

Information Technology in the News

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS UNDERTAKES DIGITIZATION PROJECT

■ Early in 2006, the Library of Congress will begin transferring large collections of vinyl records and video recordings to a single location, where they will be archived and digitized. The library has nearly four million separate items, currently stored in several states. The items will be moved to a Virginia facility that was set up in the 1960s as a headquarters for government officials in the event of a nuclear attack. The library's holdings will be stored on fifty-seven miles of shelves, and starting early next year, the library will begin making digital copies of the collection. Because many are covered by copyright, the digital copies will not be available online. Researchers will be able to request digital copies of specific recordings, however, and library staff will pull the original and make a digital version. (*Federal Computer Week*, <<http://www.fcw.com/article91968-01-13-06-Web>>)

NEW SITE AIMS TO IDENTIFY MAKERS OF MALICIOUS PROGRAMS

■ Researchers at Harvard Law School and Oxford University are launching a Web site that will identify organizations that distribute spyware, adware, and other unwanted computer programs, as well as the tactics they employ to install their applications. StopBadware.org was financed initially by companies including Google, Lenovo, and Sun Microsystems. The site will also include an area where consumers can submit testimonials about their experiences with different software they have downloaded. John G. Palfrey Jr., the executive director of the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard, said, "We want to turn the spotlight on the bad actors, but also give ordinary users a place to go and get an early warning before they download something that might harm their computer." According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, 59 million U.S. adults said their

computers were infected with spyware last year. Data from Consumer Reports indicate that despite consumer spending of \$2.6 billion over the past two years on antivirus and antispyware tools, users still spent \$3.5 billion in damages over the same period due to unwanted software. (*New York Times*, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/25/technology/25spy.html>> [registration required])

MARINE RESEARCHERS TO USE NEW FIBER-OPTIC CONNECTION

■ Officials from research centers on opposite sides of the United States announced a project that will link the two centers with extremely fast connections, allowing researchers at each site to collaborate with colleagues at the other as if they were in the same location. The

e-publishing

KEEPING ONLINE ARTICLES AVAILABLE

Several libraries and publishers are cooperating on a pilot project to ensure access to online journals. Libraries at five universities, as well as the New York Public Library, will work with nine publishers on an archive that will consist of copies of journal articles from participating publishers stored on ten servers at the universities. Those archived copies will be unavailable to the public, but the system will monitor the Web sites of the journals that published those articles. When the system detects that the publisher's online version of an article is unavailable for an extended period of time, the system's governing board will decide whether to make the archived copy available. The goal is to ensure long-term access to journal articles, even when publishers go out of business or computer systems suffer severe outages or losses of data. The effort is important because libraries and publishers are frequently at odds over how and when to provide online access to copyrighted material. Those involved hope the effort will help the groups work together toward a common goal. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <<http://chronicle.com/daily/2006/01/2006012502t.htm>> [subscription required])

BRITISH LIBRARY WORRIES ABOUT ACCESS TO ELECTRONIC CONTENT

In comments submitted to the All Party Parliamentary Internet Group, which is investigating digital rights management (DRM) technologies, the British Library has expressed strong concerns about the long-term viability of electronic resources. Content producers increasingly use DRM to limit unauthorized access to electronic materials, but officials from the library said the protections also threaten legitimate uses of content. Use of materials held by libraries constitutes an important exception to copyright laws, according to Clive Field, the British Library's director of scholarships and collections, but DRM tools inadvertently upset the balance between appropriate exceptions and the rights of content owners. Moreover, long-term access is at risk. Even when copyright expires for a work, the DRM tools applied to its electronic version will still be in place. If the owner cannot be contacted, there may be no way to unlock materials that are no longer covered by copyright. "This will fundamentally threaten the longstanding and accepted concepts of fair dealing and library privilege," according to the British Library's statement, "and undermine . . . legitimate public good access." (*BBC*, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/4675280.stm>>)

Community Cyberinfrastructure for Advanced Marine Microbial Ecology Research and Analysis (CAMERA) project, funded by a \$24.5 million grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, will use the National LambdaRail and other fiber-optic connections to link the J. Craig Venter Institute, in Rockville, Maryland, with the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California at San Diego. Larry L. Smarr, one of the project's leaders, noted that many research programs that involve disparate components are limited by the connections between facilities. CAMERA will allow researchers at the two locations to access and compare vast amounts of data on marine microbes, including genetic codes and data on water conditions at locations around the globe. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <<http://chronicle.com/daily/2006/01/2006011801t.htm>> [subscription required])

ACADEMY AND INDUSTRY STUDY ROI

■ A group of academic and industry researchers will work together on an initiative to create a methodology that organizations can use to study the return on investment (ROI) of technology projects. Governments are increasingly asked to demonstrate the value of taxpayer dollars invested in IT projects. Led by the Center for Technology in Government (CTG) at the State University of New York at Albany and SAP, the effort will include researchers from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, Accenture, Gartner Research, Cisco Systems, and North American and European government agencies. Anthony Cresswell, the deputy director of CTG, said that calculating ROI for IT projects "has been a complex and difficult problem." He said the new effort will "produce results that will make a major contribution to the ability of governments of all types to enhance the political, social, and economic value they obtain from IT investments."

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campus infrastructure

IOWA STATE FIRES UP NEW SUPERCOMPUTER

Researchers at Iowa State University will use a recently acquired supercomputer to work on a map of the genome of the corn plant. The \$1.25 million IBM BlueGene computer, which was financed by the university and the National Science Foundation, can perform up to 5.7 trillion calculations per second, according to Srinivas Aluru, professor of electrical and computer engineering at Iowa State, enabling research projects that otherwise would be impractical due to processing needs. Three other universities are also working on the corn genome. Researchers hope that understanding the genome will allow them to engineer a corn plant "that, for example, produces biodegradable plastic or ethanol," said Patrick Schnable, an agronomy professor and director of the Center for Plant Genomics. The supercomputer will also be used in biomedical research to study protein networks. (*NewsFactor Network*, <http://www.newsfactor.com/news/story.xhtml?story_id=0010001JZMRW>)

Federal Computer Week, <<http://www.fcw.com/article91625-12-06-05-Web>>

DHS GRANT FUNDS OPEN SOURCE RESEARCH

■ The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has awarded a \$1.24 million, three-year contract to improve the quality of open source software. Given the growing reliance on open source technologies for infrastructure that underpins national security, DHS expects to see real benefits from the grant. The award will be split among Stanford University, Symantec, and Coverity, a firm that specializes in code analysis. Rob Rachwald, the senior director of marketing at Coverity, said, "The DHS in many ways is obviously brokering this and they are the main beneficiary." For the grant, Coverity will identify security flaws and risks; Stanford will offer academic analysis of trends and provide opinions about the relative security of various technologies; and Symantec will provide consulting on how governmental agencies can incorporate open source products in a secure fashion into their own applications. (*Internet News*, <<http://www.internetnews.com/security/article.php/3576886>>)

BELLSOUTH FOUNDATION SUPPORTS ONLINE EDUCATION

■ The BellSouth Foundation announced it will spend \$20 million over five years to improve online education and technology access in nine states in the southern United States. The BellSouth Foundation is the charitable arm of BellSouth, which serves the southern region. The foundation is specifically charged with improving education and, according to Mary Boehm, the president of the foundation, decided a year ago to focus its efforts exclusively on virtual learning. The new initiative will fund virtual learning programs and will work to bring technology and Internet access to children in poor areas of the region. A pilot site for the initiative in Atlanta is working on job-shadowing technology and an online algebra course for middle and high school students. Organizers hope to create eight similar sites, one in each of the other states of the program. Boehm said, "We wanted to be sure all kids, not just the privileged, could be part of the virtual learning movement." (*Associated Press*, <<http://www.kentucky.com/mld/kentucky/news/state/13280651.htm>>)