

Editorial

Introduction

The greater part of this quarter's issue is taken up with a selection of the papers from a conference on digital libraries held in Espoo, Finland in September, 2003. As the organizers (Sinikka Koskiala and Reijo Savolainen) have written an Issue Editorial, I shall leave it to them to describe the papers. However, readers should be aware of the refereeing process employed for these papers. Initially, abstracts were submitted to the conference organizers, and these were refereed by an international panel of referees, of which I was a member. When the paper had been delivered, authors were invited to submit their papers to the journal, through Koskiala and Savolainen, who carried out a first refereeing process before forwarding them to me for further review - in some cases I had enough knowledge to act as a second referee, in others I referred them to members of my own panel. This is why the contents page reads, "Selected papers..."

Organizers of conferences in 2004 who are looking for an open source outlet for the papers are invited [to contact me](#).

There are also two other refereed papers in the issue. The first, by Wallace Koehler of Valdosta State University, Georgia, USA, is the second he has published in the journal on Web page persistence and decay. This one is a longitudinal study, covering the period 1996 to 2003, and using a sample of 361 Web pages collected in 1996 - eroded by May 2003 to 122. The author comments:

There are two interesting trends that emerge from this analysis. First, once a collection has sufficiently aged, it may stabilize in the sense at least that its URLs may become more durable in time. We have shown, for example, that Koehler's collection of randomly collected URLs remained in a fairly 'steady-state' for two years after it lost approximately two-thirds of its population over a four year period. From a collection development perspective, this period of stability has been but of short duration. Additional monitoring is needed to establish resource lifetimes.

The second paper is on "Systems for the management of information in a university context: an investigation of user need", by Rita Marcella of Aberdeen Business School and Karl Knox of the Northumbria University. Here, the important issue of satisfying management information needs in universities is addressed. I was interested to see that, seven years after we published a report on the [information needs of academic Heads of Department](#), the same issues are apparent in a very different University.

Information Research and the wider information world

One of the benefits of the [NedStats](#) counter, which I use on the top page of the journal, is that it is possible to collect information from it showing which link someone clicked on to find the journal. I collect this information a couple of times a week or so, and have information on where the hits come from for over 4,000 hits since November 2002. These show the most 'popular' sources for gaining access to the journal - other, of course, than pages within the journal itself. I reported on this on [the Weblog](#), but, as not everyone who reads the journal subscribes to the log, here is the information again - slightly updated:

Referring site	No. of hits	%
www.com.washington.edu/rccs/links.asp	83	1.93
www.doaj.org/links/term1870/term1940/	132	3.06
www.libdex.com/journals.html	125	2.90
www.shef.ac.uk/uni/academic/I-M/is/publications/index.html	160	3.71

bubl.ac.uk/journals/	206	4.78
libres.curtin.edu.au/periodicals.htm	94	2.18
www.searchenginewatch.com/searchday/article.php/2204961	104	2.41
www.google.com/search?	198	4.59
Total hits analysed 4310		25.56

It's a curious list consisting of a variety of organized resource 'directories', like BUBL, together with one other e-journal, a academic site hosted by the Department of Communication at the University of Washington, the search engine, Google, and one item in a newsletter about search engines.

The last of these - [Searchday](#) from Search Engine Watch - demonstrated the impact of certain sources: the item was published on 27 May 2003 and it immediately led to a peak in the hits curve, and hits from that page have been arriving ever since, to the effect that it now accounts for 2.5% of all the hits on the top page.

The Directory of Open Access Journals also illustrates how a new site can have an immediate impact on traffic - I don't recall when the hits first appeared, but it was only earlier this year, and it now accounts for almost 3% of the total.

The data on Google are a bit of a cheat - in fact, if one takes all **28** Google sites (from www.google.ae to www.google.sk, the search engine in its different manifestations accounts for 7.55% of the total hits.

A record year

Well, largely as a result of a few days down time for the server, we just failed to hit 43,000 hits on the top page: the actual number was 42,774—12,358 more than 2002.

End note

I do wonder about continuing to write an Editorial for each issue. When I started on this month's, I found that the October editorial had the grand total of fifty-three hits, while the contents page had almost five thousand! However, I shall soldier on, admitting that my words may not be so golden as to attract the crowds.

I hope you all enjoy this new issue and, remember, you can discuss the papers by registering with IR-DISCUSS at <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/ir-discuss.html>



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January 2004

How to cite this editorial:

Wilson, T.D. (2004) "Editorial." *Information Research*, **9**(2), editorial E92 [Available at: <http://informationr.net/ir/9-2/editor92.html>]

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