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What about the users?

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Are Academic Libraries really user facing?

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The impact of increasing diversity

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How extended is your family?

+ *Supporting HE in FE*

Delivering services to front line practitioners

Marketing library services

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Editorial

Recent *Relays* have dealt with library and information professional futures, strategic issues faced by academic libraries and the new environments in which they operate. It is probably about time to focus on the user – the theme of this issue.

To generalise greatly, two particular strands seem to me to emerge from our contributors – the increasing complexity of the client base, and the corresponding need to segment this, and employ the techniques of marketing, in order to meet this diversity of need. The impact of all this on service design and delivery, and on LIS professionals, leads us back to the themes of our previous issues.

As usual we have commissioned a range of review articles and case studies to produce an appropriate mix of theory and practice, with the aim both of stimulating reflection on current issues and providing interesting examples of good operational practice. I am also glad to include some feedback from actual users.

This is the largest *Relay* we have produced, with a slightly different look, reflecting UC&R's new logo and website (<http://www.ucrg.org.uk>). It is also being distributed along with a members' survey questionnaire and details of election arrangements for the new UC&R committee. All these factors mean that it appears rather late and without the usual Bulletin Board – apologies for this to readers and contributors.

Andrew Martin
 Editor, *Relay*

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Are academic libraries really user facing?

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When I was first asked to write a short article on this topic my instinct told me that academic libraries probably pride themselves on being user-facing, and undoubtedly spend considerable staff time on trying to improve in this respect, but on the whole they are not as user-focused as they think they are or as they ought to be. When I thought a little more, however, I decided that in the last couple of decades the services on offer in academic libraries really have become immeasurably more user-focused than they used to be. So I adjusted my views, and began to think that it is the ways in which we communicate and promote our services to users, rather than the services themselves, which may not yet be as user-facing as they could be. More a matter of presentation than of substance. I also thought of one vital area of library work where perhaps a rather misplaced interpretation of user needs which was prevalent a decade ago has now contributed to landing us communally in a bit of a pickle. So this is not as clear-cut a topic as one might think.

Let's start with the positive. There has definitely been a sea change in the last ten to fifteen years in the priorities which academic libraries have set themselves. Where collection development and the custodial role of libraries still tended to hold sway right into the nineteen-eighties, now the users stand much more at centre stage. Libraries make consistent and largely successful efforts to familiarise themselves with the courses they support and the research needs of academic staff they serve. Long ago we stopped using staff structure concepts such as "bibliographical services" in favour first of "reader services" and then, no doubt in

deference to the proliferation of electronic information sources, "user services".

We have library staff sitting on just about every university committee or working group, rubbing shoulders with academic colleagues and students and picking up ideas all the time as to how we can and should improve our services to suit their needs. We use printed guides and websites to market our services, and we include students and academic staff wherever possible in our internal project groups and think tanks. We invite constant feedback from users via notice boards, websites, and library news sheets. In common with many other professions, usually described as service industries but also including politicians in recent years, academic libraries have moved rapidly into a world of user satisfaction surveys, questionnaires, opinion polls, and even focus groups. A quick email survey of SCONUL chiefs (Society of College, National and University Libraries) in late August 2002 brought 64 replies in just a couple of weeks. Five simple questions were asked and the results were impressive:

- over 86% of respondents regularly conduct user satisfaction surveys in their library
- over 73% have held user focus groups at one time or another
- over 85% feed the results back, warts and all, to their users
- 80% follow up the surveys with action plans to address weaknesses
- at least 70% convey the action plans to their users.

I think it would be hard to find many professions that could boast this level of responsiveness to users, and what is really heartening is the high percentage who follow the whole exercise through to the extent of reporting back to users the actions taken as a result of their comments on the service. There is clearly an excellent track record on our attempts to make our services user-facing.

What about the way in which we present our services then? In my view that is where there are still weaknesses. Four years ago I joined a library (London School of Economics) that was trying to be very user-oriented but was not always succeeding in its aims. One of the conclusions I reached was that, try as we might, as librarians we find it difficult to communicate from a user's point of view, never mind addressing the standpoints of multiple users with different needs. When faced with introducing a new service, writing a user guide, or creating library web pages, our tendency is always to stick on safe and familiar ground and describe what we are about: our collections, our opening hours, our services one by one, and goodness even our rules and regulations. We set out our wares and then sit back and expect our users to come along and choose what they need. Two years ago at the LSE we created a new post of Communications and Marketing Manager and appointed a professional with a marketing rather than a library background. We have not looked back since. She has helped us to transform every piece of communication we have with our users. We have realised that we often had a tendency to use librarianship jargon that meant nothing to the user, and that we preferred to start from where we felt comfortable, expecting the user to follow us. Although we still have room for improvement at LSE, we now know that we can do better with help from experts outside the profession. So let's look more closely at the issue of presentation.

The user-friendliness of many academic library websites has greatly improved in recent years, but from a user point of view there is patchiness, with some real howlers (see below). A quick trawl of about thirty sites at the end of August showed commendable efforts in over half of them at being informative in ways that suit the user. Often there is a link either on the

home page or only one click away to an email form for feedback to the library. Many of the sites arrange their content in user-friendly ways, often targeting different types of user in different links: for example, part-time students, postgraduate students, undergraduates, distance learning students, users with disabilities, staff users, and so on. One library even includes mature students in its choice of links to click onto. So there are signs of genuine efforts to deliver not only the library services themselves, but also our promotion of these services, in a user-facing way.

However, often the websites are patchy when put to the user-friendly test, and some really fail rather badly. There is still a tendency to describe where we are coming from rather than where the user is. Thus rather too many university library websites still look stiff and textual, describe size and scope of collections on the front page, give prominent links to “rules and regulations”, “policy documents”, and “mission statements” (nothing wrong with a mission statement if it is a quote on your home page, but a stodgy link which invites you to click onto the “library’s mission statement” is quite another matter). These are not how the user thinks and they do not address user needs. Worse still, some websites use librarianship jargon which will simply not be understood by users; for example, “borrowing regulations” (why not just “borrowing books?”), “holdings” (yes!), “staff structure” (why not just “library staff?”), and “current awareness”. A number of sites I looked at had strange and inexplicable (from a user point of view) acronyms and titles, some on their very front page: for example RSLP, Archives Hub, BOPCRIS, WATCH, SCONUL Scheme and M25 Scheme. How could users know which of these will be of relevance to them and are therefore worth clicking onto? Why not use language that tells the user what these are? So there is still some way to go in the user-facing stakes. Perhaps it is time for all academic libraries to recruit a student or two on their web editorial boards.

The same, no doubt, goes for their printed user guides and leaflets, not to mention the slide presentations given to users by well-meaning library staff. But these are not cardinal sins, and it is important to attend to our custodial role too. Indeed, it is possible to bend over too far backwards in our attempts to simplify things for the user as the following example illustrates.

I referred in my opening paragraph to an issue where in my view librarians made what has with hindsight turned out to be a rather fundamental mistake in their calculations. During the nineteen-eighties and nineties, some libraries developed a tendency to skimp on cataloguing standards, sometimes paring descriptions down to a bare minimum. This phenomenon was particularly prevalent in public libraries, where staff resources were very squeezed and much of the material was probably regarded as dispensable (especially fiction), but it also happened to varying degrees in academic libraries. Many librarians felt that as long as a catalogue entry was sufficiently detailed to allow a reader to find the book through an author, title or subject search in the online catalogue, this would be good enough. Even when full catalogue entries were available via cataloguing co-operatives, some libraries chose to import shortened versions. This policy shift away from the custodial role and the standards that go with it must have seemed quite justified at the time. Budgets were struggling to keep pace with published output, demand for services was growing, and it was perhaps tempting to shift scarce staff resource out of cataloguing and into user services. As a profession we were not to know back then that in the very early twenty-first century there would be the technical capability and the perceived and expressed user need to link catalogues together to save search time, to embed within one online environment links to another system altogether, to create seamless movement from retrieval of a catalogue record to request for the material via another system without having to re-key the search terms,

interoperability in a word. And what is the major obstacle to the creation of such a fluid and joined-up information environment? Lack of consistent standards of cataloguing of course. Unfortunately, we may have here an example of one seemingly user-neutral or even user-friendly decision taken by many libraries which has unwittingly led to a blockage when the profession has come to identify a new and unforeseen user requirement which its previous action has rendered difficult to achieve. We should probably have looked to our backroom activities better after all.

What do I conclude from this? In general, that academic libraries have in fact moved with the times, and that they are constantly redoubling their efforts to interpret and serve their users’ needs in more effective ways. Their services on the whole are extremely user-focused these days, although there is always room for improvement and librarians recognise this in the resources they are willing to devote to seeking and addressing user feedback. Presentation of our services to users is an area of some weakness still, and we can rise to the challenge better if we genuinely try to put ourselves in the user’s shoes; we can be helped in this by people outside of our profession who are trained to start from the audience and work from there. The salutary tale of the loss of perfect cataloguing shows how one attempt to devote more resources to user services may inadvertently have caused a barrier to unforeseen user-friendly improvements some years later. But many professional librarians are poised as we speak to use their considerable skills to overcome the challenges of interoperability, once more in order to render their services more user-facing. Clearly our best bet for the future is to try harder still to make our libraries more user-facing, while endeavouring to ensure that the infrastructure activities with which we are traditionally associated are not allowed to slip because they too have their part to play in the service of our users.

Increasing student diversity and its impact on academic library and information services

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There are some persuasive statistics available to illustrate the speed of growth and increased diversity of the student body in academic institutions. For example, in 1962 there were 200,000 full time students in UK universities, compared with 1.7 million students in colleges and universities today. Between 1989 and 2002 student numbers had increased by 88%. In the same period the money spent by government per student fell by 37%, this was on top of a 20% cut between 1976 and 1989. Current government targets, of 50% of people under 30 experiencing higher education by 2010, suggest that this trend will continue. Latest figures provided by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) indicate that institutions are having some success in meeting the targets set. In 2001 an additional 18,000 students entered higher education. This figure includes an increase in mature entrants of 9.7% on the previous year.¹

The increase in numbers masks a more complex picture across the sector. Although additional numbers have been recorded, some subject disciplines have suffered significant decreases in recruitment. These areas include many traditional stalwarts such as environmental and other physical sciences, town and country planning, chemistry and engineering. The disciplines which are making up the shortfall in numbers and are enjoying notable increases in

recruitment include education, media studies, cinematics, nursing and music. There is no doubt that these type of fluctuations are leading institutions to think more clearly in terms of market forces. Professor Michael Stirling, Vice Chancellor of the University of Birmingham – a traditional red-brick institution which has recently launched a BA in applied golf management studies – identified this in very clear terms:

“We need to get faster, we need to be more dynamic – track what’s happening with student choices, with aspirations where jobs are going, what’s seen as exciting, and make sure we’re offering courses that match”.²

In order to meet government targets, many institutions are also accepting a larger proportion of home applicants. As recently as 1989, institutions accepted only 60% of those applying for places – this compares with 79% in 2000. The widening participation agenda, which is central to this change in policy, has an inevitable and largely welcome impact on the diversity of the student population. However, it has also placed strain on the existing infrastructure. It’s interesting that a recent national audit office report stated that as many as 86% of higher education institutions reported the introduction of basic study skills programmes. This type of development is a clear response to the increasing literacy and numeracy needs of new students. New approaches to learning and teaching, often making significant use of newly developed learning technologies, have been introduced across the sector. This development has been, in part, in response to the increase in class sizes

and to the increase in the number of students who require remote access to materials. The requirement for off-campus access to learning materials and resources is not limited to traditional distance learners but can also be the result of work and home commitments as well as personal preference. The reference to personal preference is an important one. Students in the UK pay the highest tuition fees of any European country and leave university with average debts of £10,000. It’s not surprising that students increasingly see themselves as customers of the sector and as deserving of flexible, customer-focused services.

The changes described above have resulted in a range of responses by academic library and information services as well as active anticipation of further change. In fact, the ability to work with and manage change has become one of the most important skills required of those entering the profession. The government agenda to widen participation has resulted in a richly diverse student population and no excuse for providing standardised “one-size-fits-all” services and facilities. Library and information services now need to present and explain themselves in ways which are relevant to the individual and not to the stereotypical “18 year old...white male living away from home having done three A-levels”.³ They also need to be as quick in responding to change as their parent organisations hope to be – with stock, services and staff specialisms mirroring new areas of strength rather than reflecting old favourites.

Although the whole sector has grown and diversified, institutions vary

considerably in terms of mission, student population and availability of funding. Developments in library services obviously reflect these variations. However, it's possible to highlight a range of developments which are present to some extent across the sector and which can be described in terms of variations to core services, provision of innovative or specialist services and increased co-operation with partner institutions.

A recent survey into the needs of part time and distance learners, carried out by Fytton Rowland and Iris Rubbert, reported that:

“Existing library services often only need to make small operational changes the better to meet the needs of part time and distance learning students. In some institutions, library staff have the potential to transform the learning experience of these students from pain to pleasure”.⁴

Students responding to Rowland and Rubbert's survey identified geography and time as the two main barriers to the use of learning resources. It's probably fair to say that these barriers are not confined to part-time and distance learners but are typical of all students with home, work and other commitments on top of their academic responsibilities. The survey results highlighted a number of basic practical changes to core services that can address these barriers, including allowing equipment bookings over the telephone, closer liaison between departmental and library staff to ensure availability of information, better introductory sessions on the availability of subject-specific information services, and subject-related gateway services. The survey highlighted difficulties faced by mature and/or part-time students in

copied with the information overload often associated with the increased use of ICT. One question posed by the report's authors is how much responsibility library and information services should take for this development and for creating and optimising an appropriate learning environment. There is no doubt that the increased use of ICT in learning and teaching, which is in part a reaction to increased student numbers, has led to the need for library and information staff to work much more collaboratively with teaching colleagues in teams which facilitate and support learning.

Increased opening hours were also cited as critical by a number of the respondents to Rowland and Rubbert's survey, with particular emphasis on the need for extended opening hours to be available when more traditional programmes of study may have ceased for summer vacations. Of course, any extension to opening hours carries considerable additional costs and the funding for such developments is dependent upon institutional support. However, with the development of reliable self-service technology it's possible to extend a range of services with limited staffing. For example, a number of university learning and information services, including those at Sheffield Hallam and Liverpool John Moores, have developed 24-hour provision, offering facilities such as access to IT, self-service printing, and self-service loans and returns, which are staffed purely on a security basis. With comprehensive web-based services, developed as interactive tools, services are able to expand physical and virtual access whilst controlling staff costs.

The use of web-based delivery has been particularly effective in the development of services for off-campus users. In addition to

providing web pages with standard information which often mirrors printed guides, an increasing number of academic library and information services are also providing more interactive facilities, such as on-line help, interactive guides and quizzes and information skills tutorials. One of the relatively recent and exciting developments has been the work carried out to evaluate how best electronic resources can be linked to university and college virtual learning environments (VLEs). A range of projects, funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee, (JISC) has published some initial recommendations and developed models of good practice. The eventual aim is to provide a fully integrated online learning environment with features such as one-stop access, individualisation for the learner and universal accessibility.

An off-campus user can, by definition, be any student who chooses not to make a physical visit to a library or learning resource centre. Special services to distance-learning students, which are well-established in a number of academic library and information services, aim to meet the needs of students for whom geographical distance makes physical access impossible. Such services can often be a combination of the very hi-tech (online chat, interactive tutorials) and the low-tech (postal loans, telephone enquiry services). These services are typical of an increasing tendency to acknowledge the diverse range of the student population by providing targeted services, often with dedicated staff. A number of academic library services also provide targeted support for students with physical disabilities. Such services typically include more flexible circulation services, specialist equipment and software, specialist staff or the presentation of information in different formats. This

type of approach is particularly important in relation to the requirements set by the Special Educational Needs Discrimination Act 2001 (SENDA), which comes into full force in September 2002. SENDA will require educational institutions to take reasonable steps to ensure that, in relation to student services, disabled students are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with students who are not disabled.

The developments described above have also led to a closer consideration of the benefits to be gained from collaboration by making scarce resources go further, by sharing staff expertise and training costs, or by providing physical library facilities to students who are studying away from their home institution. It's common for academic libraries to be members of collaborative groups which share resources and skills in this way and which have a range of access and referral agreements as well as joint staff training programmes and collaborative purchasing agreements. In recent years this local collaboration has been enhanced by national collaborative initiatives such as the UK Libraries Plus scheme, which ensures external borrower status in participating library services across the UK for students on distance, part-time and sandwich programmes.⁵ Of course, collaboration is not limited to activity within the academic sector. Collaborative activity has also been driven by the government's lifelong learning agenda and, in relation to libraries, has been articulated in the Library and Information Commission

Report *Empowering the learning community*, which highlighted the need for greater collaboration between libraries in the public and academic sectors in order to open up access to learning.⁶ The longer-term impact of such recommendations is dependent upon the development of regional agencies and on fundamental issues such as funding streams across different sectors.

One size does not fit all students in academic library and information services. Lifelong learners are liable to step in and out of the academic sector at different points in their lives and are very likely to be under pressure of time, geography and finance. They may need to access several different library services either physically or electronically in order to make the best use of the resources available in a region and may need help with specific study skills along the way. They will pay a level of fees for the services they receive that leaves them in debt and ensures that they see themselves as paying customers with the rights that go along with that status. They may be mature, be working full or part time as they study, be studying at a distance or have a physical disability which means they need to access specialist services. It's likely that they will be in a very large student cohort and be presented with a range of teaching and resource support material via a virtual learning environment which requires IT skills and access to the relevant equipment and services. Pressure of time may mean that they want to access such facilities on a 24-hour basis.

Academic library and information services have already gone a long way to meet the needs of this student body, either by adapting traditional services, introducing new and targeted initiatives or working in closer collaboration with other service providers. Although variations in recruitment across the sector mean that there are many uncertainties about future change, the continuing government focus on widening participation suggests that the trends of growth and diversification will continue and that library and information services will need to continue to be flexible in their anticipation and reaction to this change.

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How extended is your family?

Professor Andrew McDonald
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You're not one of us

Academic libraries have for many years had policies for what we call "external" users. This is a quaint if rather dated term, referring at best to users who are rather different and at worst to people who are quite outside or even excluded from our libraries. Nevertheless, it suggests these external people might derive some benefit from using our services.

Meeting the needs of our "internal" users or primary clientele is a significant challenge in itself, but providing services for external users who are outside the traditional institutional framework can be an even more daunting task. We probably know much less about them and there may be considerable barriers to overcome. We could dwell on the definition of internal and external users, but I suspect that different institutions would draw the line in different places.

But why would a busy university library want to open its doors to external users and why might they be important to us? Does the university library have a broader role in the community beyond the learners, teachers and researchers within the institution? I fear I will provide more questions than answers, although I will point to some interesting initiatives in the University of Sunderland as examples of reaching out to the broader community.

The Government's challenge

A significant driver for change will be the Government's Strategic Review of Higher Education due in December this year. We are already witnessing a focused debate on some of the issues that will influence this wide-ranging review and these issues are pertinent to a discussion about the broader role of university libraries.

Social inclusion is a major thrust of current Government policy and central to this is providing better opportunities for more people to learn throughout their lives. The Government has an ambitious target of extending participation in higher education to more young people so that 50% of those aged 18 to 30 enjoy the opportunity and benefits of higher education by 2010. This policy is to expand numbers and widen access to provide more opportunities for young people from low income backgrounds and with non-traditional qualifications. The Government wishes to ensure real equality of opportunity in the sector and to build on the progress that has been made in tackling inequalities in participation for women, mature students and certain ethnic minority groups.

Another challenge is strengthening the relationship between higher education institutions and their regional economies and communities. The Government requires the sector to improve its links with businesses, employers, Regional Development Agencies, public services, schools, further education colleges and local people.

A key question is how to ensure a suitable funding system to underpin the sector and its consumers and yet recognise the heterogeneity within the system.

Universities are doing all right

But, as Universities UK points out, there is a real danger in getting lost in rhetoric and in assuming the sector is failing in some way. Universities *have* successfully responded to these ministerial requirements albeit against increasing odds. Vice Chancellors are keen to point to the progress that has been made in widening participation and in unlocking the potential of the poorer sections of society: the UK has one of the highest higher education participation rates in the OECD. Universities continue to produce world class research and to support excellent teaching. The sector has worked better with industry and the wider community and has increased the numbers of overseas students.

The overriding concern is that the sector is in deficit and the current financial position is unsustainable: higher education needs additional expenditure on, and a better system for, student support.

However, there is broad agreement that significant change is needed if we are to achieve a 50% participation target. Where will these new students come from, how will they be funded and what demands will they place of the system? Indeed, we may need to redefine what we mean by participation since new learners may engage with us in different ways by accessing bundles of modules and through different modes of delivery.

There are concerns about the economic viability of widening access and lifelong learning within current funding regimes. Universities committed to lifelong learning are well aware that recruiting and retaining a greater diversity of students has significant resource implications. Government now seems

to appreciate that supporting students from non traditional backgrounds may cost as much as 30% more than our traditional cohorts.

Enough of this spirited exchange between Government and the universities. There are, however, some clear messages here for the sector and its libraries. Attracting new students to meet the 50% participation target and responding to the needs of local commerce and communities are both formidable challenges. University libraries must play their part in reaching out to the broader community. In doing so, we may place rather less emphasis on who might be regarded as internal and external as we recognise an extended family of customers who simply access our services in various ways.

University libraries have done a great deal

But university libraries should feel justifiably proud of a whole range of initiatives concerned with broadening access to a wider community of users, particularly in recent years. We have arguably done more than most in higher education in this respect and often without the benefit of institutional encouragement and additional resources.

Just as an example, the library at the University of Sunderland reaches out to new users in a number of ways as indicated below. Indeed, as a philosophy, we encourage our partners and the community to turn to the university library for access to information, knowledge, learning and, increasingly, for information skills. We believe that libraries have an active role to play in encouraging learning and research in addition to our work in supporting the scholarly activities of the University. Many other university libraries will have similar initiatives and further innovative examples.

Providing new services to support the growing number of our distance learners around the globe

Enabling our users to have greater access to other higher education libraries in the UK through regional and national schemes, such as UK Libraries Plus

Encouraging staff and students in the region's further education colleges into the University Library through TWIRL (Tyne & Wear Information Resources for Learning – a joined up network of further education libraries in the region with the University Library)

Enabling staff and students from franchise colleges and those concerned with Foundation Degree to use the University Library

Encouraging lifelong learners in the City into the University Library through LASH (Libraries Access Sunderland Scheme – a partnership between the college, public and university libraries in Sunderland which opens up all the libraries to everyone in the City)

Providing services for local health trusts through service contracts

Reaching out to local commerce and industry, particularly SMEs, by offering library and information services

Offering access and information skills training to local professional groups, such as solicitors

Providing information skills training for local schools and QTS testing for school teachers

Providing IT training for school teachers, librarians and local authority staff (NOF-funded)

Running a literacy scheme for a local women's group

No one said it would be easy

There can be little doubt that we will see a greater diversity of learners in higher education in the next ten years than we did in the last ten, and we can reflect on some of the issues and difficulties in reaching out to new users beyond the institution's traditional customers.

Government targets

A number of university libraries welcome customers who might be regarded as external in other institutions. However, I would suggest that this experience only gives us a flavour of the real issues in responding to the step change in participation required by the Government without a promise of additional resources except that which is released by restructuring.

University libraries have a proud history of collaborative working and can demonstrate many initiatives to broaden participation. Despite all these achievements, it is disappointing that our role continues to be underestimated, sometimes by our institutions, and, more seriously, within Government circles. There is an important message here for our profile.

In its influential *Empowering the Learning Community* Report, Resource recommend that public and education libraries in a region should work together to promote learning opportunities for people and suggested that more training is needed both for users and library staff. The Report, subsequently endorsed by ministers, highlighted the importance of cross-sector library collaboration and of cross-domain partnerships between libraries, archives and museums for reaching a broader community of learners.

University support

We have seen a rush of university mission statements in the last decade with ambitions for lifelong learning and community relevance. But what do these terms really mean and does the approach pay? It can be harder to demonstrate high quality in institutions committed to broadening access because of the nature of some of the indicators used. Indeed, at times of financial difficulty, some institutions have placed a greater emphasis on consolidation, competition and exclusivity rather than on expansion, collaboration and inclusion. The greatest difficulty reported by library managers has been the lack of institutional encouragement and the absence of any investment to enable initiatives to broaden access. Clearly, the challenge will lie in the development of new services for a wider community whilst maintaining our existing provision.

More diverse customers

Our new customers will have a wide range of abilities, backgrounds and preparedness for higher education. They will have different expectations and requirements and will certainly need more support. As Government has come to realise, diversity is not cheap; there are considerable resource implications in broadening access, particularly in recruiting and retaining a greater range of students.

We will need to redesign many of our services, realign our rules and regulations and provide more support for the new users. There will be demand beyond 24x7 access for 24x7 support. We must develop new services to support our learners at home, at work, in the community and in other centres of learning. It is likely that new learners will require a mixture of on and off campus services and of traditional and electronic services in order to meet their

particular learning styles and lifestyles. Library staff will require diversity training and a greater awareness of disability and learning differences.

External users very often come from different organisational cultures and have very different requirements from the traditional academic community, being groomed essentially in helping themselves. They often want more help than we can give at times when we are unable to give it and they need this help on an individual basis. For example, hospital doctors don't expect to photocopy materials for themselves and managers in SMEs don't expect to wait for information. Faced with growing pressure from our existing customers, it can be difficult for staff to give distance learners and other new learners the attention they deserve. Some libraries who have developed services for their distance learners report the need to change the attitudes of staff and the culture of the organisation, and that on-campus learners themselves begin to find these new services attractive.

Culture change

A key question is changing the culture within the library so that staff have the knowledge, attitudes, motivation and organisation necessary to meet the needs of a broader range of users. Significant drivers for change include a new mission and strategy, strong leadership, managerial support, additional resources, staff training for developing new skills, and revised staff structures and organisation. When developing a new range of services, such as distance learner services, university libraries sometimes set up special developmental units with a view to mainstreaming the new services in due course.

Lifelong learners

Through the Libraries Access Sunderland Scheme we sought to encourage community-wide lifelong learning through the City's libraries. Our experience showed that cross sector collaboration of this type need not be difficult or expensive and, more importantly, did not result in the library becoming overwhelmed by new users. Indeed, we found the perceived difficulties involved tended to be exaggerated. Good staff training was crucial throughout the libraries to underpin effective networking.

Our experience of putting libraries at the forefront of supporting LearnDirect learners similarly showed the importance of good staff training. Through new training programmes, we ensured that staff were fully briefed about this new learning development and about the needs of lifelong learners from the community which are very different from those of our traditional students. The new learners appreciated libraries as helpful, customer-focused services where they could learn in their own way, at their own pace and in their own time.

Lifelong learners face a number of barriers in using our libraries. They may lack the confidence and skills necessary to use our services. There may be pressures arising from their lifestyle and from managing their time commitments, and they may find our opening hours, services and staff attitudes unhelpful. Their motivation is for informal learning rather than our more rigid approach with detailed learning outcomes and formal assessment. Unintentionally, we may have added some technological barriers with card entry systems, automated printing systems and authentication protocols.

Copyright

The concept of copyright and fair dealing can be a difficult to communicate even to our traditional clients, but ensuring compliance with, for example, the new EU Directive regarding commercial copying will be even more difficult to a broader constituency of users, some of whose activities might well be regarded as commercial.

Electronic services

Many of our new readers want access to our comprehensive electronic services, but very often the licenses under which we purchased the databases preclude access by what the suppliers regard as unregistered or external users. While there is evidence that some suppliers are loosening up in this respect, particularly vendors of electronic

journals, others are restrictive to the point of watermarking printed output.

Ironically, access to e-sources may become even more difficult for the extended family of users with the introduction of Managed Learning Environments. Increasingly, authorised users will access our e-resources through the portal rather than directly, and so unregistered external users will be unable to access these electronic services. Electronic learning has tremendous potential for reaching new learners, but our experience indicates that e-learners require rather more support than we once imagined and they demand it on a 24x7 basis. Even though we teach e-commerce in our universities, we have a great deal to learn about how to make online learning available in an attractive way.

Conclusion

University libraries must follow the mission and direction of their parent institutions which themselves are likely to be significantly challenged if not fundamentally changed by the Government's strategic review. Libraries have a huge role to play in broadening access and social inclusion, but opening our doors more widely is not without difficulty or implication. It would certainly be instructive to evaluate our experience of welcoming external users, at least as a way of planning services for an age of 50% participation and stronger links with industry and the community. Suddenly, meeting the needs of an extended family of customers, many of whom we have regarded as external in the past, may become crucial both to our core business and to our survival in the coming period.

***Access and identity:
 Delivering HE in the FE environment***

**Martin Foy, Chris
 Spencer, David Ball,
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Background

A recent demand study, commissioned by Bournemouth University and others from KPMG, identified significant potential for growth in HE participation in the sub-region of Dorset, South Wiltshire and South Somerset (DSW). The sub-region is diverse: a large conurbation in the Southeast, a predominantly rural economy elsewhere. Transport infrastructure is poor. HE does not have a high profile outside the conurbation.

The challenge therefore is to raise the profile of HE in the sub-region, whilst

making HE more accessible and flexible, minimising dependence on time and location, and maximising the quality of learning opportunities.

In order to meet the challenge, a bid was made to HEFCE by Bournemouth University and The Arts Institute, Bournemouth, on behalf of the other providers of HE in the sub-region (Bournemouth and Poole, Kingston Maurward, Salisbury, Weymouth and Yeovil Colleges). Funding has been secured for two years, 2001/2-2002/3, to help develop the HE infrastructure.

The Hybrid Library

One major element of this infrastructure is the hybrid library. In the first year work has concentrated on six areas:

- **Images** – access through a web-page to databases of digitised images, including moving images, maps and graphics.
- **Access Policies** – establishing a recognisable identity for the HE student, bringing together details of entitlements, thus contributing to the development of HE culture.
- **Common Library Management System (Virtual and Actual)** – developing as far as possible connectivity and interoperability.
- **Physical Access** – access to traditional library resources continues to be important particularly given the number of potential barriers (e.g. geographical location, transport infrastructure) to HE study.
- **Electronic Access** – augmenting existing provision, evaluating

alternative electronic access models, and resolving authentication and licence issues hindering access.

- **Staff Development** – provision of electronic resources has required library staff to take on new roles and acquire a range of skills. In addition, academic staff need to acquire new or enhance existing skills if electronic resources are to become a component of the learning environment.
- **User Needs Analysis** – a questionnaire was circulated to targeted groups of HE students and academic staff in FE colleges (FECs).

The experience gained will form the basis of a one-day conference, entitled *Access and Identity*, to be held in London on 27 February 2003 (contact pdale@bournemouth.ac.uk).

The current paper will concentrate on two areas highlighted in the user needs analysis: access to resources and the engagement of academic staff.

Student Survey

Hard-copy questionnaires were sent to HE students studying at the 5 FECs. There were 181 respondents from a possible target group of 691, a return rate of 26.2%. Between FECs return rates ranged from 12.79% to 51.11%. 75% of the respondents were full-time students, 25% part-time.

The satisfaction rate for the overall service is high at 70%.

One interesting result is that 86% of students have access to a PC at home; 57% also have access to the Internet. Both these figures exceeded perceptions.

One set of questions attempted to build a geographic profile. Respondents were asked how often they used the following libraries and how far they had to travel:

College

Once a term	Once a month	Once a week	3 times per week	More often
8%	19%	41%	23%	9%
Up to 3 miles	3–5 miles	6–15 miles	16–30 miles	Over 30 miles
53%	9%	15%	15%	8%

Bournemouth University

Never	Once a year	Once a term	Once a month	Once a week	More often
48%	10%	14%	16%	9%	3%
3 miles	3–5 miles	6–15 miles	16–30 miles	Over 30 miles	
31%	11%	10%	10%	38%	

Public

Never	Once a year	Once a term	Once a month	Once a week	More often
42%	17%	17%	15%	6%	3%
Up to 3 miles	3–5 miles	6–15 miles	16–30 miles	Over 30 miles	
76%	14%	7%	2%	1%	

The rural nature of the sub-region is reflected in the college statistics, with 38% of respondents travelling over 5 miles.

The distance from the University shows an interesting distribution: over a third live more than 30 miles away, about a third within 3 miles. This reflects of course the location of the partner FECs: one in the same conurbation, the others over 20 miles distant.

Students in the conurbation FEC use the University Library relatively frequently: over 50% once a month or more often. However 24% do not use the Library at all.

Access and identity

	V. Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	V. dissatisfied	Did not use
Books	9%	54%	31%	5%	1%
Books availability	3%	43%	41%	13%	1%
Journal relevance	8%	49%	25%	1%	8%
E-resource relevance	7%	45%	25%	7%	16%
E-resource availability	8%	40%	27%	10%	15%
Off-campus access	5%	27%	23%	16%	29%
BU web site	4%	31%	15%	4%	46%

While distance is one obvious deterrent factor, it is therefore by no means the only one.

Public libraries are closest to most respondents: 76% live within 3 miles. However the same percentage uses them very infrequently, three times a year or less. It seems therefore that, despite their convenience, public libraries are seen neither as sources of hard-copy learning materials, nor as venues for study or accessing electronic and Internet resources.

The second set of questions attempted to measure satisfaction with services and resources offered to HE students based at FECs.

While 63% were satisfied or very satisfied with the relevance of book stock, only 46% were satisfied with book availability. Students taught at the University are generally more satisfied with book availability. Relevance of journal titles registered a 57% satisfied or very satisfied response.

52% were satisfied with the relevance of electronic resources although 16% did not use them. Satisfied and very satisfied responses to the availability of electronic resources fell to 48%; only 32% of users were satisfied with off-campus access. 29% did not use this off-campus resource even though 57% had Internet access at home and 76% live within 3 miles of a public library.

There may be an underlying dissatisfaction with this particular service. However very few raised this issue in the free-text box; the majority of users may therefore not be fully aware of its value to their studies.

While 35% of respondents said they were satisfied and very satisfied with the resources available through the Bournemouth University home page, as many as 46% said they did not use them; 54% had not used WebOpac.

Staff Survey

The tutor survey returned 32 responses. As there were no target

group figures it is impossible to say if this was a good rate of return. The satisfaction rate for the overall service was higher than for students, at 94%.

16% of tutors did not have Internet access from their office although 81% had access from home (compare 57% for students). While 29% of students claimed they did not use the off-campus access facilities and 39% said they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the resource, 67% of tutors admitted to having a poor understanding of the off-campus access service.

Tutors were asked to rate their understanding of the following services and resources: ILL and management of reading list material scored, respectively, 66% and 63% excellent to good. Awareness of the following was rated as fair to poor: inter-site book return scheme, 60%; borrowing schemes with partner libraries, 67%; resources available from Bournemouth University home page, 93% (with an 89% poor rating); WebOpac, 74%; subject resource pages, 70%; databases on the tutor's subject, 53%; electronic resources, 55% and off campus access, 84%.

The low awareness of electronic databases and resources is due of course in part to the anomalous position of FE academic staff with regard to licences. They are generally not employed by the University, and

therefore do not have the access rights of their students, who are members of the University. However, it must also be noted that 52% of tutors said they had not attended an information skills session hosted by their library.

Conclusions and Actions

Students were less content with the overall service than staff. This may imply either different expectations or a greater engagement with the libraries.

Lack of knowledge of and engagement with e-resources by tutors may have affected students' take-up of and satisfaction with them.

There is under-use of a potentially convenient physical and online resource in public libraries. In the second year of HEFCE funding attention will be paid to the following as a result of the survey:

- Involving public libraries as partners in combating geographic isolation.
- Improving the seamlessness of the overall service from colleges and the University, particularly as regards e-resources.
- Increasing the involvement and understanding of academic staff in partner colleges, particularly as regards e-resources.
- Obviating licence constraints on access to e-resources for academic staff in FE.

Beyond library walls: delivering services at the front line of clinical practice

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Introduction

The traditional image of HE libraries offering services to NHS members exclusively within the library environment has been challenged in recent years. Especially since the

advent of the Internet and the adoption of evidence-based healthcare principles, significant effort has been expended towards ensuring that actual user needs are understood and that services are

fashioned to respond to those, bringing library and information services into the front line of clinical practice. There is now even an evidence-based librarianship movement, looking at how effective such developments actually are.

Supporting evidence-based healthcare

It is no surprise that there has been an increased need for access to information since evidence-based practice became a declared part of the NHS agenda. Evidence-based healthcare involves “deriving focused questions from clinical problems, searching systematically and thoroughly for best relevant evidence, critically appraising the evidence, and applying new knowledge in the clinical context”.¹ The increased availability through the National electronic Library for Health (NeLH – <http://www.nelh.nhs.uk/>) of information resources such as Clinical Evidence and the Cochrane Library, which help to synthesise published research findings, is intended to address the need for highly authoritative and easy-to-find answers to clinical queries.

However, it is widely acknowledged that many clinicians do not possess the skills to practice evidence-based healthcare¹ and many clinical queries are never addressed.² Initiatives have therefore centred on making it possible for “quality-filtered, patient specific information that will contribute to patient care”³ to be exploited on demand.

There are wide variations in the range of services provided by HE libraries at the front line of clinical practice, spanning a spectrum that might include:

- delivery and promotion of electronic information resources and services

- delivery of outreach training for clinical personnel
- delivery of clinical effectiveness enquiry services via phone, email, fax, or in person
- delivery of evidence-based digests
- provision of clinical librarian services during ward rounds and clinical meetings

These are discussed further below.

Delivery of electronic information resources

A key driver for enhancing services at the front line of clinical practice has been the impetus created from the increased availability of information that can itself be delivered at the workplace. Although networking and IT rollout generally in the NHS has lagged significantly by comparison to similar developments in HE, nonetheless the gap is now beginning perceptibly to narrow. The aggregation within the NeLH of key information resources that are accessible directly over NHSnet⁴ or via the ATHENS access management system has made it possible also to highlight the benefits of accessing such information within the context of healthcare delivery.

Promotion of the information services via an intranet or web gateway is one way in which HE libraries are able to present high quality information resources to clinical personnel. An example is Sheffield Evidence for Effectiveness and Knowledge (SEEK – <http://www.shef.ac.uk/seek/>), a web site for evidence-based practice funded as part of the Sheffield Health Authority Information for Health Local Implementation Strategy.

A forthcoming procurement exercise led by the NHS National Core Content Group (NCCG) bodes well for the provision of a range of

representative bibliographic and related databases across England.⁵ As with KA24 (providing “knowledge access 24/7” to databases and journals London-wide and to the South East) and other NHS regional deals, so with the resources negotiated as part of the NeLH and the forthcoming NCCG-brokered deals, HE libraries are often at the forefront of delivering training and of promoting and marketing the availability of these resources to NHS members of the libraries, and have contributed markedly towards high levels of take-up. The NCCG itself seeks to establish models by which HE institutions will also be able to buy in to this national resource.

Outreach training

In many cases, the opportunity to take services to the front line of clinical practice has hinged on training and awareness-raising about the availability of electronic resources made available via the NeLH and regional NHS purchases. HE libraries supporting NHS users locally have developed wide-ranging information skills training programmes, and these have been made available from within the library as well as beyond – into departments and remotely through outreach training initiatives, in the community as well as the ward.

Where dedicated information skills trainers have been employed, their availability has enabled the development of courses that match the specific requirements of multidisciplinary teams and can be provided within library training areas or within the workplace environment itself. The emphasis of such programmes is usually on helping participants become competent and confident in accessing and assessing information themselves and on contributing towards the practice of evidence-based healthcare. A training programme developed by the Friends of the Children of Great Ormond

Street Library, for example, attempts to address just such concerns, and to become integrated within the day-to-day workings of teams, multidisciplinary or otherwise, as they develop evidence-based practice. To deliver specialist training, library staff are liaising with local knowledge experts, and courses are being planned in partnership with research methodology experts so as to ensure that the training delivered is relevant and in line with service priorities.

Clinical effectiveness enquiry services

Despite the provision of effective training programmes, it is acknowledged that, due to competing demands, many clinicians lack the skills or time to practise evidence-based healthcare.¹ There is, instead, an increasing need to make available a portfolio of services directly at the point of healthcare delivery, within the practice environment itself, and at times that are optimal for clinical, educational or research queries to be generated and satisfied. A potential solution is the provision of a clinical effectiveness enquiry services, along the lines of services such as ATTRACT⁶ and other services that have been described elsewhere.¹ Such services, for example, inspired the recent launch of a Clinical Effectiveness Enquiry Service by the Medical Library at the Royal Free Hospital.

Both training and enquiry services aim to address the information seeking and appraisal needs of NHS staff in support of evidence-based clinical practice. Beginning with a clinical query, a training service would aim to equip clinical personnel with appropriate skills of information retrieval and critical appraisal so that they may undertake the relevant steps and derive the “clinical bottom line” themselves. An enquiry service instead would offer a mediating

approach, with the “clinical bottom line” provided directly to the enquirer, or with the provision of sufficiently focused high-quality information to the enquirer from which the “clinical bottom line” may be derived.

Evidence-based digests

An extension of critical appraisal work has given rise to other specialist services, and evidence-based digests have been well received, wherever sufficient resources have allowed their development. *Health Evidence Bulletins Wales* is a useful example, the result of a cooperative initiative between the University of Wales College of Medicine Libraries’ Support Unit for Research Evidence (SURE) and practitioners in relevant clinical departments – and supported by the Health Authorities in Wales.⁷ *Health Evidence Bulletins Wales* is intended to provide a concise and current review of a subject area through statements, or summaries of the supporting evidence, which give details of the references on which they are based. Quality is assured by the use of a methodology that covers both the searching for, and the critical appraisal of, relevant information. In the electronic format of the *Bulletins*, hypertext links are provided to the evidence, which is cited whenever it is available.

Clinical librarianship

Despite services such as those described above, nonetheless queries arising during clinical practice often remain unformulated and may remain unanswered. Reasons for that include lack of time and skills among clinicians to practice evidence-based healthcare, and particularly those elements of query formulation, searching for the evidence and critical appraisal of the research literature.

An attractive response to these observations is the provision of a

clinical librarian service: it is proposed that through such an initiative it is possible for librarians to provide information to help answer queries arising in clinical practice, such that may not otherwise be articulated or else may not otherwise be answered. Definitions of clinical librarianship vary, but tend to converge on the following:

- participation in ward rounds or clinical meetings
- responding to clinical questions using information and critical appraisal skills
- provision of case related information in support of clinical decision making

Although the literature on clinical librarianship spans a quarter of a century, during which time there have been fairly low levels of take-up, nonetheless interest in such a service has been revived in recent years, as the information and knowledge intensive nature of evidence-based healthcare has been widely acknowledged. A fully-fledged implementation of this model of service provision has been developed at the University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust. A conference on clinical librarianship has been held, and an associated web site has been created.⁸

Opinions differ on the benefit of attending ward rounds, and on how realistic it is to expect clinical librarians to attend all ward rounds, especially in terms of cost effectiveness. Indeed, as far back as 1980, the clinical librarian’s role in the patient care setting was held to be equivocal.⁹ A recent study reports that clinicians do not feel that librarians are being used effectively by attending full ward rounds.¹⁰ However, it is appreciated that there is a place for librarians in the clinical setting and that the precise location may differ depending on the team

with which the service is associated. Audit and other clinical meetings are identified as particularly appropriate locations, as they are potentially multidisciplinary and may address the evidence base of treatments and services.¹⁰ A systematic review of the effectiveness of clinical librarian services is underway, and it is expected that it will be published during 2003.¹¹

Evidence-based librarianship

What of the evidence concerning the relative effectiveness of different services and levels of provision? There is an increased realisation that the services provided should themselves be evidence-based, since the bulk of the work carried out at the front line is in support of evidence-based practice. The literature that evaluates the effectiveness of the different services is not yet plentiful, although several initiatives have been taken or are underway – see e.g. an evaluation of the effectiveness of virtual outreach services¹² or the systematic review of clinical librarianship.¹¹ A conference on Evidence Based Librarianship has been held and an associated web site is available.¹³

Implications for HE libraries

What are the implications for HE libraries aiming to provide such services to local NHS users? Major issues associated with such a shift in provision relate to:

- the need to secure additional funding that would make the introduction of such staff-intensive services possible
- the need to introduce new areas of expertise, alongside traditional areas of professional operation
- the need to accommodate new attitudes such as those underpinning greater outreach activity, as well as a knowledge of

and a will for greater integration with key NHS initiatives

All these needs bring along with them an increased requirement for advanced professional training and development. Specialist conferences may need to be attended, as standard training packages are insufficiently well focused to equip the new information professionals with the skills necessary to undertake the new range of activities. Indicatively, ScHARR (the School of Health and Related Research) at Sheffield University offers a range of Courses for Information Professionals (see <http://www.shef.ac.uk/~scharr/ir/library/infoprocourses.htm>).

Conclusion

Mention is made above to a range of services that HE libraries are known to be delivering to the front line of clinical practice. Some elements are provided through NHS special funding, and other elements result from creative remoulding of existing posts and rebasing of existing funding. Although these developments are often piecemeal and not necessarily delivered in an integrated fashion, nonetheless, each of the different approaches offers at least one unique way in which information needs are met, and all support the principle of evidence-based healthcare. While the relative effectiveness of each approach remains to be explored and defined, anecdotal evidence suggests that each approach is beneficial in helping to achieve the goal of providing quality-filtered information at the front line of clinical practice at the time and in the format required by busy clinical personnel.

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Marketing library services at LSE

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I joined LSE in October 2000, working from a temporary site with the promise of a Foster-designed Library building – literally and metaphorically – just around the corner. We approached the ‘redevelopment’ of the Library’s marketing efforts in much the same way – unpicking what we had, to put it back together better. Library management already provided strong customer-service foundations, with an interrelated focus on Library staff (achieving Investors in People status that December). Actual Library services were robust and often innovative, if not always highly visible.

As Library use sits naturally within a purely social science institution, my brief was less about outreach and more about improving the user experience, including awareness of the extent of Library services. Pre-redevelopment, the Library building showed how an outdated look could hamper services. Inspired by the modern building plans, we revamped the visual impact of marketing materials too. LSE Design Unit relished a little experimentation for this previously more staid client;

delivering a new Library logo (linking us directly to LSE, as briefed) and an unmissable orange colour. Importantly, we began to look as professional as the Library service we delivered. Due to the immense range of Library print materials – from glossy guides to simple forms – we gradually and manageably changed over to the new identity. The first items, including a range of branded giveaways, were introduced in line with the move back to the redeveloped building, spring 2001.

Smart Library rucksacks were available in return for user comments on the redevelopment. Positive quotes were used in later promotional materials; negative ones helped us address building teething problems. To many users at this point, our world-class Library services were only as good as our plumbing or ventilation! This clear example of Library use as an all-encompassing experience will inform our marketing thinking for some time to come.

The redevelopment comment forms were in addition to our standard feedback forms – which we reply to individually. Time-consuming but effective, this reveals ‘the Library’ as reasonable and human, and sometimes instigates service improvements (such as introduction of 8am opening and a water vending machine).

In addition to print materials, the Library website also benefited from a

facelift. This large, popular site had grown over time, but without a clear plan. With LSE Website Services – and using existing web content – we introduced a new visual template and navigational structure. We kept our prominent link on the main LSE home page; aware that this profile isn’t always evident on university websites. In the coming academic year, we’ll identify page-level improvements to existing web content, add new information, now gaps are more easy to spot, and address any accessibility issues within our site.

Juggling marketing with other Library duties, my colleagues could previously pool various sections of text, but lacked the necessary time or distance from the subject to more actively shape and edit the finished result – true for the web as for print. Library guides, newsletters, etc, tended to include an off-putting ‘everything’ on any particular subject, rather than the most appropriate level of information. As a non-librarian who’d never used this Library before (and with a Library-wide, rather than departmental remit) I was well placed to consider first impressions, tone, length, clarity, use of acronyms / jargon, etc – editing and clarifying text as necessary. Our language style is more direct and user-friendly now, while still ‘professional’. Readability best practice guidelines have been prepared and road-tested by the Library’s Communications Group

(representing staff of all levels and departments) – ready to be issued to all staff soon. Even notices in the Library are written with care (then printed on to notice stationery and laminated). This simple but firm notice policy also encouraged wider staff to adopt the habit of thinking about how we present Library information.

While much staff time and effort has gone into our print and web new look, direct expenditure in those areas is largely similar to previous years. My salary is an additional cost, but covers income generation activities too. That's a article in itself, but it's relevant to mention that sponsorship – via intermediary Youth Ltd – encouraged us to re-think our promotional bookmarks, rationalising four into two more effective designs. Interaction with LSE non-academic departments is another small step, at little direct cost, that supports our marketing efforts. Regular informal

liaison with the Press Office highlights campus promotional opportunities – whether newsletters or PC log in box messages. With Student Recruitment, we actively welcome potential users at open days. Links with the Office of Development and Alumni Relations help us market to alumni Library users, including a new three-way leaflet (with IT Services too) and mailing of the termly Library newsletter *Update*.

Library management obviously support these initiatives, but are equally willing to commit funds for long-term marketing benefit. Two new display cases in the Library entrance enable us to highlight more 'hidden' Library collections – such as microforms or archives.

A professional audio tour of the Library (developed with Acoustiguide) reached recording stage this week and, all being well, will roll out soon.

Like our physical redevelopment – currently extending to a new plaza and café outside – there's plenty more to do on the marketing front. We're implementing service developments in response to our latest (shortened and improved) annual satisfaction survey of LSE students (in which 89% agreed with the statement, 'overall, the Library provides a good service to me'). The Library's Service Level Definitions, including targets and performance monitoring, are going live for users too. Entrance turnstile figures have doubled since the building redevelopment and marketing has equally stepped up a gear. Memorable moments along the way include Victorian costume – corset included! – used to promote a wonderful archives website (www.lse.ac.uk/booth). I look forward to bringing some of this (broad!) LSE experience to a simultaneous post during 2003, on a two-day-a-week secondment to SCOUNL – and to meeting more *Relay* readers.

Supporting HE students in FE colleges: the view from an academic

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APU's Regional Partner Colleges, spread across the four counties of Cambridgeshire, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk, offer programmes of Higher Education. The programmes cover a broad spectrum of academic and vocational specialisms, reflecting the size and experience of the colleges and the demands of the local labour market. Awards range from HNC to Honours Degrees. My role as Assistant Director of the University's Regional Office regularly takes me into colleges to listen to our students.

The Library or, more often, the Learning Resources Centre, is invariably on our agenda.

Most Higher Education students in Further Education Colleges lead extraordinarily complicated lives. Full-time HE students often find themselves juggling course work with paid work, extensive family responsibilities and surprisingly long journeys between home and college. Many part-time students have demanding and stressful jobs. Students' unprompted comments make it clear that members of the staffs of the Libraries / Learning Resources Centres are among the friendliest and most approachable people they encounter in the college

life. Electronic novices particularly appreciate unpatronising help willingly given.

Environment

HE students in FE colleges are keen to assert their HE identity. They recognise students on Access Courses as part of their community. But younger students, even younger students on Level 3 programmes with HE as their goal, are not considered 'people like us'. Younger students are blamed for excessive noise (and, in my experience, some libraries and LRCs are uncomfortably noisy) and other kinds of anti-social behaviour. At the same time HE students are reluctant to use enclosed booths and

similar confined spaces reserved for silent study. The diverse, and perhaps conflicting, needs of a range of users presents a challenge to managers of mixed-economy colleges – it is easier to compel silence than to maintain an acceptable level of sound.

Access to resources

The Dewey system means that students may be confronted either with long runs of books with *short* but *identical* numbers or with dauntingly long strings of letters and numbers. Is there a way round this?

Every reader expects the impossible – instant access to the source she needs the moment she wants it and for as

long as she requires it. Reference-only copies of key texts help. Short loans create problems for students who attend classes once a week and indeed for full-time students whose tutors have responded to requests for concentrated blocks of taught-time. Returning a book can involve a round trip of fifty or sixty miles. Fines, in some colleges, are low enough to tempt students to keep books well past their due date.

A sense that they are competing for printed material is one factor that leads students to value electronic learning resources, particularly when they are available to computer-owners at home via the college's Intranet.

Learning skills

Library / LRC teams are in an ideal position to provide students with support in the continuous development of electronic and other learning skills – and to remind them of means of avoiding the hazards of plagiarism and poor academic practice. The libraries / LRCs that I visit produce clear and helpful – and sometimes wittily conceived – leaflets on a spread of study skills, including the referencing of electronic sources that complement and reinforce the advice and support provided by the lecturing team.

Keep up the good work.

Medical libraries and librarians in 2002 – a researcher's perspective

Robert T Mathie, PhD
Research Development
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A researcher's key needs

A research professional must be familiar with the published and ongoing work in his or her field of investigative enquiry. Without a full and critical awareness of others' contributions and any related published debate, original research cannot be optimally targeted or pursued. Modern technology is crucial in assisting researchers of the 21st century to cope with the massive volume of published work, but the fundamental information needs of today do not differ from those that existed in the days before computers became so firmly established in our everyday lives.

When I started my research career (in physiology) in the mid 1970s, a time-consuming, comprehensive search of *Index Medicus* and *Science Citation Index* was able to alert me to most of the published research I needed to help me begin my PhD. Much laborious photocopying (and reading!) of key articles was involved. For new biomedical researchers in 2002 it can also be sufficient initially to carry out a fairly straightforward search on *Medline*, for example, and to download and read relevant abstracts and full texts from accessible electronic journals. But all maturing researchers develop a need to scrutinise additional – often less obvious – sources of information and to adopt correspondingly more complex search strategies in order to access them.

Attaining a substantial depth of historical background is often required, especially when beginning the

challenge of writing a research thesis or undertaking a review article. Finding a detail of research method or a single item of another group's research data might become vitally important to a project's satisfactory completion. Consulting an original textbook or finding an article in an obscure or foreign-language journal might occasionally be necessary. Current awareness becomes vital to all active researchers: knowing about any new, relevant research, including what is presented in conference proceedings, develops into an ever more important facet of professional life. These are some examples of occasions when searching information sources becomes a sophisticated research skill in its own right, and when a merely intuitive approach may no longer be sufficient. Availing oneself of the resources and knowledge available in a real, rather than a virtual, library can then become crucial to success.

What should a modern medical library therefore comprise?

Less well-known archival databases should be intimate and accessible, for the information they contain may broaden the scope and increase the penetration of a detailed literature search. A library should also possess an archive of back issues of popular journals like *Lancet* and *British Medical Journal* and make it easily available to its readers. An up-to-date range of more specialist biomedical journals is highly desirable. There should be a range of catalogues, periodicals and information on how to access specified conference proceedings and other pre-published work. Enabling reader access to foreign language translations and to inter-library loans of books and journals is as important for a library today as it has always been.

Experienced librarians will be able to help or advise on most, and probably all, of the above. They should remain prepared to carry out a properly structured search of *Medline* and/or other literature archives, especially since many of the most useful computer search options are less than transparently obvious. Crucially, librarians are needed by researchers to help them make the best of the entire thicket of electronic journals and the associated technology. The latter includes helpful facilities such as automated email services that can notify a researcher newly published work in a chosen field. Professional advice on authenticated and other useful websites is becoming increasingly necessary, for the Internet is filled with spurious 'research' and subjective opinions. And any serious researcher must be

able to build his or her own electronic reference database; experienced librarians will be able to advise on how to approach this and to get the best out of it, including how to download or upload new references.

The electronic age of information and communications has added enormous speed and important opportunities in enabling researchers keep fully abreast of relevant research, but it has created an additional complexity that is likely to become ever greater. To meet these developing challenges and opportunities, today's medical libraries and their professional staff must continue to provide excellence and appropriate innovation. Future biomedical research will not flourish fully without such support.

Books and computers: an ambivalent relationship

Kathryn Tomlinson
University College London

From my perspective as a post-graduate research student based at University College London, I have been asked to discuss key messages for academic librarians. I have drawn largely on my and others' experience of academic libraries in London, but I suggest that the issues highlighted will apply to academic libraries elsewhere.

Post-graduate researchers see themselves as pressed for time. Although a weekly two hours spent seeking books may be insignificant in the grand scheme of a three or four year doctorate, in front of the shelves they seem valuable minutes. But such students are also sympathetic to the problems that librarians face in terms of limited resources, both of staff hours and book-purchasing costs. From the post-graduate users' point

view, then, the best service is one which mediates effectively between these limitations.

The period of my doctorate has seen a great advance in this direction: the development of on-line catalogues. As many of us have to travel to reach our key libraries, or between libraries themselves, the ability to ascertain availability of resources in a number of locations without leaving one's desk is of immeasurable value. The extension of this service to include the recalling and renewing books at the click of a button is similarly extremely welcome, and saves very considerable time and much frustration in front of the shelves. As one colleague declared, 'On-line catalogues are fantastic!'

Internet-friendly libraries are increasingly making possible positive changes in study and research practice. Librarians should lead the

way in encouraging all researchers to take advantage of these developments. Recall and reservation notices sent by email reach many post-graduates far faster than a note in a pigeon hole or a letter sent home, and many of us would be surprised if they do not also save libraries money. The ability to renew books at a click means that it should be possible to increase circulation of books by decreasing long loan periods, while not inconveniencing researchers who need constant access to specialist books for considerable periods of time. Furthermore, on-line journals and citation indexes not only save users' time but broaden the scope and style of research in ways that a physical library alone cannot.

But the warmth felt for computer-aided library-use ends when books and journals begin to disappear from the shelves. Although on-line catalogues make it possible to recall

books and journals from stores before travelling to read them, limiting volumes on the shelves to only recent years' publications makes it impossible to browse the available literature and become aware of other issues contested at the time. As one colleague remarked, 'If we are supposed to be building systematically on knowledge accumulated in the past, what possible justification can there be for locking the past up halfway across town?'

In at least some cases, the welcome expansion of on-line access to libraries has been accompanied by an

increasing number of computers in the libraries themselves. While it is vital for universities to provide adequate computing facilities for their students, from the post-graduate point of view this must not come at the expense of space for books. Here perhaps we clash with undergraduates – presumably more of us have access to personal computers than do the latter – and perhaps our battle is not with librarians but with other university decision-makers. Please site your computers elsewhere! We want to be able to use computers to access books in the libraries, rather than see computers in libraries squeeze out the books.

Finally, computers cannot replace knowledgeable librarians. On the contrary, as library-use becomes ever more technological, users need staff to point them to the tools that make research in libraries both easier and more rewarding. 'Friendly and knowledgeable staff – from head librarian to issue desk temps – make the frustrations of limited resources tolerable.' As another put it, 'libraries are for books, journals and people', and although technological developments are making it easier to access all these resources, they cannot yet replace them.

Thoughts on the Library – an undergraduate view

Jackie Titmuss **University College** **Northampton**

As undergraduates we have a tendency to set ourselves extremely low standards and yet often have difficulty achieving even those. This is the point at which after having exhausted any and all credit with our lecturers we finally decide to find out where the library actually is. Once the building is located, the aspiring graduate may not be immediately apparent of any resemblance between it and a petrol station; one being the standard repository of all knowledge and wisdom the other being the reservoir of sanitary convenience and locomotive elixir. But the marketeer's model of 'distressed purchase syndrome' applies very similarly – we need to access both places while wanting to go to neither and do so at great cost to ourselves.

Whilst enticing undergraduates into the library via the promise of sweeties, fresh bread, fags and prophylactics has many advocates,

one suspects it has limited appeal to either the cleaners or those concerned with serious study. Most libraries have the pre-requisite over-abundance of reading materials meticulously ordered and referenced. Access to these materials requires motivation and self-discipline from the undergraduate, qualities usually conspicuous by their absence. One might accept that part of earning a degree is dogged perseverance, technical ingenuity and self-reliance in the pursuit of knowledge. Sadly the spoon-feeding of undergraduates is out of fashion at the moment, but I would put forward a spirited argument to suggesting extra supporting/supportive classes available from the library.

Many assumptions are made about the undergraduate; that they are literate, computer competent, have an encyclopaedic knowledge of library information systems and are between the ages of 18 and 22. However many UCN students are mature, rediscovering education well after the computer revolution has passed them

by or are of foreign origin. Even those undergraduates who do fit that profile have little or no experience of information retrieval in any sense let alone the specifics of any particular library system. Maybe secondary schools are more advanced these days but there is a huge leap from textbook teaching to researching from various texts and one might argue it is beholden on the educational institution to make sure that their students are equipped with the techniques as well as the academic standards to complete the proffered courses successfully.

As information systems constantly evolve and change, a regular class in information retrieval should be provided. This should show: how the library has organised and structured its materials, how best to define and narrow a search, which sources would be more relevant, where they are and how to get them. It should be noted this information is provided on a private individual ad-hoc basis that seems an inefficient use of a scarce resource.

Another useful library course that should be held regularly is: 'The Ideal Essay Answer' class. In liaison with course lecturers, students could be taken through an entire 'A+' essay scenario, which would be tailored and entirely relevant to a subject they are in the process of undertaking. Lecture and seminar material should be analysed and the perfect answer provided. This would show what is required of the student in respect of essay structure, content, correct use of grammar and punctuation, and the appropriate use of referencing and bibliography. The emphasis should obviously be on emulation rather than direct plagiarism! This (mandatory?) class could also be a useful feedback exercise for lecturers as to who is in need of extra help at an earlier and less sensitive stage. Although the essay marks for the first year have no material effect on the ultimate grade of their degree it is often a source of considerable despondency to be flapping about in the wind trying to conjure up a descent essay with little concept of what is actually required.

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its materials; how best to define and narrow a search; which sources would be most relevant and where they are and how to get them. It should be noted this information is provided on a private individual ad-hoc basis, which seems an inefficient use of a scarce resource.

As a third year American Studies undergraduate I was relieved that our faculty librarian ran a dissertation workshop. This one hour long session was enormously instructive and jammed with information. It took on the general appearance of a school class but each student was aware that they were being offered the key to a successful piece of work. Sadly however, 'information overload' and the 'blinding of science' took its toll. Each student retained possibly 10% (if you were lucky) of the information. On chatting to students on other courses, it became apparent that this one-hour session is not a uniform offering and potluck is the order of the day.

On a more mundane level, many areas of the library function as a social venue (albeit the computer and study rooms are prodigiously under utilised), the respectful hush of professional thinkers seen as a quaint anachronism.

The judicious barking of an over officious college bureaucrat or two would not go amiss.

The facilities for copying material from the Internet seem to change frequently and get more complicated (and expensive) with each 'improvement'. Could the copying evolution take an extended holiday so we can all come to terms with one permanent system?

Could lecturers and librarians liase with one another regarding information from short loan sources? Having been caught in the stampede of an entire lecture hall of ravening student wildebeest hunting down a single book, a pile of photocopies of the offending article could be made available.

By this simple ruse, the student is enticed into the library, the copyright laws can be dutifully obeyed according to which ever principle is in place that week and our dear lecturers will have the satisfaction of knowing that their carefully thought out lecture plans and assiduously researched words of wisdom are no longer falling on deaf ears but are being filed for retrieval the night before the relevant exam!

HE Libraries and Disability Discrimination Legislation

Liz Victor **Marketing and** **Information Assistant** **Skill: National Bureau for** **Students with Disabilities**

The trend for libraries to become more user-focused is particularly relevant to their interaction with disabled students who will often have individual needs that need to be met. Following the introduction of the new Part 4:

Education of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995, it is now a matter of legal obligation, rather than simply good practice, for libraries and resource centres in post 16 education to make sure that they do not discriminate against disabled people.

Below **Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities** explains the legislation and offers some suggestions about how those working

in libraries and resource centres can ensure that they comply.

What does this new legislation cover?

Part 4 of the DDA introduces the right for disabled students not to be discriminated against in education, training and any services provided wholly or mainly for students or those enrolled on courses when this is provided by 'responsible bodies'

including institutions of further and higher education. The definition of 'student services' in the DDA covers a wide range of educational and non-educational services including libraries and learning resources.

What does the new law mean in practice?

1. It will be unlawful for responsible bodies to treat a disabled person 'less favourably' than a non-disabled person for a reason which relates to the person's disability.

For example, a blind student is waiting in the queue to apply for a library card. The librarian tells her that she will have to wait until all the other students have been served because her application will take extra time. The treatment she receives is less favourable compared to other students, and the reason for the treatment relates to her disability. This is likely to be unlawful.

2. If a disabled person is at a 'substantial disadvantage', responsible bodies are required to take reasonable steps to prevent that disadvantage.

Some examples of reasonable adjustments that libraries and resource centres may need to make are:

- Allowing extended loan periods to dyslexic or other students
- Supporting students in getting texts put into Braille or onto audio tape
- Setting aside books in advance for students who find it difficult to get in to the library
- Individualised induction to using the library so that needs can be discussed
- Assisting students in using the catalogue, finding resources or using equipment

- Fetching books from high or inaccessible shelves

The law requires responsible bodies to anticipate the requirements of disabled people or students and the adjustments they could be making for them, not simply wait until a disabled person requires a particular adaptation. For example, a library should have a policy in place to allow flexibility over loan periods for dyslexic students rather than having to go through an extensive process of gaining permissions each time a dyslexic student requests a longer loan period. Another example of anticipating requirements would be to ensure that staff are given training in meeting the needs of disabled users. Institutions are also expected to review and improve their provision over time.

How do people know whether an adjustment is reasonable or not?

What steps are reasonable all depends on the circumstances of the case.

- They will vary according to:
- the type of services being provided
 - the nature of the institution or service and its size and resources
 - the effect of the disability on the individual disabled person or student.

Some of the factors that might be taken into account are:

- the financial resources available to the responsible body
- the cost of taking a particular step
- the extent to which it is practicable to take a particular step
- health and safety requirements
- the relevant interests of other people

The final decision about what is reasonable will be decided by the courts.

Confidentiality and knowledge about students' disabilities

Institutions are expected to take reasonable steps to find out if a person is disabled so that adjustments can be made. For example, asking students whether they have a disability when they register with the library or resource centre. It should be made clear why this information is being requested and how it will be kept confidential. Once a student has disclosed their disability, the institution as a whole is deemed to know even if only one member of staff has been informed. Staff should be clear about how they should pass this information about the student's disability on within the institution in accordance with any confidentiality request from the student.

Not knowing about someone's disability cannot be used as a defence if an adjustment could have been anticipated.

Timetable of the legislation

With two exceptions, the new legislation came into force from 1 September 2002. The exceptions are reasonable adjustments involving the provision of auxiliary aids and services (such as interpreters etc) which comes into force on 1 September 2003 and the requirement to make physical adjustments which is to be implemented on 1 September 2005.

A selection of questions it may be useful for staff in libraries and resource centres to consider:

- Is information about library facilities accessible to disabled students? Is it available in alternative formats (electronically, in Braille, audio tape or in large print)?

- Is web-based material accessible to those using assistive technology, such as screen reading software, or those not using a mouse?
- Does information about services and facilities make clear what adjustments are already in place and that additional adjustments can be made on an individual basis?
- Is there good lighting and colour contrast to aid orientation? Is signage clear? Are loop systems installed (and turned on) at helpdesks? Are helpdesks at appropriate heights?
- Are fire and emergency procedures appropriate for all library users?
- Is the catalogue accessible and are instructions for its use in accessible formats?
- How will people obtain books and resources? Are aisles wide enough for wheelchairs? Are there sufficient staff to fetch books for

those that cannot reach or see them? Is it clear that students may approach staff for such assistance?

- Are disabled students personal assistants permitted to withdraw books on their behalf?
- Does the library cater for those who cannot use standard print? Are there materials in large print or online? Is there a scanner, which students may use?
- Are longer loans periods available for those that need them?
- Are computer clusters accessible to disabled people? Are there computers with large screens or other assistive technology or software available? Do networked computers allow a roaming profile so students can customise screens? Do students who need to use computers with assistive technology installed have priority access to them?
- Have staff been trained in, for

example, communicating with someone who lip-reads, guiding someone with a visual impairment, or supporting someone having an epileptic seizure?

Further information

For more information on the Disability Discrimination Act Part 4: Education, contact Skill's Information Service, Tel: 0800 328 5050 (voice), 0800 068 2422 (text), Email: info@skill.org.uk or visit Skill's website, www.skill.org.uk

Some of the information above has been taken from *The Disability Discrimination Act Part 4 Libraries and Learning Centres Good Practice Guide*, produced by the Disability Rights Commission in partnership with Skill, SCONUL and other organisations in the sector. The full leaflet is available on the DRC website, www.drc-gb.org.

Developing the Virtual Research Environment

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Whereas considerable work is being undertaken in providing online library and information support for distance *teaching and learning*, the field of support for *research online* is still comparatively unexplored. As resources are being integrated into Virtual Learning Environments

(VLEs) to improve the quality of the teaching and learning experience, the need for something similar to support online research, is apparent.

By analogy to VLE the title *Virtual Research Environment* (VRE)¹ has been chosen for this project which is led by the University of London Library on behalf of the University of London. Its aim is "to develop and test an integrated web-based environment to support the needs of the e-researcher". As a basis on which to develop the VRE model, a review of current research support provision within the academic community has been undertaken, mainly focusing on the University of London, but also considering the wider UK academic community and beyond as appropriate.

In order to develop online support for e-researchers knowing their online research needs and expectations is obviously of paramount importance. The review was therefore accompanied by a survey among a selected group of researchers, pursued with the aim of identifying a "generic" research support model, applicable for many subject disciplines. Furthermore, in order to ensure its practical usefulness, it has been decided to develop the model in close dialogue with a number of test researchers from different subject areas, drawn from the Colleges and Institutes of the University of London. A recommendations report was produced, suggesting which examples of research support provision should be targeted for online delivery within the VRE

model. From the initial findings of report and survey, complemented with input from the test users, the following principle components of the VRE have been so far identified:

Virtual Research Library Support, a highly integrated resources portal based on a *Research Resource Meta-Search Engine* and *Personal Bibliography Harvesting Software*, allowing researchers to search across a variety of relevant library resources, such as e-journals, subscription services and a broad range of library catalogues from a single point of access. A generic template for an *Online Research Skills Training Tutorial* to facilitate the acquisition of effective research and information skills, which can be customised for a variety of different research subjects. As the enquiry desk is one of the most heavily used services in a physical library, such a facility is also required in an online environment. An *Electronic Help Desk* is currently also being developed in order to answer any resource-related enquiries from the e-researchers as a roll-out of the remote-access *Enquiry Service* for distance learners which the ULL is already delivering as part of its Virtual Library Service.² Reference guides, guidelines, style manuals, funding information and other *Research-related Information* will be compiled into a gateway for the VRE. An *Online Secure Research Repository* and *Electronic Communications Facilities* such as: forums, newsletters, virtual meeting venues etc. provide place for exchange and dialogue between researchers as well as meeting places and secure private areas shared by for example, a researcher and their research supervisor. This development addresses a number of concerns which have been articulated in relation to distance doctoral research, including quality and communications issues. Different versions of the

documents can be stored, comments shared and changes tracked using version control software which also allows both people to see the document at the same time and make *live* changes during a discussion, allowing them to meet *virtually* without either supervisor or researcher needing to leave the comfort of their offices. *Online research planning tools* to track research activity and achievement add to the VRE's functions. As project management skills have become essential in the modern workplace, such skills, particularly for longer research projects such as PhDs and Masters' dissertations, would be highly beneficial in an academic environment. Once certain elements of the research have been completed, a *Research Output Repository* to store digitised or born-digital research articles, book reviews, electronic theses and dissertations is an important feature of the VRE, the developments of which are being shared with the JISC FAIR e-theses clump projects.³ The ability to search this repository will, of course, also be included in the modular library meta-search engine outlined above.

As one of the key objectives of the project is to develop a researcher-focussed VRE model, it is essential to develop the model in dialogue with the relevant test researchers drawn from University of London Colleges and Institutes. For such collaborative work to be most effective, a VRE demonstrator, integrated with some of the functionalities listed above has been developed. Following the findings of research report and survey, and in order to keep it flexible, extensible and future-proof, it was decided to implement the VRE in a number of modules, integrated within a collaborative, open-source content management system. Though most of these components (Meta-Search, Bibliography Software,

Forums etc., see above) have been available as standalone functionalities on the internet for some time, the real added value the VRE provides for e-researchers is that it aims to offer the highest possible integration between its components. The VRE will therefore be more than the sum of its components. For example, results delivered by the Meta-Search engine will be fed directly into the electronic bibliography facility and pre-determined searches can be carried out automatically on a regular basis to ensure that the researcher has the most current information delivered to their desktop.

As the strengths and weaknesses of the demonstrator can only be identified in "live" research situations, the focus of the project at this stage is on encouraging dialogue and participation by researchers. Their feedback, criticism and suggestions, are directly taken up and implemented (where possible) into the demonstrator. Following this iterative development process, the final VRE platform will be shaped. It will consist of a series of generic modules which the researchers have decided would be most useful for implementation. From this generic selection, researchers will select the most appropriate modules for their research, adapting existing content, pre-configured for generic academic purposes, and populate them with their own content, thus creating customised subject-specific VREs.

As an outcome of the demonstrator development process, several customised VREs will have been produced by the test users that demonstrate successful implementations of the generic model. Once the final implementation of the VRE is launched, towards the end of 2002, it is hoped that academic departments and individual researchers across the University of

London and perhaps also in the wider academic community will customise the generic model for their own research.

¹ <<http://www.external.ull.ac.uk/ELPT/vre.asp>>

² <<http://www.external.ull.ac.uk/ELPT/enquiries.asp>>

³ <<http://www.jisc.ull.ac.uk/dner/development/programmes/fair.html>>

Impressions of COFHE / UC&R Conference Gate-crashing or hurdling the barriers to collaboration? University of Bath 3–6 April 2002

Kate Purcell
Media Librarian

**London College of Fashion
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Scanning through the delegate list, I felt daunted by the appearance of so many heads of services and library managers. As a relatively new professional, I initially felt more like a gate-crasher than a hurdler! However, the stars on my name badge indicating my conference virginity, soon broke down barriers as more experienced delegates kindly took time out to show me the ropes.

Each of the three days was well-structured, balancing guest speakers with a wide range of 'break-out' sessions and of course social events! Although there was time for questions after each speaker, much of the delegate participation happened during the break-out sessions and informally at coffee and meal times. This was an excellent chance to share experiences with other colleagues and I left with a notebook of practical tips to improve the library services I offer and a list of email addresses. I found the diverse range of people and institutions represented at the conference to be particularly refreshing.

The conference opened with Professor Bob Fryer, Chief Executive of the

University of the NHS, revealing his very creative and lively approach to 'life-long learning' – a phrase that he dislikes because it reminds him of a prison sentence! He believes that too often the educational system places barriers in the way of people, reinforcing negative self-image and narrowing people's perspectives. Using 'walking' as an analogy, he claimed that if walking was taught in an educational establishment, some students wouldn't be able to get out of chairs and some would only get NVQs in stumbling! He suggested the situation needs a radical overhaul if we are to address the UK's current skills shortage and the literacy and numeracy problems that affect 8 million people in the UK including 15% of graduates. He concluded that collaboration is the most effective way forward to increase participation in education in order to avoid duplication and the unnecessary competition that only serves to confuse and overwhelm learners.

This was followed by a presentation by Geoff Smith of the British Library who outlined some of the problems faced by libraries when they tried to work collaboratively especially across sectors. Different sectors have different funding agencies, different cultures and consequently sometimes different agendas. He believed it was necessary to persevere with collaborative projects in order to empower the learning community at a

time of decreased funding, increased student numbers and the challenges arising from electronic and digital technologies.

My only criticism of the conference is about the gender balance of the platform on the first day. I feel that it would have been positive to have scheduled a female speaker as this sets the tone for the conference. Many day delegates may have gone away with the impression that we are predominantly a profession of women managed by men! Nevertheless, our first female speaker was worth waiting for and was for me one of the highlights of the conference.

On the second day, Alicia Wise, Head of Development at JISC summarised the latest round of funding initiatives and presented some very interesting research about student use of e-resources. I was dismayed to hear that users are struggling to find quality resources on the WWW, preferring to rely on free search engines rather than the gateways and content that libraries provide. However, I soon felt inspired by her vision for seamless end-user access across multiple content providers as a way to combat this.

As a librarian in an institution belonging to the M25 Consortium, I found Anne Bell, Director of Library Services at King's College, London a very informative speaker on the final

day. She talked about her experience as Chair of the M25 Group, revealing the obstacles that it had been necessary to overcome to engage the member libraries and their varying levels of experience, resources and commitment to collaboration. It was heartening to hear how the consortium is being widened not just

geographically and across sectorial boundaries but also in terms of its remit.

I would just like to thank the London branch of UC&R for the opportunity to visit the conference. I hope that this award is something that the branch will continue to finance as I

am sure others will find the experience of participating in a conference that they would not otherwise have been able to attend as rewarding both professionally and personally as I did.

Many thanks!

ALT-C and the Alison Northover Bursary

Angie Donoghue
VLE Information Adviser
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It was with thanks to the Alison Northover Bursary that I recently found myself gazing at a September seascape in Sunderland and revving up for the forthcoming Association of Learning Technologies conference, ALT-C. This event took place at Sunderland University from 9–11th September.

In my work I stagger under the title of Virtual Learning Environment Information Adviser in an e-learning project team. It was therefore the sessions on library and information research and practice on the programme that caught my attention and I was hoping to pick up a few tips. As well as some librarians, the conference attracts an eclectic mix of teachers, researchers, learning technologists, software developers and graphic designers.

The next few paragraphs describe ALT the organisation, the conference and some sessions in particular.

What is ALT?

ALT is a professional organisation that aims to:

- promote good practice in the use of learning technologies, in education and industry
- represent the members in areas of policy
- facilitate collaboration between practitioners and policy makers.

It does this through its journal (ALT-J), a programme of seminars, publications and an annual conference (ALT-C)

ALT-C attracts attendance from across the board of those interested in using technology for teaching and learning in further and higher education. Traditionally this may have been learning technologists and lecturers. Given the current enthusiasm for implementing Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) the subjects addressed by the conference papers are of interest to an increasingly wide range of staff. Multi-disciplinary teams of staff are now working together so VLEs can offer the best possible access to learning. Library and information services have a major part to play in this as recommended by the Inspiral Report (Currier, 2002).

ALT-C this year

The theme of this ninth annual conference was 'learning technologies for communication' and provided plenty of opportunities to listen and discuss. There were keynote speakers, and parallel sessions for short papers,

long papers, workshops, poster presentations and panels.

Three keynote speakers provided some interesting insights and visions from their own experiences in North America, Europe and the UK. Of all the speakers I found Lord David Puttnam the most interesting. For the past few years he has transferred his energies from film making to education. He chairs a number of committees and councils as well as being the Chancellor of Sunderland University. While he was obviously very excited about what he sees as the unrealised potential of technology in education, he was realistic about the level of investment this will require. However, he pointed out that it was not only investment that was required. He felt it was time for teachers to be getting more creative, encouraging them to reclaim the technology and not allow the "pointy-headed nerds" (his very words) to own it. Of course, pointy-headed nerds are always other people so nobody seemed too offended by this remark.

For the rest of the conference choices had to be made. Rather than present a list of sessions I didn't attend or didn't enjoy, I have singled out for further description some of those I found of particular interest to me as an Information Adviser in an academic library.

Papers

The papers sessions were short and sweet, comprising a 15 minute presentation followed by 15 minutes of questioning.

I eased myself in gently to the proceedings with a session from Ian Winship describing the work done in the University of Northumbria Library on developing guidelines for tutors in using electronic information resources in a VLE (in their case, Blackboard). With the proliferation of VLE courses there is clearly a great deal that the library and learning centre has to offer. Over the past few years the amount of information available electronically via the library has grown enormously, but accessing it can be a mysterious business to those not intimately associated with the library and all its ways. The guidelines seem to cover all a VLE unit author might wish to know about linking to electronic information (on and off campus), library catalogues, information databases, web pages, copyright, information skills and a host of other issues. Anyone embarking on the development of an e-learning unit would be informed but not scared away by these guidelines and the session kick-started me into thinking about developing something similar at Sheffield Hallam University where I work.

Research

The research sessions were longer – usually a couple of hours to enable a more detailed presentation of work. Again, the librarian in me was drawn to the paper given by Professor Jennifer Rowley describing the development of a methodology for profiling and understanding student information behaviour (Rowley, 2002). Such an understanding could enhance service delivery, performance measurement, and trend monitoring. The research has drawn on the JISC User Behaviour Monitoring and

Evaluation Framework and particularly on the work of two projects: JUSTEIS at Aberystwyth University and JUBILEE at the University of Northumbria. The analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected has identified many of the dilemmas and challenges facing those wishing to provide high quality electronic information services (EIS) for a range of students. Professor Rowley described how the research had addressed issues of representativeness, sampling and access, selection and interpretation of selected measures. She emphasised the importance of contextualising any understanding of information behaviour in the learning process and showed how elements of a methodology developed in one sector or institution can be adapted for different groups. She suggested that only by encouraging a critical approach to the research methodology can an understanding of user behaviour inform the policies and practices by the diverse institutions that exist within education.

Panels

On the final morning I attended a panel session presenting and discussing the aims and progress of ANGEL, another JISC funded project. As the project reaches maturity (about 6 months to go) it becomes much clearer what it will deliver. While its goals have been widely stated – middleware (you don't see it) to enable seamless access to resources and learning environments – how this will be achieved has been a little more obscure. However, now there is an information that introduces and explains the three different elements of the project, gives some example scenarios of what those elements will do and also offers some technical information about how they do it. The examples describe how the middleware manages the rights

groups the user is entitled to belong to, how urls can be maintained, and finally how the user is directed to the appropriate copy of any item given their rights and location (eg are they on or off campus). This is a very simplistic description and I urge you to visit the website for more details.

What did I get out of it?

For several years the term convergence has meant the integration of ICT with library and information services. With the introduction of VLE's we are experiencing another type of convergence – academic staff, computer services, administrators, library and information services all working together. This brings many new challenges and ALT-C offers a forum for all those involved to demonstrate their research and practice in the area. I arrived with concerns about how, in these days of resource based learning, information services can contribute to that learning by providing appropriate services and I left with a better grip on how libraries and learning centres might work towards achieving this.

Thank you Alison.

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Report on the 11th World ICEVI Conference 27th July – 2 August 2002

Wendy Ellison University College Chichester

I was very grateful to be a joint winner of the Alison Northover Bursary 2002 along with Angie Donoghue. This enabled me to attend the 11th World Conference of the International Council for Education of Visually Impaired People, held in the Netherlands.

The conference was an excellent opportunity for delegates from over one hundred countries to meet and discuss best practices, new developments in adaptive technology and future strategies. It was also an opportunity for the ICEVI to promote itself as an umbrella organisation for other smaller bodies concerned with educating the visually impaired. As a large international organisation, ICEVI would be able to provide information and assistance with a view to improving services and reducing costs.

As there were over two hundred presentations at the conference, then this report can only give a very personal perspective by discussing several papers and workshops which reflect my specific areas of interest. These include the provision of services for blind and visually impaired students at a higher education learning resources centre and the current developments in adaptive technology.

The University of Dortmund

Birgit Drolshagen and Birgit Rothenberg detailed the approach taken by the University of Dortmund in catering for their special needs students. This approach begins with the Dortmund Centre for Handicap and Study giving the students individual counselling, analysing a student's problems and developing an

individual model to reduce barriers. The Centre also provides training on adaptive technology and liaises with the library and other departments to initiate changes where necessary and to ensure that special needs students can participate equally with other students.

The University also provides an adaptation service, which can be used by staff and students to record study materials digitally or onto audio tape, or to transfer them into Braille or large print. The library also offers a separate adaptation service for complete books. Not surprisingly they state that for a university to be considered suitable for special needs students, then all the resources of the library must be accessible.

Vision Assessments

Ruth Nicholson talked about the work of Orthoptists working with the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind (RVIB) in Victoria, Australia. As part of the RVIB's services, Orthoptists (who are paramedical health professionals) are available to provide clients with an Orthoptic Vision Assessment (OVA). The assessment details the client's visual status and specific needs in layperson's language and when complete, the report is given to the client to use and distribute as he/she chooses. As the assessment is prepared in consultation with the client, it will not include any information which the client wishes to remain private.

Students can give copies of the report to lecturers, librarians and other support staff, so that not only will everyone have a clear idea of the student's needs, but the student doesn't have to keep reiterating his or her situation. Students are also encouraged to use the report to obtain the extra help or modifications that they are entitled to under the law.

An evaluation on the effectiveness of the reports was recently carried out, which concluded that not only were the reports beneficial to most users (i.e. 96% of the respondents), but that in over two thirds of these cases, recommendations and suggestions contained in the report were acted upon.

E-Learning

Will the development of the virtual learning environment (VLE) mean that blind and visually impaired students can learn on a level playing field with other students? This is the question behind a research project at the Royal National College for the Blind in Herefordshire. Shirley Evans, who is part of the research team, gave details of the project and discussed some of their findings.

After looking at various VLEs, the team concluded that few of them were easily accessible to blind or visually impaired users or easy to use. This meant that students would need extra training for the variety of E-content they might encounter in higher education.

The project addressed this problem by setting up a discussion board where students explored social issues using the VLE of Blackboard and the screen reader JAWS. In this way the students could familiarise themselves with a VLE and develop their ICT skills. On a more personal level, the team found that in some cases the discussion board enhanced the visually impaired students' participation in face to face discussions, helping to them combat the social isolation they often experience.

The research also suggests that as the technology improves allowing more accessibility and forms of delivery, there will be an increased need for staff training and development.

However, although E-learning may help to redress the balance in terms of accessibility, it should be seen as only one element of a broader learning experience that develops a wide range of skills.

Software Developments

A significant part of the conference was given over to the presentation of new access and information technologies being developed around the world.

Paul Blenkhorn from UMIST discussed a suite of tools that will shortly be available which will allow non-specialist staff to produce a standard Microsoft Word document into large print, speech or Braille. As long as the PC is connected to the appropriate hardware, the user can just select the preferred format and the software prepares the layout and produces the document in the required format.

Deborah Gilden from San Francisco talked about how she had introduced one of her mechanical engineering students to the features of Microsoft Office. By increasing the font size and changing the colours for both the background and the font, the student was able to see what he had created on screen for the first time.

This has led to the student creating graphs and diagrams using PowerPoint and Excel. However the general mood of the questioning seemed to indicate that visually impaired users felt this was inadequate and although sighted teachers might see the Microsoft features as cheap and easy screen magnifiers, students should really be using specialised packages such as JAWS or Supernova.

The "Wow" Project from the Netherlands is concerned with the development of an accessible website with online games for blind and visually impaired users. This project was particularly interesting as they had decided not to try and adapt the

graphical user interface used in visual games, but instead they looked for the 'essence' of a game and translated that into a sound based environment. The team demonstrated 'Drive', a racing game that identifies speed as the essence and translates this into sound using real voices, function sounds and music that changes as the speed increases. The game was both exciting and fun and retained many of the popular features of visual games such as skill levels and bonuses. The game is due for release shortly.

Hardware Developments

In the workshop sessions, representatives of Pulse Data International (PDI) from New Zealand and Freedom Scientific from the United States each demonstrated new portable notetakers for the blind and visually impaired.

PDI is developing its BrailleNote and VoiceNote models, which use the Windows CE operating system within an 'access shell', allowing the student to use all the usual notetaker applications such as email, word processing and databases.

The student can input information using a standard computer or Braille keyboard (both quiet enough for use in lectures) and access information using a speech synthesiser or refreshable Braille display output. The company's design philosophy is one of compatibility rather than direct access, so avoiding the problems of translating the graphical user interface, or as Larry Lewis from PDI put it "...an equal environment as opposed to equal access".

Of particular interest to blind and visually impaired delegates was the new BrailleNote GPS which includes Global Positioning Technology enabling the user to navigate in unfamiliar surroundings and find restaurants, hotels and other places of interest. Any route taken can then be reloaded and reversed.

Tobias Winnes demonstrated the new PAC Mate from Freedom Scientific which incorporates Microsoft and Intel technology with the JAWS screen reader. It aims to utilise the Pocket PC Suite of applications along with other custom developed features and functions.

Internet browser facilities will also feature strongly in this new generation of portable notetakers.

Although there were far too many new and improved products presented at the conference to cover in detail here, it would be remiss not to at least mention the hard work and innovation of the following two companies.

Firstly, Exceptional Teaching Aids, Inc. for their development of the SAL (Speech Assisted Learning) system, which aids the teaching of Braille and secondly Dancing Dots, for their development of the Goodfeel translators, which automatically translate music files into Braille.

Conclusion

Overall I felt that the conference was well organised and in particular I would like to pay tribute to the Programme Committee who managed to put together such an interesting and varied programme. I regret that I have only been able to highlight a few of the many presentations which I attended, however I hope that I have been able to give a useful insight into some of the current practices and new technologies in this field.

Further information is available from the ICEVI website at <http://www.icevi.org/> and if anyone wishes to contact me, my email address is: w.ellison@ucc.ac.uk.

Finally I would like to express my thanks to the Alison Northover Bursary Panel and University College Chichester who made it possible for me to attend the conference.

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East Midlands

A half-day event entitled ‘Academic library futures: the library, the user, the staff, the vision’ was held at Nottingham Trent University in June 2002. An interesting mix of speakers considered the topic from the various perspectives and there was an opportunity for delegates to participate in discussion.

A full programme of events for the forthcoming academic session is in preparation, of which the first is a session by Dr Andrew Lacey on the Special Collections at the University of Leicester Library on 19 November. The next meeting planned is one on dyslexia at De Montfort University in December.

The committee has had a change of treasurer with the departure of Ruth Curtis from the University of Nottingham on maternity leave. Philip Thornborow from University College Northampton has taken on the role, and Ruth’s successor on the committee representing the University of Nottingham is Rachel Bell. Another new committee member is Georgina Payne from University College Northampton, whose specific role is to develop the region’s web page.

Philippa Dyson
 Secretary, UC&R East Midlands
 Section
 University of Lincoln

West Midlands

Because you’re worth it: marketing library and information services
 Coventry University, 21 May 2002.

A football stadium, a television newsroom and a night-club. The

connection? These are just some of the ways to transform and promote libraries suggested by delegates at this workshop on the importance of effectively marketing library and information services.

This one day event at Coventry University’s Lanchester Library brought together staff from a wide range of backgrounds, with the HE, FE, public, special and government library sectors all represented among the delegates. Led by Antony Brewerton of Oxford Brookes University, the importance of marketing to the survival of library services was discussed, along with some of the theories underpinning good marketing strategies, and some case studies of effective marketing.

In light of the extra burdens on our time brought about by new library resources and activities, many might feel that marketing has a low priority. However, if we fail to promote ourselves and our services we could find libraries becoming increasingly marginalised. Antony claimed that stereotypes of librarians matter, because limited, stereotyped customer perceptions of libraries can limit the take up of the benefits we can offer.

Focusing on benefits to customers was perhaps the main theme running through Antony’s initial presentation. Customers are not interested in what we do, but in what they can do and how the library can help them do it. Perhaps librarians can follow the lead of Charles Revson of Revlon Cosmetics – “In the factory we make cosmetics; in the drug store we sell hope.”

Other top tips for marketing included: the importance of listening to your customers and putting yourself in their mindset; taking a positive

approach that focuses on strong, simple messages; and ensuring that marketing events are planned to take advantage of, or avoid clashing with, other events.

In the second session of the day, Coventry University’s Pat Noon took us through the promotion and marketing required first to secure funding for the building of the university’s new library, and second to promote the library once complete. Continuing the theme from the previous session, the need to promote the potential benefits of a new building, rather than its features, was highlighted.

In addition, tailoring marketing activities for specific stakeholders / customer groups was mentioned as key to the success of this particular marketing venture. Face-to-face promotional events, though all on a similar theme, were tweaked and turned to be as relevant as possible to each group. The result of all that promotion is that the new library building is now itself used as a major promotional tool by the university.

After lunch and the obligatory tours around the Lanchester Library we returned to a presentation of marketing events case studies led once again by Antony Brewerton. After hearing of how Oxford Brookes librarians have variously dressed as Dracula, handed out apples to students, and turned students into walking library adverts through the use of stickers, the remainder of the day was given over to group activities.

Asked to develop a one-off marketing campaign for a library product or service, the groups responded with a diverse range of approaches, from giving away mini footballs and CDs

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(all sponsored, of course), to running video loop presentations and mock news stories on student radio. All this, along with a noticeable concentration of campaigns focusing on electronic resources, showed awareness of the need to move from the image of the shushing librarian stamping books.

After a round-up of the different proposed campaigns the workshop came to a close. Like many others, I left with an enthusiasm to devise new ways of promoting the benefits of our services to our various customers. All who attended will now wait with interest to see whose marketing event can get mentioned in CILIP Update first!

Martin Wolf
Information Services
Cardiff University

Yorkshire and Humberside

SEND (The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001) and its implications for learning resources provision: an event organised by Yorkshire and Humberside, UC&R Wednesday 13 March 2002, Sheffield Hallam University

This well-attended event started with an overview of the legislation and its implications for libraries and went on to examine some ways (provision for dyslexic users, web design and accessibility, support from JISC TechDis) of not only complying with the legislation but making sure that library services are made accessible to disabled people, thus improving services overall.

Sophie Corlett from SKILL (the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities) outlined the way in

which SEND fits in to the existing framework of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. SEND is the DDA part 4. It is not solely full time students who attend a course that are covered. Those covered include people who are:

- going on a training course, even for half a day
- attending an evening class at a local school
- students on a part-time or full time course
- someone enquiring about applying for admission or enrolment, including attending an Open Day at the institution
- ... and many others!

This session provided a number of answers regarding where the legislation will fit in with existing legislation and helped to reduce some concerns which participants had.

Rob Woodford (Sheffield Hallam University), the next speaker, delivered a very interesting talk on Dyslexia that also included some practical exercises in order to illustrate how a dyslexic person may encounter difficulties in libraries. On occasions in libraries staff are repeatedly asked if they will help someone use the catalogue. At first staff oblige but over a period of time help is required so frequently that the student is recognised and the staff attitude may change. It is worth remembering that a disability such as dyslexia may inhibit a person's use of the library and its facilities so, even if asked repeatedly for help using the catalogue for example, it is worth remembering that the student may have a reason for it, not that they just want spoon-feeding.

One thing that arose out of this was an exercise to show how numbers can present difficulties for dyslexic library

users. To test short-term memory, we had to write down the numbers said to us but in reverse order so 17 became 71. As one would expect when the series of numbers lengthened, it became harder to reverse the order. Within a library context, if someone experiences difficulties with numbers we could be making it harder for them to find a book by classifying too specifically.

One thing to consider is, should we broaden the subject area, thereby decreasing the length of the class number? It may be better to give a shorter number thereby increasing the possibility of all users finding a book instead of only non-dyslexic users having the greater success rate.

A reasonable adjustment could also be no longer producing handouts on a single colour paper but having them all available in a variety of colours in order to 'catch' those who may have a preference for a particular colour.

This presentation provided an opportunity to experience the difficulties encountered by people who have dyslexia and better appreciate that what we take as an everyday occurrence, they see as a difficulty that can at best be described as a challenge. We saw both the mountains and molehills that dyslexic people experience in this presentation.

Jenny Craven (CERLIM) followed this talk by one on Web design and accessibility.

CERLIM has done a variety of research into accessibility for people with visual impairments. The projects include REVIEL (Resources for Visually Impaired Users of the Electronic Library); ACCESS (Electronic Access for All) and NoVA (Non-visual Access to the Digital

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Library). Jenny started by dispelling some myths that surround Web design, such as:

“Accessible sites have no colour, pictures or multimedia features” - the RNIB recommend that web sites should have contrasting colours rather than recommending colours in particular. Italics can be a problem as they break up the text; so it is better to use a bold font or a different colour.

“Accessible web design just caters for a few disabled people” -

Accessibility helps people who:

- have difficulty reading or comprehending text;
- cannot see or hear some types of information;
- cannot use a keyboard or mouse;
- have early browser versions, text only browsers or slow PCs;
- use small screens, e.g. mobiles.

“Making sites available is not as complicated as it may at first appear” – e.g.

- Hypertext links – avoid ‘click here’ as not everyone can see this. It would be better to use a more descriptive piece of text such as click to go to search page.
- Font size and style – the standard size should be either 12 or 14.
- Descriptions – should be provided for all images and sound. If you use text only you can see those images that have been named whilst those that haven’t are listed as “Link, link, link” and so on.
- Care should be taken when using frames and tables (in some instances logical progression is to read left to right, however with tables especially it could be intended that the column is read from top to bottom, which can make using a screen reader difficult).

One website Jenny directed us to, as an example of good practice, was the University of Central Lancashire’s site. A web site can be checked for accessibility using either Bobby; LynxView, RNIB Web audit, and of course we must not forget to ask the people who use the site.

This presentation provided an opportunity to see some sites that were good and some that are not very good either because of the lack of information or poor choice in colours as well as encouraging those who design web sites to consider all users of the site.

Simon Ball of TechDis (Technology for Disabilities Information Service) delivered the final presentation.

TechDis is a JISC funded service. The TechDis mission statement best describes what they are doing:

“To provide information and advice to the HE and FE sectors on the use of new and existing Information/Communication Technologies, to enhance access to learning and teaching, research and administration activities for students and staff with disabilities”

Their website, <http://www.techdis.ac.uk>, includes a variety of items including staff development tools and exercises to help design and develop accessible materials. There are also two databases; TechDis Knowledge Database – which is a searchable bank of information about technology and disability and TechDis Accessibility Database – which lists over 2500 items of assistive technology used to support students with a disability. This database is very like a shopping basket as it gives descriptions/guides/costs of items and

where they can be purchased.

There are a number of questions to be asked within our own libraries, such as:

- are there any barriers within the workplace that a disabled person may experience difficulties with?
- is there a reluctance to come into the library in the first place and if so, why?
- are the OPACs suitable for all users?
- are aisles too narrow?
- is access between floors okay?
- do you virtually need a torch to find books on the shelves?
- are books shelved on shelves that are too high, or too low for all people to reach?

TechDis have been involved in a project to compare VLEs. By the time this report on the SEND event is published the report on the TechDis project should have been published. It will be free for all institutions and will be sent to Disability and Staff Development Officers nationally.

*Wendy Wrigglesworth
University of Bradford*

Thomas Danby College in Leeds was the venue for ‘Let’s be real!Stic: Info Skills for the real world’. The one day event, which was the result of collaboration between the Big Blue project, the JISC Regional Support Centre for Yorkshire & Humber, and UC&R Yorkshire and Humberside, focused on the delivery of info skills in FE and HE institutions. Emphasis was placed on how to develop Information Skills (IS), training while remaining realistic about the amount of time and resources available.

Philip Pothan, JISC Communications Manager, began the conference by

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asking the question, what are Info Skills and why are they important? He stressed the importance of IS given recent developments with MLEs and VLEs. Philip went on to talk about new projects such as Exchange for Learning (X4L) which will see further innovations in ILT. He finished his presentation by asking: "Librarians are toast, or are they the best thing since sliced bread?"

Claire Ryan then gave an overview of the Big Blue project which has been looking at Information Skills training in UK Further and Higher Education. Claire demonstrated one of the key outputs of the project- the Information Skills toolkits. The toolkits provide ideas and inspiration on a variety of aspects of IS training using case studies, links to websites and results of the project's research.

At this point the delegates split into groups to attend their choice of two out of the three available breakout sessions.

In session A Laura Haddon from University of Leeds demonstrated how she has created online tutorials for Law databases as part of the CASE Project which is looking at Law Library Collaboration in Yorkshire and Humberside. The tutorials are designed to create the impression of doing a guided 'live' search of the database but are created by copying the HTML from the live database pages and producing static versions that link to each other to give the impression of working through a search.

In session B Jo Rowley demonstrated the online induction she has created at Tamworth and Lichfield College using the Learnwise VLE. The induction is designed to reach students (such as part-time and

evening students) who miss out on traditional induction sessions. It also provides an opportunity for students who have received induction some time ago to refresh their knowledge. The tutorial includes an online test that examines students' learning and allows them to 'jump back' to sections of the tutorial that they may have skimmed over.

Meanwhile, in session C, Karen Lambe, of the JISC RSC-YH, demonstrated 'Hot Potatoes', a free piece of software that is available to educational institutions. The workshop examined how to create and structure quizzes that could be incorporated into Info Skills sessions. Quizzes included multiple choice questions, crosswords and gapfills.

After lunch the delegates came back together for a session with Emma Place from the RDN's Virtual Training Suite (VTS). The VTS has recently launched a series of tutorials aimed at FE students and Emma talked about the ways in which the tutorials can be used as part of teaching sessions. Emma particularly emphasised the free teaching notes and promotional materials.

The group then went their separate ways again for the final set of breakout sessions.

In session D Gareth Johnson talked about the Iliad (Information Literacy in all Departments) project at the University of York. Iliad is an IS and IT course that students can take to gain credit toward the York Award. The course can be taken either by attending teaching sessions or through self-directed study. First year students take a route that develops skills for university study, while students at other levels study a route that prepares them for the world of work.

In session E, Kay Moore talked about her experience of using Blackboard to deliver Information Skills at Sheffield Hallam University. A framework has been developed within Blackboard that can be adapted to teach Information Skills to any subject group with the aim of enabling staff to embed IS into learning and teaching. Kay discussed how the framework has been designed, implemented and evaluated.

Finally, in session F, Muriel O'Hanlon discussed her experiences of using RISK-IT at Knowsley College. RISK-IT is a course that students can work through independently at their own pace to gain research and information skills using IT. The course can be bought from Knowsley Associates and adapted for use at other institutions.

Feedback for this oversubscribed event was extremely positive. Comments included: "speakers very knowledgeable", "small chunks = variety of ideas" and "relevant choice of topics, good speakers and good lunch".

Overall, the event was a very enjoyable and successful collaborative venture.

Claire Ryan, Big Blue
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Karen Lambe, RSC-YH
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Helen Howard, University of Leeds and UC&R Yorkshire and Humberside
h.e.howard@leeds.ac.uk

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LC&R Award for Innovation

Moira Bent of the University of Newcastle and Christine Purcell of the University of Durham are the first winners of the £1000 UC&R Award for Innovation.

The award is intended to reward and support an individual, group or team pursuing innovation and excellence in the broad area of learning and teaching, and learner support, within academic, national or research libraries.

Moira and Christine will investigate the use of a VLE to develop and deliver collaborative library staff training, initially at Durham and Newcastle University Libraries, but with the potential to extend this work to other university libraries in the North East.

The UC&R panel felt that their application had clearly articulated and impressive deliverables, with extra interest provided by the collaborative dimension. The award winners already have experience of collaborative training and development in the form of the LibLearn programme and we are confident that they will disseminate their work to a wider community.

Alison Northover Bursary

Applications are invited for the 2003 Alison Northover Bursary

The bursary is awarded annually, to commemorate the contribution to librarianship made by Alison Northover, Deputy Head of Reader Services in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and committee member and Treasurer of the University, College and Research Group of the Library Association (UC&R).

Alison died aged 48 in July 1997. She was committed to professional development, both of herself and of others.

PURPOSE

The bursary is intended to support professional development, in particular, course or conference attendance. While the bursary may contribute towards meeting fees, it will not necessarily cover travel expenses. The bursary is not intended to contribute to fees or living expenses associated with library school courses.

REQUIREMENTS

Candidates should preferably be in current employment in library / information work, and must be in current membership of the University, College and Research Group of CILIP. Successful candidates will be expected to give a report suitable for publication in the Group's journal, Relay.

APPLICATIONS

Applicants are asked to submit the following:

- a brief CV
- their CILIP membership number and confirmation of membership of UC&R
- details of how the bursary will be spent
- two supporting references (in signed and sealed envelopes)
- a rationale (no longer than 500 words) of how the bursary will support their personal and professional development in academic library and information work.

If exact sums are not known on application, an estimate may be given.

Four copies of letters of application and any supporting documentation should be sent to the UC&R Hon. Secretary, Jo Webb at the address given below. Applications will be considered by a sub-committee of the Group committee. The sub-committee's decision will be final. The bursary will be awarded annually only if suitable candidates apply.

AMOUNT OF AWARD

For 2003, the value of the bursary is set at a maximum of £500. This amount may be varied from time to time at the discretion of the bursary sub-committee. At the discretion of the sub-committee, an award less than £500 may be made, or the amount split between two or more applicants.

DEADLINE

Applications should be made by February 28. The names of successful candidates will be announced at the UC&R AGM. Please send applications by to: Jo Webb, UC&R Hon. Secretary, Kimberlin Library, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester LE1 9BH. Tel 0116 207 8046. Fax 0116 257 7046,

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