



My directory

There are fixed physical limits on the size of all the collections I have built up. For instance, in the days when I used to collect ties, the size of my collection was limited by the size of my tie rack. (Nowadays, I never wear a tie, and my tie rack holds only a black tie bought the last time my mother-in-law complained that she had a funny turn one night). These days, my main collection is of credit cards, but, feeling that it is shade excessive to carry two wallets, my collection is limited to the number that I can squeeze into a single wallet. I find that the maximum number of cards that I can force into a single slot is three. With eight slots, that limits me to 24 cards, which, alas, prevents me adding the Elvis card and the Rolling Stones card and the affinity cards issued by every football club in the land. Since one space has to be taken up with my library card, that figure effectively is reduced to 23.

I also collect paperbacks, and the size of my collection is limited by the length of my bookshelves. But, I hear you complain, the correct behaviour for paperback collectors is to make a periodic cull and send the read-and-never-to-be-read-again books to a charity collection. Ah, I reply, I do understand that, but I should have explained that, while I collect paperbacks, I never actually read them. I split than into fiction and non-fiction, and admire the spines, and think to myself that I really must get around to reading them, but the collection just grows and grows.

I am also nearing the physical limit on my CD towers. I suppose that I could make a cull of my CDs, but I suspect that the collectors for the Home for Distressed Laundrymaids would sniff as they laid out the stalls for their jumble-sale, "Oh no, not another complete set of Mahler's symphonies". Without a cull, I have space for another five, but the pace of my buying has slowed down, now that Sir Simon Rattle has left the CBSO and before he has

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started work with the Berlin Philharmonic.

I have become just as obsessive about collecting website addresses. Here there is no physical limit, although any day now I fear that my screen may flash the message, "WARNING. DRIVE C WILL EXPLODE IF ANY MORE ENTRIES ARE ADDED TO FILE DOTCOM".

How many addresses do I have in my directory? Counting them is a tedious business, making the eye-balls roll back into the head as I scroll down the screen, but I would guess that by now I must have collected around 12,000 addresses. 12,000, I hear you gasp, but where do you get them all? It is not so difficult, I reply, for I pick them up from newspapers, from television commercials, from the boundary hoardings at cricket matches, and from the back pages of *Private Eye*. Every reference I see I enter in a directory called Dotcom, listed in alphabetical order under categories, with a few words of description alongside.

The computer nerds amongst you might wonder why I have built up a directory of 12,000 entries, when I could simply use a search engine to make my way to the websites. There are two reasons. One is

that I need a nudge for direction, since I lack the creative spirit to think of a new subject. For example, I would never have the inspiration to watch for the Second Coming of Christ, whereas adding www.messiahcam.org to my directory prompts me to watch the web-camera focused on the Golden Gate, Jerusalem. The other reason is every time I have used the search engine I seem to have uncovered hundreds and hundreds of web addresses, most of them for pornographic sites from Mississippi.

Keeping my directory in order is not easy. I started off with 20 categories including one category, Sundries, which just keeps on growing. The category People, is just as bad. I really should break this into sub-categories, such as sports stars, sites, film and TV stars, and Literary Legends.

Also, should the Association site be classed under Finance, or stay under the Organisations category, along with the Druid order and the National Rifle Association? I also have trouble with my simple descriptions. For example, the description on my first entry under the heading Religion may read 'God site', and my next entry on the same subject shows a description 'More God', the third entry 'Still more God', then 'Even more God'. I also need some symbol to indicate that it is a waste of time accessing a website, either because the site is slow and clunky (as in the case with www.rumbleybuildsoc.com) or because it asks for my e-mail address or credit card number before I can explore further.

In fact, accessing most of the websites is a waste of time, serving only to enrich B... A tiny percentage deserve a visit, but as the months go by and my directory keeps growing, I tend to forget which are worth visiting and which should be shunned.

Maybe my forgetfulness is the true constraint on the file size of my directory.