
Web watch

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WHAT DAY IS IT?

From the United Nations to local events, web-based “event calendar” websites provide information on annual commemorations. These can provide inspiration for library promotional events.

There is a subject index for United Nations Observances and Anniversaries at <http://www.un.org/en/events/observances/subject.shtml>. International decades are often launched by an international year or day, and a number of them run at the same time. The list of decades with links to resolutions in six languages can be seen at <http://www.un.org/en/events/observances/decades.shtml>. Current decades include “Eradication of Poverty”, “Deserts and the Fight Against Desertification” and “Action for Road Safety”.

The UN international days (<http://www.un.org/en/events/observances/days.shtml>) cover a range of political, social, environmental and health issues. For example, December 2012 includes:

- World AIDS Day;
- International Day for the Abolition of Slavery;
- International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development;
- International Mountain Day.

International days focusing on information, language and literacy (http://www.unac.org/en/news/events/un_days/international_days.asp) include:

- International Mother Language Day;
- World Book and Copyright Day;
- World Press Freedom Day;
- World Information Society Day (formerly World Telecommunication Day);
- International Literacy Day (<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/education-building-blocks/literacy>);
- World Development Information Day.

AUSTRALIAN DAYS

There is a general event list for Australia at <http://australia.gov.au/topics/australian-facts-and-figures/calendars-of-events>. It includes calendars of:

- cultural and religious dates;
- environmental events;
- events for honours and national symbols;
- health weeks and events.

Book Week, promoted by the Children’s Book Council is the longest running children’s festival in Australia (<http://cbc.org.au/bookweek.htm>). It will next be held from 17 to 23 August 2013, with the theme “Read across the universe”. Previous themes are listed at <http://cbc.org.au/previousthemes.htm>.

National Indigenous Literacy Day is celebrated in September. It and other events are listed on the Indigenous Literacy Foundation website (<http://www.indigenoussliteracyfoundation.org.au/fundraising-events.html>).

* All webpages cited were viewed September 2012.

Finally, this year 2012 – the National Year of Reading – has been a wonderful opportunity for libraries and others to promote reading and storytelling (<http://www.love2read.org.au>; <http://www.love2read2012.wikispaces.com>).

MORE BOOK DAYS

The Alexander Library, in New Jersey, was one of many libraries and organisations, particularly in the US, to host a Banned Books Week 2012 (30 September-6 October) event to call attention to the continued challenging and banning of books (http://www.dailytargum.com/news/university/alexander-library-hosts-banned-book-week/article_9baac806-0b74-11e2-a983-0019bb30f31a.html). This year marked the 30th year of BBW and it was widely covered and commented on in social media, extending interest in the issues beyond the week's US origins (<http://www.bannedbooksweek.org/about>; Twitter: #bannedbooks; #bannedbookweek).

Children's Book Week falls in May in the US (<http://www.bookweekonline.com>) and in October in the UK (<http://www.booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading/children/childrens-book-week>).

QR CODES

QR (Quick Response) codes are mobile phone app readable, two-dimensional barcodes that can store URLs, phone numbers and other alphanumeric data. They follow an international standard and so are recognisable around the world. You can make your own at <http://www.goqr.me>; <http://www.qrcode.kaywa.com> and <http://www.qrstuff.com>.

Publishers have added QR codes to book covers to provide marketing information and extra information about the book and its author (<http://www.qrcodepress.com/major-publisher-to-add-qr-codes-to-its-book-covers/8510377>).

The Atlantic magazine is using QR codes to provide readers with access to video interviews and other multimedia content (<http://mashable.com/2012/06/21/the-atlantic-augmented-reality>).

QR codes are used at the University of Technology Sydney library to provide information about library services and resources (<http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/whats-on/social-networking/qr-codes>). Charles Darwin University library uses QR codes to provide information at point of need, eg in the print room linking to printing instructional tutorials. The CDU presentation from the m-libraries conference can be viewed on Slideshare (<http://www.slideshare.net/sallysetsforth/exploring-student-engagement-with-mobile-technologies-at-a-regional-university>).

Murdoch University library has added QR codes to the record displays of their library catalogue, providing information on how to find the item. You can share this information by email, sending it either to yourself or to friends.

The State Library of Queensland (<http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/services/onsite-services/qr-codes>) uses QR codes to link to sound recordings, online journal issues, a PC booking system and a "Ask Us" page for contact with a librarian.

FINANCIAL TRANSFERS

Methods of payment and transfer of money have been changing in Australia. The Reserve Bank has reported that cash is still the most common form of payment by consumers, but that its share of total payments has declined (<http://www.rba.gov.au/publications/bulletin/2011/sep/pdf/bu-0911-7.pdf>), largely due to the increased use of cards and online payments.

Alternatives to the traditional banking sector include PayPal, Flattr and Bitcoin.

PayPal can be used for online payments and transfers. You can store money in a PayPal account (<https://www.paypal-australia.com.au>), but can also link it to a bank account, credit card or debit card, and take the money out as required. In addition, you can use it to accept credit card payments from around the world.

Web watch

Flattr (<http://www.flattr.com/about>) “is the world’s first social micro-payment system”, a way of sharing small amounts of money. Registered users pay a small monthly fee to Flattr, and that money is divided between all the things that they have “flattered” that month. Clicking more sites to donate to means the amount that has been committed is divided among more recipients.

Bitcoin is an electronic cryptographic currency that is transferred over a peer-to-peer network, avoiding the use of financial institutions as intermediaries. The simplest way to acquire bitcoins is through a bitcoin exchange, such as Mt Gox (<https://mtgox.com>), on the transfer of ordinary cash. There are lists of suppliers that accept bitcoins, eg at <https://en.bitcoin.it/wiki/Trade> and <https://www.spendbitcoins.com/places>. Bitcoins are also one way in which people donate to WikiLeaks (<http://www.shop.wikileaks.org/donate>).

Bitcoins have been well described by David Glance in *The Conversation* (<http://theconversation.edu.au/bitcoin-a-pirates-booty-or-the-new-global-currency-3130>) and by Erik Voorhees in *A Business Primer on the Bitcoin Ecosystem* (https://www.bitinstant.com/static/erik_btc_primer_business.pdf). The second Bitcoin conference was held in London in September 2012. One of the speakers was Richard Stallman, founder of the Free Software movement (<http://www.bitcoin2012.com>). My disclosure statement is the same as David Glance’s – I think I own some bitcoins and I am curious about their future – but I have not yet done anything but hoard them.

FREEPINT

FreePint (<http://www.freepint.com>) is a long-running newsletter that “supports the value of information in the enterprise”. It has a basic version that is free, and a subscription service that provides access to additional or deeper articles, reports and packages. Recent articles included a discussion of FirstRain (<http://www.firstrain.com>), a news aggregator that aims to increase current awareness and reduce information overload. FirstRain now offers FirstTweets – “precisely selected Tweets on companies, products, competitors and other relevant topics” as well as the FirstRain Performinator (customer intelligence software).

You can view issues of FreePint going back to 1997 (in plain text or HTML) at <http://www.web.freepint.com/go/newsletter>.

COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

ADVICE FROM WRITERS

Brain Pickings has published a series with advice from writers on how to write. The writers include John Steinbeck, Susan Sontag and Kurt Vonnegut (<http://www.brainpickings.org/index.php/2012/04/03/kurt-vonnegut-on-writing-stories>).

HOW NOT TO MAKE A SPEECH

“The Worst Speech in the World” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LIAI2tEApC>) is described on YouTube as “a whimsical look at the horrible buzzwords used in corporations around the world”. The words and phrases were gathered and presented as an example of what no-one wants a speech to sound like.

VERBING AND SPEAKING WITH CONVICTION

As a fan of verbing (making verbs from nouns – a form of anthimeria), I enjoyed the announcement in the *Daily Mash* of the launch of “legacy” as a verb (<http://www.thedailymash.co.uk/news/society/legacy-launched-as-a-verb-2012081037869>). They observe that some will scoff, but “now is not the time for pedanting, malcontenting or bluestocking”.

Kinetic typography (a video with moving words as art) is used with this recording of Stephen Fry discussing his love of language but distaste for pedantry (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7E-aoXLZGY&list=PLB325DAF2E967CD59&index=1&feature=plpp_video). He upholds the art of verbing, naming Shakespeare as an innovator in this field, and cites commonly used words, such as “sanctioning”, as now familiar examples.

“Speak with Conviction” by Taylor Mali (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OEBZkWkkdZA>) is a clever and entertaining use of kinetic typography to talk about the way we speak. You can also hear him read his poem “I’ll Fight you for the Library” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2qXgPfMGG8E>) and discuss “The impotence of proofreading” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OonDPGwAyfQ>).

TYPOGRAPHY AND SHORTHAND

The “I love typography” website discusses “The origins of ABC”, providing a visual history of the origins of the letters we use (<http://ilovetypography.com/2010/08/07/where-does-the-alphabet-come-from>).

Although shorthand use has significantly declined, here is a website aiming to “keep New Era alive” – <http://www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk>.

ART AND MUSIC

GOOGLE ART PROJECT

The Google Art Project, launched on 1 February 2011, is an online platform through which people can see high-resolution images of artworks from the project’s partner institutions (<http://www.googleartproject.com>). Visitors can “walk through” the museums using Google’s Street View technology. Six Australian galleries have joined the project (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-04-04/google-art-project-australia/3932000>) – the National Gallery of Australia, the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the National Gallery of Victoria, the Melbourne Museum and Griffith University’s Rock Art Research Centre. The National Gallery in Canberra will be showcasing a painting by Clifford Possum.

You can browse the website by Collection, Artist and Artwork. There is also an education section with an introduction to art and some fun activities, including matching the painting of a shoe to the wearer (<http://www.googleartproject.com/education/expert>). The DIY section asks “If you could bring any work of art home, how you would display it?” and “What would you wear in your designed interior? We assembled our outfit on Polyvore: http://www.polyvore.com/roger_angelica/set?id=44298658” (<http://www.googleartproject.com/education/DIY>).

In “My Galleries” you can also save artworks to create your own personalised collection which you can share with family and friends.

INFOGRAPHICS

Infographics present complex information quickly and clearly using brief descriptive text and engaging graphics. Visual.ly (<http://www.visual.ly>) “is the largest data visualization showcase in the world”. It is a source of infographics and also provides free tools for creating infographics.

A short selection of infographics on the web include:

- “How to build a taxonomy”, from Straits Knowledge (http://www.greenchameleon.com/gc/blog_detail/taxonomy_development_infographic). It has also been expanded into an interactive presentation (<http://damfoundation.org/2012/05/how-to-build-a-taxonomy>);
- “How a new word enters an *Oxford Dictionary*” (<http://oxforddictionaries.com/words/how-a-new-word-enters-an-oxford-dictionary>);
- “E-books in America” (<http://printmediacentr.com/2012/05/infographic-e-books-in-america>);
- “The internet a decade later” (<http://mashable.com/2012/08/22/the-internet-a-decade-later>);
- “How social media distracts you at work” (<http://mashable.com/2012/09/24/social-media-work-distractions>);

Web watch

- “The science of Star Trek”, from most plausible to least plausible ideas (<http://www.geeksaresexy.net/2012/06/04/the-science-of-star-trek-infographic>). See also the NASA discussion on this topic (http://www.nasa.gov/topics/technology/features/star_trek.html). For a different perspective, you can read how judges have cited Star Trek (<http://io9.com/5940680/8-ways-that-judges-have>).

FOR FUN

I am not really a fan of tattoos, but these tattooed librarians are very creative (<http://www.mentalfloss.com/blogs/archives/141087>).