of Shark Island may not be counted amongst John Ford's list of classic films, but this film is certainly one of the finest wronged-man films in Hollywood history.

It is the story of the doctor who set the broken leg of John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of Abraham Lincoln. A medical practitioner in the southern states, Samuel A. Mudd was tried and found guilty of complicity in the assassination because of the treatment he provided for John Wilkes Booth. His sentence was life imprisonment in Fort Jefferson, situated in the Dry Tortugas off Key West, Florida.

The film portrays events such as Mudd's attempt to escape through waters infested by sharks, and in particular his heroism in working to combat an outbreak of yellow fever. It was this which eventually earned him his pardon and release.

Warner Baxter (next page), giving what is said to be his finest performance, played the role of Mudd, opposite Gloria Stuart as his wife. The character parts are also well-drawn, and especially well-observed are the portrayals of Mudd's "outspoken, Confederate father-in-law" played by Claude Gillingwater, Ernest Whitman's role as Buck, a now-freed slave who stays faithful to Mudd throughout, and in particular John Carradine, who played the part of a sadistic sergeant called Rankin, at the prison.

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Nunnally Johnson contributed a polished screenplay, and the photography of Bert Glennon, who also worked on some of Sternberg's films, adds much to the film. John Ford's use of close-ups in this production is said to resemble that of Orson Welles.

Extras on the DVD include a biography contributed by Scott Eyman, who wrote *Print the Legend: the Life and times of John Ford*. There is a video interview, a gallery and a 24-page booklet as well. Released at the end of March, the price is £19.99 discounted by 25% to £14.99 online.



Battle in Heaven

Battle in Heaven (below) was controversially screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 2005, because of allegations of the exploitation of amateur actors who took part in some explicit sex scenes. Other critics

found it ambitious and expertly made, and argued that it should have won the Palme d'Or.



While audiences might be a little uneasy about it, the film is still a powerful story of a couple's botched attempt to kidnap a baby. The plan goes wrong and results in the death of the child. Overwhelmed by guilt, the man, a chauffeur, embarks on a relationship with a prostitute who is the daughter of a general.

His life then begins to unravel in what is a tour de force for Carlos Reydagas, the director, and is visually stunning.

Reydagas makes good use of close ups and other techniques to create a series of powerful images. Unarguably one of the best original films of last year, the film is "a powerfully rewarding experience". (Alex Davidson).

The DVD extras include interviews and notes, and the price is £19.99 or £13.99 online.

Day of Wrath

Day of Wrath was directed by Carl Theodor Dreyer and is set during the witch-hunts of 17th Century Europe.

The young wife of an elderly priest has a history. Her mother was accused of witchcraft, but Pedersen, the priest, spared her. The price of his mercy was the hand of the daughter, Anne. The relationship is put under strain by the appearance of Martin, who is Pedersen's son from his first marriage.

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Anne (right) sees the possibility of a happiness she cannot find in her marriage to the old man. In an atmospheric film, Dreyer creates a shadowy world of foreboding and death, as Anne tests the limits of her freedom within her marriage.



There is a powerful confrontation between husband and wife, and erotic undertones while Pedersen is absent and the "howling wind outside increases the shell of silence inside" .

(Graeme Hobbs).

DVD extras include two short films and a commentary, with a price of £19.99 or £14.99 online.

Rien ne va Plus

To end on a lighter note, *Rien ne va Plus* is Chabrol's 50th feature – a comedy thriller starring Isabelle Huppert (left) and Michel Serrault, who get involved in a swindle involving five million Swiss francs. The film is marked by the "byplay between Huppert and Serrault . . . some of the set pieces are classic Hitchcock . . . the digs at Switzerland's sobriety are very droll" (David Parkinson).



Nevertheless, Serrault steals the show.

All the DVDs in this section are available online from <http://www.moviemail-online.co.uk> and the notes on MovieMail releases are taken from their quarterly lists, with grateful thanks.

bfi Video releases Free Cinema – the Definitive Collection



The British Film Institute has compiled, for the first time, the definitive collection of films from the 1950s Free Cinema movement. Free Cinema not only re-invented British documentary making, but this highly influential period in the country's cinema history was the precursor for the better known British New Wave of social-realist films in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The DVD set celebrates the 50th anniversary of the first screening of films by the Free Cinema Group, which was also commemorated by a special event at the NFT on the 5th of February of this year.

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The term Free Cinema was coined by critic and filmmaker Lindsay Anderson (If, O Lucky Man!), when he, Karel Reisz (Saturday Night and Sunday Morning), Tony Richardson (A Taste of Honey, The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner) and Lorenza Mazzetti screened a programme of their short films at the National Film Theatre on the 5th of February 1956.

Every beard and duffle coat in London, every urchin-cut and pair of jeans seemed to converge on the National Film Theatre on South Bank last night. Queues of cinema enthusiasts, even longer than during the Festival of Britain, stood in the drizzle for hours in the hope of seeing three short films [that] in four days have become the talk of the town.

reported the Evening News. The screening was so successful that five more programmes followed until 1959, featuring films by another young British and foreign filmmakers.

The Contents

O Dreamland (Lindsay Anderson)
Momma Don't Allow
(Karel Reisz/Tony Richardson)
Together (Lorenza Mazzetti)
Wakefield Express
(Lindsay Anderson)
Nice Time
(Alain Tanner/Claude Goretta)
The Singing Street
(Norton Park Group/Nigel McIsaac)
Everyday Except Christmas
(Lindsay Anderson)
Refuge England (Robert Vas)
Enginemen (Michael Grigsby)
We Are the Lambeth Boys
(Karel Reisz)
Food for a Blush (Elizabeth Russell)
One Potato Two Potato
(Leslie Daiken)
March to Aldermaston (anon)
The Vanishing Street (Robert Vas)
Tomorrow's Saturday
(Michael Grigsby)
Gala Day (John Irvine)

The films were free in the sense that they were made outside the framework of the film industry, and that their statements were entirely personal. They had in common not only the conditions of their production – shoestring budgets and unpaid crews – but also a style and attitude and an experimental approach to sound. Mostly funded by the British Film Institute's Experimental Film Fund, they featured ordinary, mostly working-class people at work and play, displaying a rare sympathy and respect, and a self-conscious poetic style.

Extras include Small is Beautiful: The Story of the Free Cinema Films Told by Their Makers (2006). This is an exclusive 43-minute film consisting of specially commissioned interviews with Free Cinema filmmakers Lorenza Mazzetti, Walter Lassally, Alain Tanner and Michael Grigsby. Also included are film extracts and previously unseen photographs.

A collection of five rarely seen short films from the late 1950s-early 1960s, made in the spirit of the Free Cinema movement, is in the package, together with a 40-page fully illustrated booklet including a general introduction, the original manifestoes, notes on each of the 16 films, and a further reading list and web links.

The collection was released in March with a price tag of £29.99.

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Ordet

Ordet (below) is one of four Carl Theodor Dreyer Films recently released by *bfi* Video. During a career of almost 50 years, Dreyer released only 14 films, all of which have earned a place in the history of the cinema. *Ordet* (The Word) is one of the most popular and admired of the 14. With a running time of 33 minutes, it contained only 114 shots, accounting for its spellbinding simplicity.



The production is based on a 1932 play by Danish dramatist and Lutheran country priest Kaj Munk (1898-1944), and is a tale of miraculous redemption brought about by human love. It is an extraordinary expression of spiritual optimism, neither sentimental nor pious.

The film is the story of religious intolerance and family tensions in a Danish farming family, and through this theme Dreyer explores the clash between orthodox religions and true faith.

Powerful effects are achieved by simple means, and the closing moments are said to be one of the most extraordinary scenes in all cinema.

The DVD also includes two rare short films made by Dreyer, who was involved in 13 state-commissioned documentaries and short films up to 1956. His subject matter ranged from art and architecture to road safety.

Other extras include *Ordet Og Lyset*, about cinematographer Henning Bendtsen and the making of *Ordet*, and a booklet including essays on Dreyer's work

Jonas Mekas, writing in *Film Culture*, said of *Ordet*:

We know parables told to children: realistic content presented through fantastic happenings. No child believes them, but everyone gets their simple moral messages: courage, endurance, or whatever it may be. *Ordet* is a modern parable, and its message – or, let us say, one of its most obvious messages – is a plea for man's faith in our time of confusion. Not a cry of desperation or pessimism, but a trembling, anguished, searching cry – a cry of a man who takes his life and death seriously and who still believes that there must be a WORD.

Ordet is in Danish with English subtitles and was released by *bfi* Video in March.

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Master of the House

Master of the House is the second Dreyer film to be featured. Day of Wrath and Gertrud will be released after this issue has gone to press, and will appear in the August issue.

Its golden simplicity almost defies description
(Sight and Sound)

Put Carl Dreyer where he belongs – [with] Mizugochi, Vigo, Ophuls,

Master of the House is the story of Victor (right). A businessman whose enterprise has failed, Victor is turned into a domestic tyrant, constantly claiming and criticising his long-suffering family.



His behaviour is contrasted with the saintly forbearance of his wife Ida, and her attitude drives him to greater tyranny and vindictiveness. This provokes a reaction from Victor's old nanny, furious with her former charge.

Astrid Holm takes the central role opposite Victor, and turns out an enchanting performance. A carefully conceived comedy of manners deals with the issue of domestic inequality as the nanny, played brilliantly by Mathilde

Nielsen, provides the rich vein of humour which runs through an emotional and affecting production. Of the film, Dreyer commented:

In the theatre, you have the time to write, time to linger on words and feelings, and the spectator has time to perceive these things. In the cinema it is different. This is why I have always concentrated on the purification of the text, which I compress to a minimum. I did this as early as Master of the House, for example, which was originally a play. We compressed it, cleaned it, purified it and the story became very clear, very clean.

The DVD extras include Torben Skjodt Jensen's My Metier (1995) with optional English subtitles, and two more of Dreyer's short films – Good Mothers from 1942, and They Caught the Ferry from 1958, again with optional English subtitles. Caspar Tyberg, a Dreyer scholar based at the University of Copenhagen, contributes an essay in an illustrated booklet also containing reviews by Tom Milne and James Leahy.

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The Art of Cinematography

Arnold Glassman's ground-breaking documentary (above) was an award-winning celebration of one of the most vital yet frequently overlooked contributors to the art of filmmaking: the Cinematographer, also known as the Director of Photography or lighting cameraman.

Made by the American Film Institute and the Japanese Broadcast Corporation, the production explores pioneering camerawork over almost a century of filmmaking. It was the first behind-the-scenes look at the cinematography used in classic scenes from some of the most famous films in the world.

Visions of Light also features interviews with 29 cinematographers and directors, who acknowledge their mentors and illustrate their influences and inspiration with over 100 film clips. They also share some of their tactics and trade secrets.

Among the many contributors are Ernest Dickinson, Spike Lee's cameraman from *Do the Right Thing*, Haskell Wexler (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *Days of Heaven*), Vittorio Storaro (*The Conformist*, *Apocalypse Now* and *The Last Emperor*) and the late Nestor Almendros (*Days of Heaven*).

Feature films range from the early cinema of D. W. Griffith's 1915 classic *The Birth of a Nation* and the 1919 production of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Weine) to some of the best-known cinema in history, including *Citizen Kane*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Goodfellas*, *Blue Velvet*, *Blade Runner*, *Star Wars* and *Raging Bull*.

The DVD also contains biographies of Arnold Glassman, writer and co-director Todd McCarthy and co-director and producer Stuart Samuels. As an extra, *News Reel-Men who Film the World for you* (Jimmy Taylor 1922), from the *Topical Budget Newsreel Collection* is also included. The release date was the 27th March 2006.

bfi Video releases are available from all good DVD retailers, by mail order from 0845 458 9910 or online at <http://www.bfi.org.uk/video>

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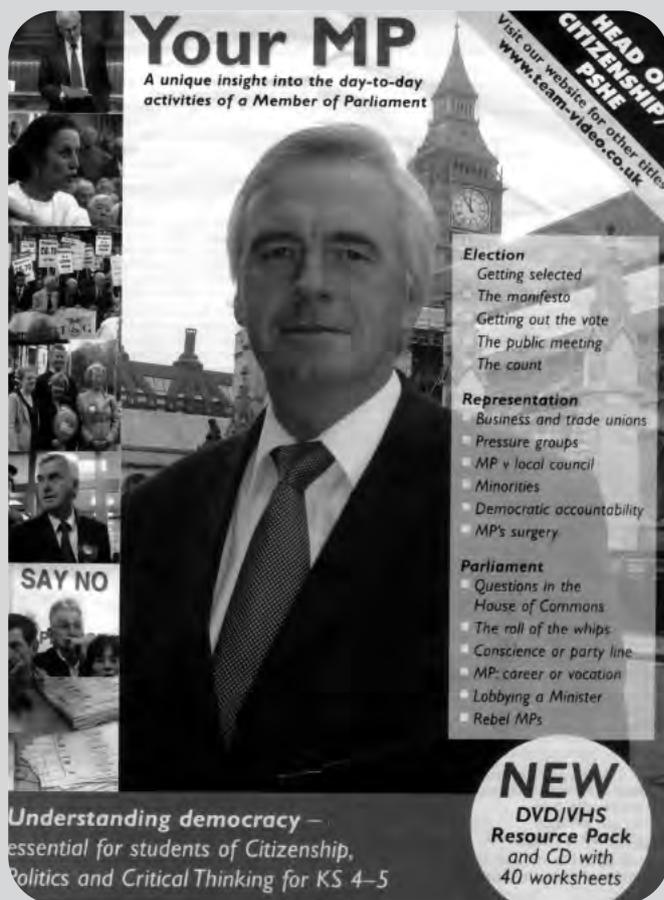
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Team Video Introduces



The latest release from Team Video is a DVD/VHS & CD pack providing a unique insight into the role and responsibilities of a Member of Parliament. It is suitable for students of all abilities.

The resource is specifically designed to introduce students to the importance of the democratic process, and during its production Team Video were given unrestricted access to the work of John McDonnell MP. This included his election campaign, his constituency work and his Parliamentary responsibilities. Issues arising included representation, accountability and the democratic mandate.

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The pack is made up of nine units, covering, in Unit 1: The Constituency: the demography of Hayes and Harlington and an introduction to the Member of Parliament himself; Unit 2: The Beginning of the Election: attendance at the MP's surgery, the candidate selection meeting, representation, the campaigning; Unit 3: The Hustings: organising supporters, knocking doors, leafleting, doorstep issues, the limits of local democracy, telephone canvassing, organising supporters, an election rally with Tony Benn. The question of whether being an MP is a career or a vocation is asked; Unit 4: The Final Stages: A public meeting with all the candidates, questions and answers, minority representation, gender and racism; Unit 5: Getting the vote out, monitoring the turnout, consequences of a low turnout, trade union support, the count, the declaration, returning to Parliament; Unit 6; The Pressure Group: A meeting opposed to the expansion of Heathrow Airport, effectiveness of a good pressure group, questions in Parliament, lobbying a Minister, What influences the final decision? Unit 7: covers MPs and Trade Unions: union rallies, the political consequences of the financial support from unions, declaration of interests and the integrity of MPs, protests against low pay by House of Commons cleaners, the response; Unit 8: The Business Community and the Local Council: A Chamber of Commerce meeting, what influence can an MP have over business? Representing local interests, is local business hostile or supportive? Political control of the local council; Unit 9: Rebel MPs; role and influence of fringe groups, challenging new bills, political tactics, political effectiveness, the role of the whips, conscience versus the party line, the consequences of being a rebel and advice to a new MP.

The presentation is well-structured and presents a large amount of information in a digestible way. It is lively, setting a brisk pace throughout, the visuals are good and the attention of the viewer is held. The issues it deals with are important, and no attempt is made to skate over awkward questions. It is not only a valuable learning resource, but presenting the view from the constituency means that it is an antidote to the impression sometimes created by Westminster. It is to be commended.

The Citizenship Video Pack

The Citizenship Video Pack from Team Video asks the question What is Good Citizenship? It has been designed to provide a challenging resource for students to consider what citizenship is. 12 British citizens and one political refugee are questioned on what citizenship means today.

The citizens include Lord Tebbit of Chingford, journalist and broadcaster Jeremy Hardy, Sally Witcher of the Child Poverty Action Group, Police Superintendent Davina Logan, Mish Bibervovic, an ex-long term prisoner, Lady Olga Maitland the ex-Conservative MP, Claude Moraes the Director of the JCWI, and Derek Hinds, who is the Coordinator of Operation Black Vote.

A Question From a Constituent at a Protest Meeting:

We can all write letters and go on marches and things like that, but will there be enough MPs who've responded to Geraldine's letter to actually repeal this legislation, that gives so much unprecedented power to the airport to expand in the way that it has in the past and the way it wants to do in the future?

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Between them they offer a number of perspectives on what citizenship means.

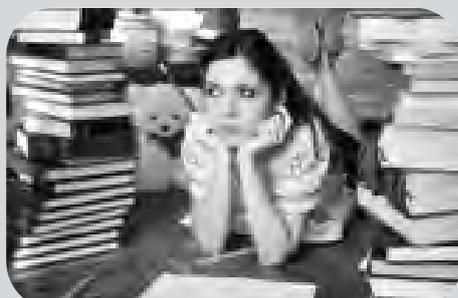
Some of the key questions posed in the video are

- What makes a good citizen?
- Can a citizen be too powerful?
- Are all citizens equal?
- What rights does a citizen have?

The 18 units in the video are supported by 40 photocopiable worksheets, and the price of this pack is £44 including VAT, as is the Your MP DVD.

Team Video is at 102 Canalot Studios, 222 Kensal Road, London W10 5 BN.
Tel 020 8960 5536 fax 020 8960 9784 or email admin@team-video.co.uk

Orders can be faxed or posted and 21 days should be allowed for delivery.



Reviews

Edited by Lyndon Pugh

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Worley, R. (ed). [BIALL Handbook of Legal Information Management](#). Ashgate, 2006. ISBN 07546 4182 1 £70 (hardback)

Fenner, A. (ed). [Integrating Digital Resources in Library Collections](#). Hawthorne Information Press, 2006 ISBN 0-7890-2834-4 Price £21.50

Michalak, S. C. (ed.) [Portals and Libraries](#). Haworth Information Press, 2005.

Maceviciute, E., and T. D. Wilson (eds). [Introducing Information Management: an Information Research Reader](#). Facet, 2005.

Rosenthal, D. (ed). [The Guardian International Film Guide 2006](#), 43rd ed. Button Group/Guardian Books, 2006. £18.99.

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Janet Horslen: BIALL Handbook of Legal Information Ashgate 2006



Janet Horslen

Worley, R. (ed). BIALl Handbook of Legal Information Management. Ashgate, 2006. ISBN 07546 4182 1 £70 (hardback)

This book is structured as a series of chapters, each on a particular topic, some specifically on legal information, such as legal research, while others cover broader topics, such as library systems management, but they all approach their subjects from the perspective of a legal library or information centre.

Many of the writers are recognised experts in their field. Guy Holborn, for example, author of the chapter on sources of legal information, has written an entire book on this subject, and it is one I still turn to when stuck with an unusual legal enquiry, even after working in law libraries for nearly ten years.

It is possible to buy entire books on most of the subjects covered in this volume, but this handbook provides an easily digestible summary for the busy information professional. There is an extensive bibliography at the end, for those wishing to read further on a particular subject. The book is also up-to-date in its themes – there are chapters on taxonomies, e-learning, and virtual learning environments.

Inevitably, there are a large number of web sources quoted in the book. This is useful, but as time passes, websites are not updated, or their urls change. In print format these changes are almost impossible to track.

Overall, this is a useful book, of equal interest to those new to legal information work and those who have experience in this area. I expect I will be picking it up to dip into specific chapters when I need to update myself on various topics.

Janet Horslen, Reader Services Manager
Library, Law Society of England and Wales

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Lina Coelho:
Integrating Digital
Resources in
Library Collections
Haworth Information
Press 2006



Fenner, A. (ed). Integrating Digital Resources in Library Collections. Hawthome Information Press, 2006
ISBN 0-7890-2834-4 Price £21.50

This is a collection of writings by working librarians exploring issues around print and digital resource integration from different perspectives in a number of academic institutions. The articles have a North American focus and the editor is Audrey Fenner, Head of Acquisitions with the Congressional Research Service at the Library of Congress. She sets the scene in her introduction by reminding us that in recent years the very concept of collection has been redefined.

The book is divided into three sections: issues and opinions, research and analysis and histories and projects. This approach ensures that there is richness of material which appeals both to those closely involved in collection management and to those, like me, whose interest is largely academic.

The main issues facing e-collection developers are clearly explored – from business models to detailed technicalities such as the use of field 856 in the MARC record, open URLs and digital rights management systems. One of the crucial differences between print and electronic formats is the shift from product to service. Owning print in perpetuity is giving way to acquiring licences for usage. This loss of monopoly of access by libraries needs to be addressed promptly and here can be found numerous ideas and examples of how this can be done.

Different types of materials require diverse approaches, and the articles in this collection address many of them – from choosing e-reference and e-books to the challenges of e-journal deals. The main concern for librarians however, in spite of the technological advances has remained unchanged: “Are our users happy and is the budget balanced?” The fine-grained statistical analysis and project examples cited sometimes suggest uncomfortable decisions such as collection reduction and abandoning some traditional library functions.

One of the main focal points in almost all of the “technical” books on libraries is the catalogue and the integrated library system, and this collection of articles is no exception.

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Here, like elsewhere, these are judged on their ability to provide relevant solutions to the challenges presented by digital resource integration. Broader cultural and staff training issues are also touched upon.

This collection includes a few articles with a fine level of detail from which a practising librarian new to the field can take directions on how to tackle specific issues, whilst those with considerable expertise can take ample reassurance from the fact that others are facing and struggling with similar challenges.

This is a topical and rich publication. It brings together examples from libraries which have been at the forefront of solving the print versus digital dilemma and which face demanding stakeholders and user communities. Apart from addressing digital integration, it also explores the bringing together of physical resources and highlights limitations imposed by different media.

Although the collection may appear disjointed, because of the different approaches the individual authors take, this carries its own advantages. Readers can choose the topics and examples most relevant to them. The detailed accounts of developments in real libraries allow practitioners to assemble their own check-lists of questions, concerns, issues and most importantly of tried and tested solutions, as well as their limitations and pitfalls. It is a useful resource for those embarking on evaluation, selecting and acquiring e-resources.

Lina Coelho Sub-Librarian BMA Library

The book is divided into three sections: issues and opinions, research and analysis and histories and projects. This approach ensures that there is richness of material which appeals both to those closely involved in collection management and to those, like me, whose interest is largely academic. The main issues facing e-collection developers are clearly explored - from business models to detailed technicalities such as the use of field 856 in the MARC record, open URLs and digital rights management systems.

**Leo Appleton:
Portals and
Libraries
Haworth Information
Press 2006**



Michalak, S. C. (ed.) *Portals and Libraries*. Haworth Information Press, 2005.

Over recent years, there has been much talk of portals, and how they fit into library and information provision. From the outside looking in, the prospect of new technological developments such as portals, can seem overwhelming, especially when descriptions are couched in expressions such as metasearching, federated searching and broadcast searching.

This volume goes some way towards clarifying the portals universe, and all such terminology which accompanies it.

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Published simultaneously as a special issue of the Journal of Library Administration, this collection of articles attempts to give an overview of some of the good practice in portal development within U.S public and academic library services. Similarly, some of the chapters simply concentrate on the general issues surrounding portal design and development, making for a comprehensive overview of the current library portals scenario.

The introduction, written by the editor, sets the scene very well, providing a definition of a library portal and setting out the objectives of the book, indicating exactly what the reader can expect from it. At this stage, as a portals novice, I was looking forward to being introduced to the portals landscape, and gaining an insight into this new world.

The volume got off to a good start, with an overview of the history behind the Internet Public Library developed by the University of Michigan. Surprisingly this project was commenced in 1995, and upon further exploration, this reader began to feel comfortable with the idea that the concept of portals was not beyond his comprehension, as he had initially feared. Susanna Davidson then recounted the developments behind the Internet Public Library, and how the various services offered by this particular portal (e.g. an online newspaper collection) are of value to its users.

The following chapters continue in the same manner with further portals being described and explored, namely MyLibrary@NCState in chapter two and Portals to the World in chapter three. By the time chapter four had arrived I felt as if I knew all there is to know about portals. Having read through every detail of the development stages of three different, yet in some ways similar projects, especially within such a narrow subject area as portals, I decided that I had now gained the new expertise I had initially been excited by.

It was evident by this point that there was a common structure to how and why portals are developed, so the jargon and descriptions used tended to be slightly repetitive. At this stage, portals were no longer as exciting as three chapters ago.

Fortunately the monotony was broken in chapter four, in that here began a series of articles about issues, functionality and operability of portals. After several similar chapters, I was aware that my excitement and enthusiasm had dwindled, if not completely disappeared.

I must point out that the chapters are all very well written, and are clear and comprehensible to the non-expert. There is a certain amount of jargon, which the reader soon gets used to (for example Z39.50, vertical searching, scalability, personalisation, etc.), but it soon becomes very repetitive.

This is especially the case where it is perfectly evident that many of the authors have common beliefs and concerns, and that the same issues (for example that of the personalisation potential in portals) are apparent in more than one of the essays.

However, it could be argued that where this can make for quite dry reading, it at least allows for validation of the case studies and experiences which the authors write about.

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Just as I had truly begun to go off portals, the final chapters made my perseverance worth while. Chapter 10, by Regan and Walcher, approached the discussion of portals from an environmental perspective, in that they discuss how portals fit into Virtual Learning Environments and e-learning in general. As an e-learning practitioner, I found this chapter to be of particular interest.

Similarly, interest in the concluding chapters of the book is ensured through the presentation of the Final Report of the Association of Research Libraries Scholars Portal Working Group in the penultimate chapter, and a very well presented summarising chapter by Mary Jackson, looking at the general future of library portals.

The nature of the subject matter meant that the all the contributions to the text are U.S based, and it would have been refreshing to get just one non-U.S perspective, but perhaps such case studies do not currently exist.

This book, while at times difficult to endure, does at least present the reader with a very thorough guide to library portals. I certainly ended by feeling as if I understand the issues that go with portals, although getting to this stage may prove to be a bit of a struggle.

The topic of portals, if covered in anything more than one or two chapters will always be an endurance test, and in its defence, at least this book presents the writings of twelve different authors, and now provides a platform for further portals discussion.

Leo Appleton, Learning Resources Manager, West Cheshire College

Anoush Simon: Introducing Information Management: an Information Research Reader Facet 2005



Maceviciute, E., and T. D. Wilson (eds). *Introducing Information Management: an Information Research Reader*. Facet, 2005.

What is lacking in information management literature is not so much books on "how to", but a complex analysis of "what is?" More specifically, what is IM in terms of its development through research, what does this research comprise, how is theory in this area developed and how can this link back to professional practice?

This volume, a reader of selected articles from the journal *Information Research*, represents an attempt to address these questions.

One of the advantages of this volume is that it quickly orients the reader with the intention of the book. The editors make clear that it addresses specific aspects of information management (itself an amorphous topic) and more importantly, that the articles are drawn from papers originally published in the electronic journal *Information Research*. This makes the parameters clear, in both positive and negative respects.

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Anoush Simon

The process of selection was based on the number of hits on each paper in the journal, a crude, but probably effective, process of identifying the topics most likely to be of interest to an audience of researchers and students, and also IM professionals.

That is, it aims to reflect user interests as opposed to editorial preferences, and one can assume that the hit count more or less accurately reflects readers' perceptions of what would be useful to them.

Of course, however, decisions about focus and content have to be made, and the editors make it clear that there are aspects of IM that are not included in this volume (inevitable in such a wide-ranging field) but as they note, the areas they have chosen to focus on "represent, in our opinion, the core of the field"(xii).

Reflecting this core, the book is divided up into five sections, which the editors view as the most pertinent and currently relevant aspects of IM research. Their bias toward organisational IM is made explicit, and the sections have been divided up along these lines.

The first section deals with general papers including one by Joyce Kirk, discussing and providing guidelines for IM in SMEs, a useful overview of the development of the information research field by Maceviciute and Wilson (also the book's editors), and Gunilla Widen-Wulff looking at business information culture via a focus on the insurance industry in Finland.

Section B deals with the large and diverse field of Information Behaviour (and perhaps an area that many students would be most familiar with), and includes papers by Maija-Leena Huotari and T. D. Wilson, Aiki Tibar, and Louise Limberg.

In line with the focus of the book, the emphasis is on information behaviour in the organisational context, although within this, the three papers are very different in their approach and the context of discussion.

Part C, on environmental scanning and decision making, includes articles by Chun Wei Choo, Zita Correia & T. D. Wilson, Shirnajani M. de Alwis & Susan Higgins, and Judith Broady-Preston.

Between them, the four papers provide definitions and overviews of this aspect of information research, a substantial list of references to significant literature in this area, as well as reviewing and providing a fresh perspective on their original research.

Part D deals with Knowledge Management, a widely debated field of practice (and occasionally maligned term). The debate continues in two papers by France Bouthillier & Kathleen Shearer, and Wilson.

Information strategy is covered in the final part E, and the three papers here point up the diversity of this topic in terms of both level and context. It includes discussions of the role of trust in higher education information systems strategy (David Allen) and IM and technology strategy in the NHS (Hugh Preston).

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The final paper of the volume discusses national information infrastructure strategy in relation to Singapore (Cheryl Marie Cordeiro and Suliman Al-Hawamdeh). A diverse treatment of case study and/or qualitative approaches is once again evident across all the papers.

Inevitably in a volume of this type, the style and accessibility of each article varies with the individual author/s. Some are models of clarity and I would imagine accessible to most levels of university student; others rather more dense and information-packed requiring more focused attention or addressing a more specific interest.

However the quality of the content itself is assured by presumably at least one round of peer-review, as well as the editorial process itself.

Taking the perspective of the research student, I found papers that went into some degree of detail about methodology to be especially refreshing. Limberg's paper for example addresses complex issues about information use amongst students but she presents her methodological approach in a manner which makes the value and, importantly, applicability of it clear. The "black box" of methodology is often overlooked in the reports of social science research, and more contributions like this are welcome.

It is also good to see occasional reference to the problems that can arise in relation to data collection, and how they are overcome, as in Allen's discussion of the issues related to the management of large-scale qualitative projects (the data can seem overwhelming at times). Indeed, this is also likely to be reassuring to more established researchers and practitioners, as it is always good to be reminded of the complex and sometimes messy nature of empirical research. As such, this volume also provides an insight into the wide range of possible approaches which can be taken in information management research.

Methodological aspects are integral to many of the papers, covering case studies, qualitative interviewing, grounded theory analyses and phenomenography and as well more established data-gathering processes and literature reviews. As such, the bibliography also serves as a useful pointer to some worthwhile texts on both key works and methodology in this field.

The slight preponderance of qualitative or case study work is definitely a positive aspect, and, when developing their own first venture into research, students may find it inspiring to read about projects which it is possible for them to envisage undertaking themselves.

From my perspective, this is a valuable addition to teaching materials as it presents the results of research (articles have been updated since first publication) in an accessible manner. There is often a gap for students between what they learn about on various information studies/systems courses and the research going on in the field, and this volume may help to start bridging that gap. It is a complex work, in that it is showcasing original research, debate and methodological discussion, and would probably reward focused attention on a few relevant papers, depending on the reader's requirements.

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All the papers have been gleaned from one journal, so this may be considered to represent a partial view of the field. Having said that, the perspective of the journal itself is wide, all edited works represent a process of making choices about content and emphasis, and the selection process has been made unusually clear to the reader.

Additionally, the whole perspective of the book is international, as is clearly evident from just a brief scan of the contributor biographies, let alone the topics and the contexts of the various papers themselves. Therefore the compilation probably reflects the information research landscape as it currently is.

Finally, publications like this can only be a boon for a discipline which is constantly in flux, as it is at least partially rooted in professional practice and the education of practitioners, and can greatly benefit from a deeper link between the profession, the student, and the research culture.

Dr. Anoush Simon, Department of Information Studies, University of Wales Aberystwyth

Olwen Terris: The Guardian International Film Guide 2006



Rosenthal, D. (ed). The Guardian International Film Guide 2006, 43rd ed. Button Group/Guardian Books, 2006. £18.99.

Anyone watching this year's BAFTAs on television could be readily forgiven for believing that the art of cinema is largely confined to the United States and Great Britain. The red carpet, the unthreatening, saucy and charmingly slick presentation of Stephen Fry might suggest that all is blooming in the film industry and Hello! magazine will be pleased with its celebrity coverage.

It was salutary, therefore, that my review copy of the 2006 edition of The Guardian International Film Guide, edited by Daniel Rosenthal, had arrived the day before, to remind me that this feeling of well-being was partly an illusion.

The reports from international critical correspondents confirm that from Bangladesh, where cinemas are rapidly being turned into shopping malls, to Italy, where the huge cuts in cultural funding sanctioned by Silvio Berlusconi have resulted in show business strikes and drastic falls in cinema attendance, filmmaking is never secure.

Lisabona Rahman, reporting from Indonesia, notes the anticipated success of Gie, a biopic of Indonesian-Chinese student activist Soe Hok Gie, but then reflects that national production slunk back to "that time-honoured and deadly combination of bad scripts, poor acting and abysmal cinematography". Government funding cuts, economic recessions, political and moral censorship, complicated tax laws, wars, natural disasters, terrorism and lack of talent have all had their part to play in reducing film production.

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But of course it is not all bad news. Several countries have reported progress, Norway, for example where Trond Olav Svendsen tells us that the industry is larger, more productive and better funded than ever before; or China, where more genres are emerging in an increasingly diverse and receptive market. Steven Spielberg's foray into Hungary to shoot *Schindler's List* suggests "appealing tax laws, solid infrastructure and skilled manpower".

Nigeria reports that since 1992, when devaluation made celluloid film unattractive, it has become the biggest home video market in Africa, with about 1000 made in 2005. As Steve Ayorinde reports, "film-making now has new meaning for 140 million Nigerians, beyond the usual box-office system". Films are still being made across the world from Kyrgyzstan to Fiji, but it is difficult, often impossible, to see them or even know about them in the UK. The Best Film in a Foreign Language awards at ceremonies are usually despatched with brisk efficiency, and the foreign language so often means French.

Filmmakers work hard and passionately to get their work shown nationally and internationally at festivals and markets, but distributors will tend to play safe. The business of the film industry dictates that established names, recognisable genres, and strong odds on good box office returns will sell the movie. New film-makers, with modest budgets working in unfamiliar cinematic styles with uncomfortable tales to tell will always tread a stony path.

Would it not be good
if there was no Best
Film in a Foreign
Language category at all
at the Oscars and
Baftas, but just
a Best Film Award?

More than ever, British audiences need to support the British Film Institute's National Film Theatre and its regional cinemas and arthouse distributors in bringing these films to the UK.

And would it not be good if there was no Best Film in a Foreign Language category at all at the Oscars and BAFTAs, but just a Best Film award? Perhaps the fact that Aardman Animation's *Wallace & Gromit in The Curse of the Were-rabbit* won Best British Film, not Best Animated Film at the 2006 BAFTAs is a small step in this direction.

The specialist sections in the Guide include an article by Michael Dwyer charting 25 years of Irish cinema; Dwyer's account finishes in 2003, so does not mention first-time director Perry Ogden's award-winning *Pavee Lackeen*. This is a complex merging of documentary and fictional

drama in its telling of a traveller family in Dublin. A report on the film, however, is given by Dwyer in Ireland's entry in the World Survey.

Ellen Wolff and Carol Nahra write on developments in digital cinema in the United States and Ireland respectively, particularly on the ways in which digital distribution might affect the independents, in theory offering low-cost, on-demand programming to broader audiences.

The articles focus on the economics and the technology and it might be an interesting corollary in next year's edition of the Guide to consider other implications of digital cinema – the loss of projection skills, changes in sound, the films which are chosen for digital distribution and, most importantly, the look of the film.

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Critic David Thomson's article *The Last Picture Shows* (The Independent on Sunday, 1st January 2006) considering the future of film distribution including digital developments, concluded:

We are not seeing light as much as variations in the electronic signal. People in the business will tell you it looks just like a photograph, and who can tell the difference. Well I can, and I think you can. Because digital is flat, cold and dead.

In addition to the illustrated World Survey, which assesses over 2,000 new films in 100 countries, the Guide is full of information on film festivals and addresses of institutions across the world which are devoted to the promotion of cinema: bookshops, journals, industry bodies, archives, and film schools. Unusually for a reference book, it offers much food for thought, and all for £18.99 from bookshops, or buy online from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/bookshop> (free p&p).

Olwen Terris
Senior Researcher
Shakespeare Project
British Universities Film & Video Council

Naturally Speaking With Dragon Software

Ken Cheetham
UWIC Student Support

Talk to your computer and your words instantly appear in Microsoft® Word and Excel®, Corel® WordPerfect®, and virtually all Windows®-based applications. Listen to incoming e-mail and documents read aloud. Search the Web by speaking URLs and links. Use dictation shortcuts that enable you to insert blocks of texts or bitmaps—such as your name, title, and signature—with a single voice command. Dictate directly into a PC or any Nuance-approved handheld digital recorder. A noise cancelling microphone is even included.

This review is a natural progression from that of the Olympus Digital Voice Recorder published in the February 2006 edition of MmIT. Stated simply, the function of voice recognition software is to recognise what a voice is saying and to reproduce it as type which may be edited, formatted or printed. A high degree of accuracy is essential, and if the functions performed by the software can be automated the process will obviously be more efficient.

My specific interest in this type of software is related to its use in providing support for students with impairments. Imagine the positive contribution such applications may make to the work of students who have defective vision or physical coordination; whose ability to concentrate is diminished—including those with dyslexia, dyspraxia or ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder).

The Olympus Digital Voice Recorder and the Dragon Naturally Speaking Version 8 Software work exceedingly well together. They allow any kind of dictation which has been recorded on another remote device to be transcribed automatically onto the computer screen, without any need for typing.

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The latest versions of the Olympus DSS Player Pro software include a direct link to this software, making for greater ease of use as well as speeding up the process.

There are two editions of the current Version 8, and a careful choice between them should be made. This is not only to ensure that all the required features are provided, but because there is a considerable price difference.

Naturally Speaking Preferred is currently available for £114 plus vat and postage and packing, while Naturally Speaking Professional will cost £399 plus vat and postage and packing. Both versions are distributed by VoicePower, who can be found at The Square, Farnley, Otley, LS21 2QG tel +44 (0)1943 468000.

The essential difference between the two editions is that a number of advanced options are only available if the Professional edition is purchased. Naturally, more applications are supported by the more expensive of the two versions. The key additional features are:

- Microsoft Outlook, PowerPoint, Lotus Notes Importing Your Commands: this allows for easy back up and sharing of commands created.
- Wireless and array microphone support: for example via a Bluetooth headset.
- Roaming profiles: this feature makes user profiles available anywhere on a network, and automatically synchronises updates and adaptations centrally.
- Saving Your Dictated Voice: when dictating a document, the dictated voice can be saved with the document, so that when the document is opened again at a later time, it will still be possible to listen to the original dictation. This can be used for proofreading or for third party correction.
- Multiple Custom Vocabularies: individually-tailored vocabularies can be created.
- Importing/Exporting Vocabularies: third-party vocabularies for any speciality can also be imported.
- Networked tools: for centralised vocabulary management.

System Requirements

Processor Requirements:
Recommended Pentium 4 1GHz
(or equivalent AMD processor)
and above

Operating System Requirements:
Microsoft Windows XP
(SP1 or higher)
Home and Professional, 2000
(SP4 or higher)

Memory Requirements:
Recommended 512 MB or
1 GB – particularly with
Windows 2000 and XP

Hard Drive Requirements:
700 MB free hard-disk space
for a full installation + 50 MB per
additional user;
CD-ROM drive for installation

Audio Requirements:
Windows-compatible sound card
supporting 16 bit recording
(Creative Labs Sound Blaster Live
or Audigy recommended.
Alternatively a USB Sound System
(headset or adapter)

Note: Dragon NaturallySpeaking
Version 8 requires Internet access
for product activation.

Starting up the application five
times without activating it on-line
will disable it.

Important: the Installation Key
must be kept. Duplicates cannot
be issued as codes are specific to
the individual user.

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The Professional edition also has a number of advanced text and graphics commands, which are developments of the basic text and graphics commands available in the Preferred edition. For example, assuming the need to type a set piece of text, containing variables, such as

The car is in a good state of repair. It has 4 new tyres and 6 months left on its MOT

a smart command could be constructed, such as "Car, Good, 4, 6". This would produce the desired text. Similarly, macros can be recorded to allow a series of mouse movements and clicks, as well as keystrokes, to be reproduced with a single voice command.

There are also Advanced Scripting Commands, but these need some training, although this is available from VoicePower. For example, it is possible to create, within a template, a voice command instructing the cursor to go to a certain position. Therefore, if a field name in a form were to be labelled Room, saying the command "Go to room" would take the cursor to that position, ready for dictation.

Clearly, the Professional edition is a very powerful tool, and may well be capable of much more than some users would ever need. This is another reason why it is important to consider carefully what the potential demand is likely to be. It should also be borne in mind that the Preferred edition is no weakling, and is in fact a very low cost solution to a very broad range of problems.

A brief look at how voice recognition works should help to explain some of the steps employed in setting up the programme. Normally, the ability to recognise speech develops at a very early age, when extraneous noise can be filtered out fairly easily. This permits conversation in almost any environment. Along with this comes the ability to differentiate between different voices.

Fig.1 DragonBar: This toolbar gives access to all features



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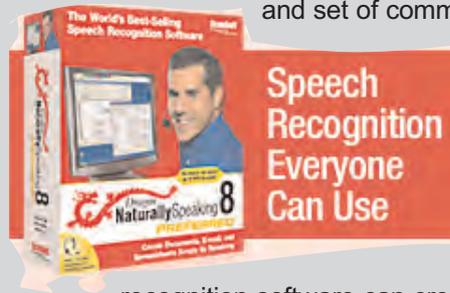
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Speech-recognition software works well when the computer is adjusted to each speaker individually. From the point of view of the computer's "hearing", voices may be altered because of the properties of the sound card, by the microphone used, or by the recording device if dictation has been carried out remotely. While this may seem to compound the difficulties inherent in voice recognition, it is less of a problem than might be imagined. A user can create separate profiles for dictating directly via a headset microphone, from a digital voice recorder, or from a Pocket PC or Palm Tungsten. It is simply a matter of selecting the appropriate profile when dictating or uploading dictation.

In earlier versions of Dragon, a user may have been working with two voice files, two sets of vocabulary and two sets of commands. The current Version 8 works with a single voice file for several dictation sources, so each source runs off the the same vocabulary and set of commands. Each time one source is used and updated, the update works for all sources.



This feature can also be used to compensate for voice changes caused by other factors, apart from equipment differences. Human voices may change dramatically when people are less well than usual, especially if they have impairments such as ME (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis), or other conditions which can cause extreme tiredness. Voice

recognition software can create an additional user profile to compensate for the altered state of the recorded voice.

It is also important that the value of training, using the training sets built in to the software, is recognised. Even after the first five minutes of training I found that the package was returning a very high level of accuracy and it became apparent that the more I used it, the better the results became. A new user is asked to read out a set passage, without worrying at all about punctuation, and the computer will say when it has heard enough. On clicking OK, the programme starts to adapt to the new voice.

It also adapts to the user's writing style, by scanning documents in the My Documents folder, including documents produced in Microsoft Word, Corel Word Perfect, text files, rich text files and html. The value of this additional training is seen in a significant improvement in accuracy. Most email applications, Microsoft Internet Explorer, Outlook, Word, Excel and PowerPoint, Corel Word Perfect and Lotus Notes are all compatible with the software, though not necessarily in all of their versions.

The key to working with applications is the value of the built-in commands which are common to them all. Let us assume that a piece of dictation has been successfully completed in Word. The document can then be formatted. Setting the option to add commas and periods automatically from the Formatting Tab of the Tools menu at the beginning will ensure that commas and full stops are already in place.

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It is then possible to set text in bold, upper case, initial capitals and other variations. Formatting characteristics can be set in Tools/Options to ensure consistency in the formatting of variable characteristics such as dates or times.

Standard commands such as File: Save and File: Exit will be familiar, as perhaps will be a number of others, even if they are not from a supported application. Documents also open promptly.

A number of shortcuts can be set up on the desktop, but sliders and other features which require manual adjustment cannot be controlled. Access to automatic procedures is still very good.

It is the degree of control over the computer, as well as the high levels of accuracy, adaptability and functionality which sell this package to me. I have been unable to fault it, except to say that it seems impossible to enlarge on-screen text in Tutorial mode, nor to print from this mode. These may be very small points, perhaps, but they are very useful facilities for users with dyslexia or impairments to their vision. It is otherwise a delight to use. Some additional useful features include:

- Easily customised vocabularies
- Conserve disc space maintains a smaller set of files for portability
- Text can be read back from Word, Word Perfect or DragonPad documents.
- The stop listening command can be used to break off and deal with interruptions such as an unavoidable conversation or a telephone call. The microphone switches to standby so that any conversation is not recorded.

The package as supplied to the purchaser is complete, with the software on one CD, a Quick Reference Card, a comprehensive User Guide and a microphone headset. The software is manufactured by Nuance UK, formerly Scansoft, and they can be contacted at

99-101 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UL
UK. Tel: +44 (0)1483 729602
Fax: +44 (0)20 7921 0035

Their website is at <http://www.nuance.co.uk>

Key Features of the Professional Version

Compatible with Microsoft Outlook, PowerPoint Lotus Notes

Easy backing up and sharing of commands created

Wireless and array microphone support: i.e. Bluetooth headset

User profiles available anywhere on a network

Automatically synchronised updates and adaptations

Dictated voice can be saved with the document, so that when the document is opened again at a later time it will still be possible to listen to the original dictation.

Saved voice can be used for proofreading purposes or for third-party correction.

Individually tailored vocabularies can be created

Third-party vocabularies for any speciality can also be imported

Network tools: for centralised vocabulary management