The aim of this week’s lab and tute is to explore the implications of taking traditional, existing documentary forms and ‘repackaging’ them for the Web. Which aspects of a particular form are translated? What added usability is possible? (NB. As I hope was made clear in the related lecture, a *form* refers to the *shape* that information takes, NOT just those documents, like application forms, which require us to provide particular information in specific ‘fields’.)

**PART A: Tutorial Read and Report (TO BE COMPLETED BEFORE ATTENDING THIS WEEK’S SEMINAR)**

Go to: M. McAdams ‘Driving a newspaper on the data highway’
http://www.well.com/user/mmcadams/online.newspapers.html and read that article, along with the one that your tutor has assigned to you.

Be prepared to briefly report back in the tutorial on your views concerning these articles. (Comment on the credentials of the author where this is available. I.e. What authority does she have that may lend authority to her views?)

**PART B: Laboratory Component**

**TASK 1: Online telephone directories**

Australian Telstra’s website is frequently cited as a model of how a web-based information system should work. Evaluate the following functions which can accessed from Telstra’s homepage.

- How does the online version compare with the paper-based version in terms of speed, convenience and value-added information? (i.e. What can be done online which cannot be done using other media?)


Look up the phone number of someone you know.
- How long does it take to find the information you seek?
- How does this compare with a hardcopy telephone directory?
• In what ways is using the online version the same as using a paper-based directory?
• What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of each format?
• What information and services can be accessed online that cannot be conveniently found in the paper form? (Look carefully at the options at in the search function and at the hyperlinks available from this interface.)

OR

2. The Yellow Pages (http://www.yellowpages.com.au/)

Look up the phone number and address for the following:

• A Melbourne restaurant called Bistro Vite
• Any computer retail business located in Caulfield, Victoria

Repeat the questions asked under ‘White Pages’ above.

TASK 2: Online newspapers

“Look, you know some things are going to have to change around here.

Like journalism, for instance.

I'm not talking about grafting an old product onto a new medium, which is, with a few exceptions, what everyone's been trying to do. The Web is jammed with newspapers and magazines taking their paper-based content and repurposing it. (That's the buzzword, I believe, for the online equivalent of leftovers. Hang a few hundred words out there and gussy them up with Hypertext Helper and maybe people will eat it.)

Of course we won't eat it. What are we, stupid?”


The statement above was made in the mid-1990’s. To what extent is it still ‘true’? i.e. Are online newspapers still ‘leftovers… (gussied).up with Hypertext’? Are some newspapers trying to do more than just put their hardcopy content online?
Working in pairs:

1. Go to the following site which lists many of the world’s online newspapers:

http://www.dailyearth.com/ (scroll down the page to the lists at the bottom)

2. Select any 3 newspapers (for example, one national, one capital city based, one regional) and rate them against the following checklist. The list contains features which could be employed by online newspapers to differentiate themselves from their hardcopy versions. (Your tutors will explain what each of these features means, if you are unsure.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
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<td>1. Discussion Forums</td>
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<td>2. Chat Rooms</td>
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<td>3. Related Information for stories</td>
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<td>4. Video</td>
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<td>6. Flash</td>
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<td>7. Other plug-in based technologies</td>
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<td>8. Java Applets</td>
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<td>9. Electronic Mail</td>
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<td>10. Polls with Instantaneous Results</td>
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<td>11. Search Tool</td>
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<td>12. Consumer Services</td>
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<td>13. Sign-up for electronic delivery of a personalized newspaper</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Instantaneous Updates of Information</td>
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Working in pairs:

Using the three papers you explored in Task 2 above, list the ways in which the structure and content of the paper-based newspaper form has been translated to the Web. i.e.

- In what ways is the online version like its paper counterpart?
- Did you find the same sort of content?
- How is it organised?
- Can you find your way to the sections you want in much the same way you would if you had the paper version in front of you?
- In what ways does the online version look the same?
- Do the newspapers you examined display any additional online features not contained in the list above?)
**Working in pairs:**

Can you suggest some ways in which the publishers of online versions might make a profit from these online versions? If publishers can’t find a way to do this, are there any reasons why they should persevere with the web-based version?

**TASK 3: Online CD catalogues**

**Working in pairs:**

1. Draw up with a list of capabilities which might be exploited by an online version of a CD catalogue (i.e. compared with a hardcopy version available under the counter in a CD retailer.)

2. From the merchant’s point of view, what are the advantages of an online catalogue of their goods?

3. The search engines employed by current online CD retailers are catalogues. Explore one or two sites, and see how they compare to the list that you have drawn up, if you haven’t already.

*(Be prepared to share your ideas and findings with other students in the tutorial discussion that follows.)*

**PART C: Tutorial Component**

**PART A: Group Discussion**

In groups of 4 or 5, discuss the following:

1. Would you use an online newspaper on a regular basis? Why? Why not?
2. How might an online newspaper be ‘customised’ to meet your needs?

Be prepared to share your ideas with the tutorial group as a whole

**PART B: Tutorial Discussion**

Briefly report back on the main points of the McAdams article, along with the article assigned to you by your tutor. What authority do they have to state what they say? In what ways have online papers changed since this article was written?
PART C: In Pairs

In groups of 4 or 5,

1. Compare the list of capabilities which you drew up for online CD catalogues. Which features from your list are common at present? How might an online CD catalogue be further ‘customised’ to meet your needs?