



LibraryConnect

Partnering with the Library Community

newsletter

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Welcome

- Customers should always come first. The theme of this Library Connect issue deals with — in the broadest sense — the challenge of improving customer service. Articles frame the subject from a number of perspectives, and parallels can be identified in how customer service is being addressed by librarians and Elsevier.

It's clear customer service is on everyone's radar screen. We all agree the main ingredients required for excellent customer service are "get the basics right," "listen, listen, listen to your customers" and "measure your success."

The importance of listening to your customer is underlined by the interview with lab administrator Jane Rigg from Caltech, who offers pragmatic advice for librarians and publishers alike. The success of customer-focused projects such as those at Griffith University in Australia and Malaysia's Multimedia University further demonstrates how customer satisfaction increases when services are developed with users' needs at the core. At Elsevier, we've recently engaged in serious listening efforts in the form of more than 1,000 telephone interviews with librarians worldwide.

In the article from Colette McKenna, we hear how information services at the University of Ulster work together to better serve their customer groups, and how they measure success against performance indicators based on access, user support, facilities and services, consultation with users, and staff development. This is a comparable approach to that taken by Elsevier's Librarian Customer Service Program outlined in the article by Felix Haest, project manager. During 2005, we've introduced point-of-service customer surveys resulting in an ongoing internal "dashboard" to monitor customer satisfaction.

I'm pleased we are devoting an issue of Library Connect to customer service because it has become clear to us that Elsevier must improve in this area. The good news is Elsevier management has given a high priority to improving our service. We're now implementing concrete and positive changes to improve the service experience for you and our mutual end-user customers. It is my hope that you will find the articles in this issue of interest. I'm confident we can learn from each other, so please let me know, via libraryconnect@elsevier.com, if you have specific feedback or suggestions.

Best regards,

Frank Vrancken Peeters
Managing Director Sales, Science and Technology, Elsevier, Amsterdam, The Netherlands



Frank Vrancken Peeters

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Don't miss our **staying connected** pull-out in the center of this issue!

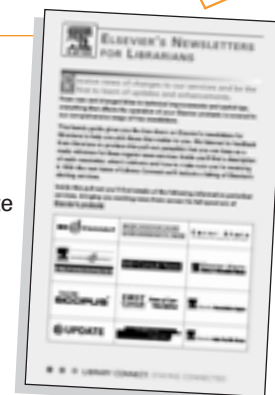


STAYING CONNECTED Elsevier's Newsletters for Librarians

- Receive timely updates on changes to Elsevier services.
- Access tips and tricks to help you get the most out of your resources.
- Be the first to hear about new content, new product availability, and enhancements to Elsevier services.

No one knows the value of keeping abreast in an environment of constant change quite like a librarian. At a recent focus group, we learned we need to do more to make you aware of information Elsevier product teams produce for our librarian customers.

This issue sees the first of two handy pull-outs edited by Shaun Briley, Library Connect marketing intern and LIS graduate student at San José State University. Pull-out #1 focuses on Elsevier's free newsletters for librarians. We know you already receive plenty of email, so we've put together our list in such a way that it should be easy to decide which will be of value to you.



Staying connected has never been simpler. Find our pull-out guide in the center of this issue.

What Users Want: A View from the Lab Bench

Jane Rigg, Laboratory Member, Administrative Staff, the Davidson Lab, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, CA, USA

On the topic of customer service, librarians and Elsevier have a shared interest in serving the research community. To get a first-hand view of what researchers need, Library Connect went straight to the research lab — the Davidson Lab to be exact — and spoke to Jane Rigg, main administrator for this prestigious group at the California Institute of Technology. Jane has worked at Caltech since 1971, with Dr. Eric Davidson, Norman Chandler Professor of Cell Biology. Library Connect's Chrysanne Lowe, VP for global account development and channel marketing, caught up with Jane to discuss the complicated relationships between researchers, librarians and publishers.

Library Connect: Can you give us a brief overview of your work at the Davidson Lab? In layman's terms, what is the focus of the research there?

Jane Rigg: We're studying the molecular biology of sea urchin embryos, focusing on gene networks. Our research is really about getting to how the adult body plan is formed, so it cuts across both developmental biology and evolution. There are no immediate applications, but that's why you do basic research.

LC: And you "run" the lab? What exactly is involved in running a lab of this calibre?

Rigg: Well, I mean I run it like an elephant. (Laughs.) There are about 35 people in the lab, so amongst getting papers out and grants out and taking care of Eric (Davidson) it's pretty busy.

LC: As an example, how many papers a year are generated by 35 people?

Rigg: I've observed that it goes in three-year cycles. You have two years

where you might have, let's say, 10 - 12 papers a year, and then the third year it goes a little higher and you have 15 - 16. Then it goes back down to 10 - 12, with multiple authors on all. And, of course, there are other kinds of output; for example, we have a lot of responsibility for the sea urchin genome project.

"... the most immediate way we work together is that every year we get a list of journals to cut."

LC: That's a significant output. What are the information needs of a research lab like yours?

Rigg: Well, we all need access to our library system, which we have. And through that we have access to PubMed, Web of Science and a Caltech system called IBID which will request articles the library does not have. The library is excellent at doing that. Usually you'll have the article by the next morning.

LC: How do your colleagues utilize research papers in their work?

Rigg: I would say most people — the post-docs and graduate students — don't access articles on a daily basis, but they certainly do look up timely articles. The lab has a weekly information session to review articles from the literature.

LC: Really? So you all get together for a weekly research review session?

Rigg: Yes, we assign various topics and each person reports on a package of papers to the rest of the lab.

LC: So this is a way for busy people to keep up? Fantastic.

Rigg: Exactly. Of course everyone tries to keep up on their own specialties, but this is a way to stay abreast of a broad span of information. I think most labs have a variation on this.

LC: And do they also get donuts?

Rigg: (Laughs.) All they get is a hard seat and information overload.

LC: Is there a difference in information needs for lab administration, i.e. grant-writing and the like, versus information needs for research purposes?

Rigg: Oh, of course. And since Eric is writing a book, I'm on PubMed or Web of Science constantly. That's certainly different from what a normal post-doc would be doing.

LC: So as a lab manager, how do you work with the library?

Rigg: Well, of course the most immediate way we work together is that every year we get a list of journals to cut. And to be truthful I've never seen a journal on that list that didn't beg the question: Why are we getting that journal in the first place? I mean there's some really obscure stuff. But that's good in that they've been able to keep things going without cutting the real core of the library. This is definitely to our betterment.

LC: How do you work with your librarian?

Rigg: Well we've known each other for a long time. He's very aware of what professors and students need. I think librarians all try to do the best they can and they get very, very frustrated, I know. I got a call from our librarian a couple years ago when *Mechanisms of Development* spun off *Gene Expression Patterns*, which used to be a subset of the journal. I don't know why, but he called me and was infuriated. The library never subscribed to that journal. So we don't get it through the library. We actually get our own subscription directly from Elsevier. But really the library is very aware and I think they do a wonderful job.

LC: So for certain specialized publications the lab gets its own subscriptions?

Rigg: Yes. And of course Eric is editor of *Developmental Biology* so we get that. We get *PNAS (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences)* because he's a member of the Academy. We also subscribe to *Development*. Of course the library has that title also, but Eric still likes the feel of a real journal. And we get *Gene Expression Patterns*.

LC: That's interesting. Even with all your online journals, there are still a few publications you want a physical copy of in the lab.

Rigg: That's right. It's whittling down. The bottom line is: For Eric's favourite journals, he still wants print.

LC: So, it's really just a matter of tradition?

Rigg: It is. But there are times when print offers benefits. For instance if Eric wants to reproduce a figure from a paper, the quality of scans from electronic copies is not as good as those directly from a print journal. So there are some reasons for at least keeping the last couple of years of those journals in the lab — if you're writing a book. (Laughs.)

LC: What are your expectations as to good customer service from your library? You've mentioned that if the library keeps the core journals you feel you are being well-served.

Rigg: Right. I mean, if they started sending around a list saying they were going to cut their subscription to *Mechanisms of Development*, I would be very upset. But if it's some arcane Swedish journal I've never heard of, it's fine with me.

LC: Does the library ever add new titles? Or are you always faced with cuts?

Rigg: No, they do in some special cases add journals. For example, they're getting *Developmental Cell*, which surprised me because that's the same situation as with *Gene Expression Patterns* — where the title

was spun off from the original journal. But, I think that happened long ago enough that they didn't react with such a hissy fit this time. (Laughs.) *Gene Expression Patterns* is a minor journal so I can understand in some ways why they decided not to subscribe to it. But it's a nuisance for us because we do, in that case, have to have a department copy.

“All I want to be sure of, is that somehow the two sides keep it going so we can have access to probably more journals than we need.”

LC: Now, I'm going to ask a controversial question here. It's clear that you have a great relationship with your library. If the library can't subscribe to something you need, you are very understanding and your lab will take its own subscription. That means that somewhere within CalTech the money is being paid for this. Have you ever thought of pooling resources?

Rigg: (Long pause.) No. The labs are pretty much like little fiefdoms and pooling just wouldn't work. You'd just end up with a mess. As far as the library goes, except for this one isolated incident, I've had no problems with the decisions they've made. If, when they send around the list next year, I want to protest about one of the journals, I can do that. And they would probably comply if I could show that it was used. So no, I think I want them to do their business...

LC: And you'll make your own decisions and you'll both respect each other.

Rigg: Yes. (Laughs.)

LC: Now, what are your expectations as to good customer service from a publisher?

Rigg: I want publishers to work with the library so that I can use the university library system as the primary access point for journals. I don't want to go

to ScienceDirect directly; it's there in the background, but for me I like the “Amazon-simplicity” of a one-stop shop.

LC: Overall, are you optimistic or pessimistic about where publishing is heading and how it will impact your lab?

Rigg: I'm very optimistic. I think it's going great. I think it's getting easier and easier to access what you want quickly. I think the role of the traditional published journal is important — the excellent peer review process — and I can't see any reason it shouldn't continue to grow.

LC: We realize that when license negotiations get heated between libraries and the publishers, researchers are often caught in the middle. What are your feelings about this and what suggestions do you have for both librarians and publishers?

Rigg: Well, I'm just grateful I haven't been involved. I don't know the details and I don't want to know. All I want to be sure of, is that somehow the two sides keep it going so we can have access to probably more journals than we need. But, if these situations are forced upon us, it's better to go with maintaining core e-journals, even if that means you have to keep cutting obscure journals. I mean, we have to keep this going somehow. So I think it's just a steady stream of compromises here. To be perfectly honest, both sides can probably get a bit holier-than-thou and that doesn't help. I think for the end user at least, the library and the publisher have managed to keep things going at a good clip and that's what we care about.

LC: Very pragmatic words of wisdom for all of us. Jane, we really appreciate you making the time to talk with us.

Rigg: Thank you. It's been a pleasure. ■

Piecing the Customer Service Puzzle

**Colette McKenna, User Services Librarian,
University of Ulster, Coleraine, Co.
Londonderry, Northern Ireland**

Proactively meeting the needs of our users is the *raison d'être* of the library at the University of Ulster. By actively engaging with our university community and listening to its changing needs, the library identifies and develops strategies in support of the university's vision.

We all know that's not as easy as it sounds. Achieving a balance between setting realistic targets for excellent customer service, measuring them, and getting the job done is the real challenge we face.

The library at the University of Ulster is part of the university's Information Services Department (ISD). More than 160 staff work in the department which covers Library Services, IT User Services, Corporate Information and Infrastructure, and Reprographic Services, as well as the University Archives Service. The library has around 100 staff and operates libraries and learning resource centers on each of the university's four campuses. To provide the best possible service to our customers, we recognize the importance of highly motivated and committed staff and work closely with the university's staff development unit to support library staff.

An active dialogue between ISD and the university communities it serves allows the department to:

- Meet users' expectations and needs for high quality services in IT, information resources and print.
- Deliver these services effectively, efficiently and responsively.
- Develop and enhance close partnerships with faculties and other university departments so as to encourage best working practices.
- Plan ahead cooperatively to keep pace with changing needs, and so provide leadership for innovation.

- Deploy with economy and efficiency resources of people, money, space and equipment.

The department's work plan is drawn up in consultation with other university departments. Each year, we meet formally with Faculty Executive Committees to share plans and discuss information service provision issues relating directly to them. At these meetings we report on a range of performance indicators established in conjunction with faculty and students. Of course, our customers' expectations are high, and managing these expectations is where the realistic balance comes in.

ISD's major projects scheduled for the forthcoming year include a new common staff desktop (including file and print facility), a document management system and a re-design of the computer lab.

Performance indicators

At the library our service targets include performance indicators falling into the following areas:

- Access to information.
- User support services.
- Study facilities and services.
- Consultation with users.
- Library staff development.

These indicators (www.ulster.ac.uk/library/info/performance_indicators_0405.pdf) allow us to report back to users on our performance and identify weaknesses. Obviously, it's not just about setting targets. We have a monitoring system behind each target to ensure there are no surprises when it comes to end-of-year reporting. Of course, neither targets nor indicators should remain static. You've got to shake things up every few years, to look at new ways of doing things and incorporate new ideas.

Building relationships

Front-line customer service at the library is the responsibility of our User Services team. Members of this team include



Colette McKenna

library managers on each campus, and a customer support librarian working cross-campus. Each university faculty is assigned a faculty librarian, also a member of the team, with cross-campus responsibilities. Faculty librarians are supported by assistant librarians on each campus.

Faculty librarians engage with our customers by sitting on faculty boards and sub-committees concerned with teaching, learning and academic support services. They consult formally with deans and associated representatives on an annual basis to inform and prepare budgetary estimates of information requirements. Ongoing listening to these customers is essential. For example, faculty librarians gather feedback from faculty and students regarding trials of electronic resources. This information is then used in making purchasing decisions. In addition, they engage with faculties at course program validations. Provision of information resources is vital for the auditing and accreditation of courses and it certainly raises job satisfaction levels for our staff when faculty come back with comments regarding the excellence of our resources and services.

The User Services team also provides information skills sessions tailored to meet student, academic staff and researcher needs. These are complemented by Web pages and user guides for specific subject areas. In response to user comments on the availability of resources, much emphasis has been placed on acquiring digitized material and developing online resource lists. These recent initiatives also benefit our increasing e-learner community.

Complementing the team's activities are those performed by the customer support librarian whose cross-campus duties include supporting non-traditional users, coordinating health and safety matters, and responding to comments

made by students and staff. Our team continually explores new ways of involving the student body. In collaboration with colleagues in the Information Services Department and in consultation with a representative range of students and staff, the customer support librarian has developed the ISD Student Charter (www.ulster.ac.uk/isd/charter.) The charter sets out the standards of service the university aims to provide in terms of library, IT and reprographics services. Twice a year, the customer support librarian and campus library managers meet formally with the students' union to discuss issues pertaining to each campus. This is a really useful channel of communication with our students, a group with whom it is becoming increasingly difficult for the library to engage.

The library's user community doesn't end with faculty and students. The assistant director for library services and the customer support librarian regularly meet with institutions in the further education sector with which the university has established partnerships. The ongoing drive towards increasing national collaboration in course provision means faculty librarians need to be closely involved, liaising with library counterparts from other institutes, as well as faculty.

There are also new customers to take into account. In the past year, the university has created a number of research institutes. To meet the information needs of these institutes a cross-faculty working group has been created, including members of the Information Services Department. We need to anticipate and meet information needs of these institutes and at present, the viability of an institutional repository and digitization of local resources are being explored.

Collecting feedback

Balance is important, not just in assessing performance but also in understanding our customer needs and evaluating feedback. Measuring success shouldn't just be a matter of counting things; we need also to look at people's perceptions of our services. The qualitative is just as important as the quantitative if you are looking for the most rounded picture

possible. We therefore rely on several feedback mechanisms.

In addition to gathering quantitative data, we collect informal verbal feedback and examine meeting reports of staff and student consultative bodies. Using online forms, available via the library website, we invite "3 Cs" (Comments, Compliments and Complaints) and we're committed to acknowledging receipt of these and replying, if requested, within three working days. Underpinning these efforts we also participate in surveys, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. We get comments on our service and resources from final year students through the university's annual questionnaire surveying students' experience at the university. All these insights are valuable pieces in the jigsaw that reflects students' views and perceptions.



About the University of Ulster Library

The University of Ulster Library operates libraries and learning resource centres on each of the university's four campuses – Coleraine, Jordanstown, Magee and Belfast. The library holds one million books and subscribes to 4,314 print journals. In addition, it provides access to more than 10,000 full-text electronic titles. Some 15,000 monographs are added to the library's stock every year and more than 400 electronic books are also available.

www.ulster.ac.uk/library

This year, we participated in the LibQUAL survey (www.libqual.org.) It's the first time we've undertaken such a wide-ranging survey of students and staff and we're keen to gain as much information as we can about their perceptions and expectations. We surveyed all our users via the online questionnaire with a response rate of 7.2%. At present, we're analyzing results and awaiting outcomes with interest. Initial findings indicate a need to improve the library as a place and to look at the effectiveness of our user communications. It is likely we will participate in LibQUAL again in two to three years, giving us sufficient time to analyze results and take action to improve services where appropriate.

What we like about LibQUAL is that, as well as collecting plenty of quantitative data, there's an opportunity to insert qualitative questions. Free text comments we've received in response to these are varied, naturally, with respondents referring to library staff as both "excellent, helpful, knowledgeable and courteous" and "cheeky and unhelpful" and to our resources as "awesome" and "amazing" or lacking in computers, books and specialized information. Qualitative feedback becomes so much more useful with the benefit of critical mass to help identify real patterns and areas for improvement and weed out respondents who may just be having a bad day.

Delighting customers

One final initiative to note is the Business Process Change Group, recently established at Ulster. The group's remit includes reforming the management of the student experience from initial contact to registration and throughout the entire teaching and learning experience. Its findings will inform our future strategic decision-making and target setting.

In the end, our ultimate aim is to exceed our users' expectations, throughout their experience at the University of Ulster, by delivering excellence in all aspects of our service. We want to get the balance right and delight our customers, whatever kind of day they may be having. ■

Why Customers Must Come First

Felix Haest, Project Manager, Library Customer Service, Elsevier, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

In the dim and distant past, before e-publishing, most of Elsevier's relationships with institutional customers were conducted through agents, a system continuing on the print side today. The electronic era brought dramatic changes — first the introduction of Elsevier electronic subscriptions, then ScienceDirect. Elsevier chose to sell and provide support for ScienceDirect directly to our librarian customer base. Since then, increasing numbers of customers have opted for electronic-only subscriptions. The seismic shift from print to electronic, from relying on middlemen to trading directly with customers, required the creation of significant new internal infrastructures and corporate cultures. Like all publishers, over the past decade Elsevier has been feeling its way in the digital environment, learning how customers work with our products and what their needs are when dealing with this new and interactive medium. To be truthful, this has been an organic, sometimes hit-and-miss process.

At the end of 2003, with ScienceDirect a well-established platform with customers across the academic world, Reed Elsevier chief executive Sir Crispin Davis encouraged Elsevier to put customer service at the heart of everything we do. Setting out the company's strategy for continued growth and success, he highlighted customer service as an important factor through which Elsevier could differentiate itself from our competitors.

TACKLING PROBLEMS

It was already known, however, that the goal of excellent customer service and the reality of Elsevier's customer service record were quite some way

apart. For a company with premium products and content, customer service lagged well behind.

Starting with librarian feedback

As the first step in rectifying this situation, we spent much of 2004 asking librarians what we were doing right, what we were doing wrong, and what should be done to improve our performance. Customer research included focus groups, in-depth interviews and market surveys, boosted in spring 2005 by more than 1,000 telephone interviews with librarians worldwide.

Managing customer queries

Our research indicated that following the introduction of ScienceDirect problems arose, principally as a result of issues of systems, data quality and data maintenance. Shortcomings in data management included ineffective fulfillment of entitlements. For example, journals to which institutions subscribed were sometimes inaccessible, especially across complex multi-site campuses and for members of consortia. Customers also told us our invoices were often inaccurate or lacking in transparency; sometimes they were issued for wrong amounts or wrong titles and arrived late, out of sync or without consideration for budgeting cycles. Discount fees were difficult to understand and obtain. In comparison to the level of detail provided by some other publishers, and by agents for print subscriptions, Elsevier's invoices provided insufficient detail for librarians to link them to orders.

Failures on these "hard" business issues were reflected in shortcomings reported on the "softer" customer service issues. Inadequate or unclear explanations of Elsevier's business models and products led to a lack of understanding of what these offerings really meant for an institution.

Perhaps the most frequent and fundamental complaint from customers, however, centered on the way customer queries were managed internally. Time and again, customers told us that when



Felix Haest

they had a problem they did not know who to turn to within Elsevier to get it solved. Whether for sales support, licensing, financing, account management or helpdesk issues, the lack of clear

contact points and apparent reluctance of designated individuals to take ownership of queries caused frustration. Queries were left unfulfilled, and customers often had to explain the same problem several times to different individuals. Poor query management left some librarians feeling that dealing with Elsevier was like dealing with a black hole.

In summary, librarians told us they felt genuinely confused about Elsevier's processes, burdened by complex inflexible negotiations and frustrated by poor — or non-existent — responses to their queries. We weren't being nearly human enough in our customer communications or interactions. While Elsevier had expended much time and energy making sure delivery and archiving systems were working as they should, customer service was allowed to take a back seat. Our Library Customer Research Program has changed Elsevier's perspective for good.

PROVIDING SOLUTIONS

Improving systems and increasing transparency

The result of Elsevier's consultations with librarians is a new drive to improve customer service within a streamlined organization. Our new Library Customer Service Program is designed to put internal systems right with a view to making external relations more efficient and effective — providing what Elsevier's customers want and expect from a major player in academic publishing. The program, developed in association with our librarian customer partners, will be continuously monitored and refined through constant customer feedback.

Data management and invoicing issues have been addressed and changes made so these processes work as customers have a right to expect them to and are, at the same time, clear, transparent and easy to understand. The global invoicing process has been improved, and all relevant customer details are now checked directly with the customer before an invoice is sent out. Legal language supporting terms and conditions of licensing has been substantially simplified. Later this year, to further improve transparency, pricing details for ScienceDirect products will be made available at www.info.sciencedirect.com. Of course, there is still room for improvement on contracting and licensing issues, invoicing and data quality, and we will continue to monitor customer response to changes we make in these areas.

Taking responsibility and changing culture

Based on librarians' feedback, our query management system is currently being overhauled. Under the new system, details of customer queries will be stored centrally, so if customers need to refer to a problem, its history will be immediately accessible. A culture of ownership of problems and queries is being introduced throughout Elsevier. For instance, there is now a commitment that, if helpdesk queries cannot be solved within 24 hours, ticket numbers will be issued and clear ownership for solving problems will be allocated to an expert, dedicated individual. The job performance of these dedicated query managers will be indexed by the speed and efficiency with which they resolve queries. It is anticipated that this new system will be fully functional by the end of 2005.

Actively monitoring customer service levels

To form a real-time impression of how librarians perceive our commitment to customer service, Elsevier has introduced a "dashboard" to monitor service levels. The dashboard covers 10 service areas. Customers who have recently

experienced service from Elsevier, in any one of these areas, may receive an email invitation to complete a short questionnaire about that last specific experience. We're now reporting quarterly on results from questionnaires completed and returned by librarians. These reports are receiving much attention throughout Elsevier.

The dashboard acts as a thermometer of current customer satisfaction levels. By tracking service delivery, it also supports the setting of customer-focused service-level agreements. Feedback has already resulted in a new helpdesk procedure under which, if a customer providing feedback is dissatisfied with any aspect of our service and indicates a wish to be contacted, contact is made within 48 hours.

Analysis of the fundamental causes of customer dissatisfaction is the only way to turn problems around. Elsevier is extremely grateful to all our customers who complete satisfaction questionnaires. We are committed to using this feedback to improve the service we offer.

The end of the beginning

Our Library Customer Service Program has just started. It's about changing cultures and expectations. Customer service has been identified from our research, and by our senior management, to be a hugely important issue. A clear understanding of this fact is now being turned into action. It's too soon to claim the program is delivering the wholesale changes in service our customers want, although there are suggestions of improvements in some territories and on some issues. This same message has been given to Elsevier's Director of Library Relations, Tony McSeán, in his consultations with our library advisory boards. Board members tell us improvements have been made, and are visible — but there's still a long way to go. ■

Customer Feedback

"If our "business" is the same (to provide information and knowledge to faculties, researchers and students), we need to share problems and solutions. In the new information space created by e-publishing this need is more pressing and libraries should work side-by-side with the publishers. The question is not to be good friends but to be faithful and reliable partners. Customer service is the key to this."

Gerardo Marraud, Director Biblioteca Universitaria, Universidade de Vigo, Spain

"As libraries have moved from the print-only serials world to electronic plus print and electronic-only access models, managing these collections has become complicated to say the least, particularly when dealing with large journal packages. In the early stages of this migration, neither publishers nor librarians knew how to cope with the vast amount of information related to these agreements: title lists, content fees, access fees, inflation caps, administration fees, print add-on costs, base package value, and so on. Imagine creating documentation that tracks all this information, and then reconciling this data with the publisher. This proved impossible, and still is in cases where the publisher has not committed the staff time and energy to managing these agreements."

"In those rare cases where journal package management has worked, the publisher has devoted staff to the tracking of data needed to manage title lists. Staff longevity also plays a major role in successfully migrating to electronic access, because they learn the nuances of each customer's agreement, and can quickly and correctly answer questions. Publishers' high personnel turn-over rates are not able to provide this level high level of customer service. So, providing necessary training to sales and support personnel, and then offering incentives to encourage them to remain with the company are necessary steps in improving e-journal package management."

"Elsevier account manager Kelechi Okere, and Denay Lewis, sales support coordinator, have each dedicated themselves to providing the highest quality customer service and the most thorough journal package information. While many librarians continue to be concerned about the licensing terms and pricing of STM titles, these two outstanding Elsevier staff members have made managing our content stress-free."

Becky Albitz, Electronic Resources and Copyright Librarian, Penn State University, PA, USA



Librarians Speak Up

How do you ensure excellent



Helle Lauridsen, Head of Serial Services, State and University Library, Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark

Traditionally technical services — acquisition, cataloguing, e-resource procurement and so on — have been the quiet machine humming behind busy circulation desks. But with emphasis having moved from print to e-resources this picture is changing.

Why this paradigm shift? How come users have taken up e-resources so readily that more than 50% of our total circulation is now E? Access to extra titles through big-deal agreements accounts for some of the continuing rise, but not all. My feeling is much of the rise comes from users. They embrace the ability to browse and read in their own time, in their own offices and homes, and without involvement of library staff.

So yes, in making sure our many e-resources are available, links maintained, holdings updated and correct, and access provided in a user-friendly and comprehensible way, serials departments all over the world now carry the key to libraries' most heavily used resources, the electronic resources.

Ensuring excellence in operations of serials departments or technical services helps ensure excellent customer service at libraries today. ■



Hilda Kriel, Assistant Director, Academic Information Service, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

The “high tech, high touch” concept also applies to excellent customer service.

The X and Y generations, making up most of our client body, expect service that optimizes all the benefits of technology: anywhere, anytime, personalized, at the point of need, instantly.

On the other hand it is also true that it takes more than technology to bridge the gap between the person needing a service and the person delivering a service. For that you need the right people with the right competencies and skills who can build lasting relationships.

Listen, listen, listen. Every interaction with a client is an opportunity to learn what your clients' needs are. Get feedback from clients on an ongoing basis, formally as well as informally. Getting feedback should be followed by giving feedback, to ensure you really respond to clients' needs.

Excellent customer service must become part of the culture of an organization and should be supported by every policy and procedure. It is no longer an option, it is the only way to justify our existence. ■



Yukiko Watanabe, Chief Librarian, Electronic Resources Management Section, Contents Division, Kyushu University Library, Fukuoka, Japan

We focus on accurate provision of electronic resources.

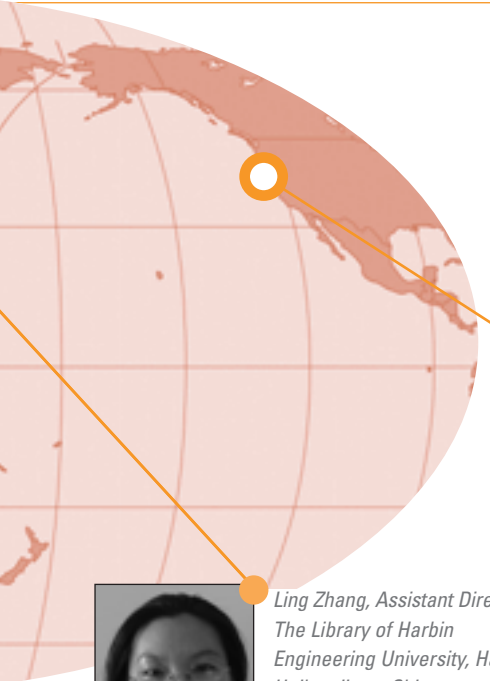
At our university, we've over the last five years developed a large collection of e-resources, but found our homegrown navigation tool did not adequately help our patrons to use the e-collection.

Last autumn I participated in the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Program and visited various U.S. libraries. I learned much about e-resource management and services that can be applied at our library.

In April 2005, our library was reorganized and a new section for e-resource management established. We also introduced an e-journal management tool and an OpenURL link resolver. Our customers can now search our library's databases and e-journals more effectively. Through the link resolver we have become the first library in Japan linking with Google Scholar.

The next step, we think, is an electronic resources management system, which will help improve customer service even more. ■

customer service at your library?



Ling Zhang, Assistant Director,
The Library of Harbin
Engineering University, Harbin,
Heilongjiang, China

Offering excellent customer service is our target. To achieve this target, we look at our customers' research or teaching processes and then identify our customers' information needs. As a librarian I do some research and teaching regarding information skills. These efforts help ensure our library staff understand our customers, who are the students and faculty in our university.

Traditional services such as circulation or reading room services are still popular no matter how digital we have become. We're never careless about details regarding traditional services, and this attention helps improve our services.

Also we are paying increasing attention to customers' personal information needs. To deliver our services exactly on time, in suitable places and in suitable ways we collect much feedback from our customers. Collecting feedback is part of our daily work.

At our library we meet and inspire customers' information needs. Excellent customer service at any library in the end results from interaction between librarians and customers. ■



Doreen P. Alberts,
Associate Director, Knowledge
Management Theravance Inc.,
South San Francisco, CA, USA

Staying on top of changes in our industry is critical to our success. Making sure information about new scientific innovations is available to our scientists allows them to respond immediately. To ensure our products and services remain competitive, we keep current with the latest technological advances and resources by networking with our vendors and other information professionals.

We continually discuss with our staff their current information needs and try to anticipate their future ones. Our high-quality information resources are aligned with our business needs and we are committed to the effective and efficient utilization of these resources.

Personalized training sessions allow our staff to become power users themselves and become better suited to evaluate new products. We encourage them to come to us with any of their information needs. They can always rely on a simple, "How can we help you?" with a smile. ■

Here's a special thank-you...

The Library Connect team would like to take this opportunity to thank librarians across the globe who've contributed to *Librarians Speak Up*.

Since *Librarians Speak Up* began in June 2003 this feature has benefited from contributions by librarians in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, England, India, Korea, Japan, New Zealand, Puerto Rico, Scotland, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Taiwan and the US.

Here are topics covered so far:

- *Who or what is your library's strongest advocate?*
- *What's the biggest issue you encounter in reaching today's users?*
- *How do you get to know your users?*
- *How do you direct users to your library's A&I resources?*
- *What's the number one archiving challenge facing librarians today?*
- *What's the most important criterion you use to measure success at your library?*

Many questions remain to be explored. To give you a heads-up, following are questions to appear in the next two issues of this newsletter.

- *How is your library helping users get the most benefit from digital resources?*
- *How is user behavior at your library changing?*

Let us know what you think

If you'd like to suggest questions or contribute, please drop a line to libraryconnect@elsevier.com

Answers to past *Librarians Speak Up* questions appear at www.elsevier.com/libraryconnect.

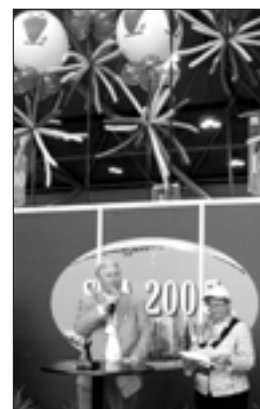
...from the Library Connect team.

Library Connect seminars offer a unique mix of updates on industry issues facing librarians and publishers plus the latest on developments at Elsevier. Seminars provide opportunities for customers to discuss issues of common concern in a neutral, non-sales-oriented environment. Speakers include librarians and industry experts from Elsevier and beyond.

AUSTRIA, APRIL — Austria was one of the first consortia worldwide to sign up for Scopus. This April, Elsevier account development manager Ove Kähler provided an intensive series of Scopus trainings. "The Austrians like Scopus," he commented, "But their questions were tough. One should certainly never underestimate them!" Our picture shows (left to right) Pamela Täubert, Scopus product sales manager and Renate Klepp, Librarian at the University of Vienna, who very much appreciated her "Never Underestimate" t-shirt.



TORONTO, MAY — Elsevier celebrated CLICK University with the SLA. At its annual conference SLA announced the launch of its "Continuous Learning to Improve Career Knowledge" or CLICK online program of courses for its members. Elsevier, a founding partner of CLICK University (www.clickuniversity.com), was represented by Daviess Menefee, Director of Library Relations for the Americas, who spoke about the importance of life-long learning. ■



BUDAPEST, APRIL — The Budapest Scopus roadshow was just one of 60 stops in 10 weeks introducing Scopus to librarians and representatives of national ministries of education across Europe, the Middle



East and Africa. Pictured left to right are Eszter Szilassy, Translator; Ove Kähler, Elsevier Account Development Manager; Ágnes Téglási, Academic Library Coordinator at the Ministry of Education in Hungary; Ildiko Madi, Local Organizer; Andrey Kovatchev, Elsevier Account Manager; and Pamela Täubert; Scopus Product Sales Manager. ■

HOT TOPICS USER BEHAVIOR AND KNOWLEDGE MINING

AMSTERDAM, JUNE — Information specialists in biotechnology, pharmaceuticals and engineering got the scoop on the latest from ScienceDirect (federated search gateway, Admin Tool and a pilot project



on knowledge mining) and Scopus (integration of chemistry sources such as Crossfire Beilstein). Marthyn Borghuis of Elsevier's usage research department provided insights into how users navigate ScienceDirect, highlighting the growing importance of linking technologies. Ulrike Frieberthshäuser from ZLB Behring GmbH Germany commented, "A yearly event on the update of Elsevier's work and future plans is very useful." ■

HOT TOPICS COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING

VIETNAM, MAY — The first ever Library Connect seminars in Vietnam were held in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, with participants from more than 50 institutes. Seminars were organized in collaboration with IGroup, Elsevier's agent in Vietnam. Guest speakers, including Choy Fatt Cheong, University Librarian from Nanyang Technological



University, Singapore; Ta Ba Hung, Director, National Center for S&T Information, Hanoi; and

Nguyen Thi Bac, Director of the General Sciences Library, Ho Chi Minh City, discussed library collection development and marketing library resources.

Nguyen Ngoc BINH, Professor with the Department of Software Engineering in the Faculty of IT and Director of the Library and Information Network (Centre), LINC Hanoi University of Technology commented, "We hope we can establish a good club/group in Vietnam to promote library and study resource activities." ■

HOT TOPICS RESEARCH OUTPUT AND USAGE GROWTH

IRAN, JUNE — At Library Connect seminars held in Tehran and Shiraz, librarians grasped the opportunity to discuss the rapid growth in use of electronic resources across Iran, as well as developments in the country's research output.

For Hamid Saniie of the Integrated Information Network Group, "Iran is one of the world's fastest growing countries in terms of articles published in academic journals... These events were a perfect opportunity for head librarians and vice-chancellors of research to meet and examine the needs of their universities in building their digital libraries." ■



UKRAINE, JUNE — Elsevier is now a regular at the annual international Crimea conference in the Ukraine. This year Neikon Consortia trainer Katja Polnikova provided demonstrations of ScienceDirect and Scopus. For Alex Mzhelsky, Elsevier account manager, it was a great success; Elsevier hosted a Library Connect seminar for librarians from five CIS republics and won a nomination for most creative booth. ■



HOT TOPICS PUBLISHING TRENDS AND ONLINE ACCESS

ALGERIA, JUNE — Library Connect seminars in the cities of Annaba and Algiers provided opportunities for librarians across the country to exchange experiences.



Publishing trends were a hot topic. The number of articles published in Algiers, for example, has increased by 110% since 2000. Online access in the country is limited due to low budgets and inadequate Internet speeds but things are changing and universities are impatient for electronic access



to scientific research. In 2005, a group was formed by the Higher Ministry of Education to build a consortium to purchase electronic resources for research and academic institutions in Algeria.

Tourab Mohamed Salah, University of Annaba, explained, "Access to online scientific research is insufficient for most research institutes and universities in Algeria: We hope this seminar will contribute to the adoption of electronic resources by Algerian universities. That would boost research in the country." ■

CHICAGO, JUNE – LIS journal editors Peter Herson, Jim Mouw and Connie Foster answered questions about how to get published at the Library Connect Editors' Session, held on the Elsevier booth at this year's ALA. ■



HOT TOPICS USER BEHAVIOR AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

JAPAN, JULY — Library Connect seminars held in Tokyo and Kyoto were supported by the National Institute of Informatics. Speakers discussed the importance of understanding user behavior vis-à-vis providing better library services and electronic products. Carol Tenopir, Professor of Information Sciences at the University of Tennessee shared research findings in two presentations: "What Does Usage Data Tell Us?" and "Researching Researchers: How Electronic Journals Have Changed Reading Patterns of Researchers."



Elsevier's Chris Kluiters, Director of Bibliographic Databases, shared experiences gained from the user-centered design approach to the development of Scopus and key findings from recent ScienceDirect referrer analysis.

Ako Iizuka from the Information Technology Center at the University of Tokyo gave a case study on how her library goes about understanding users' needs and applies findings to improve services. She commented, "It was my great honor to present at this seminar alongside Dr. Tenopir. I was moved by her passion and practical suggestions. Preparing my presentation gave me an opportunity to revisit, systematically, my daily work in understanding users." In total more than 210 delegates attended the seminars and many have reported being inspired to start projects at their own institutions. ■

HOT TOPICS USER BEHAVIOR AND USAGE DATA

SOUTH KOREA, JULY — The 4th Library Connect/Info Leaders Group seminar "Digital Library Management for Tomorrow's Leaders: Knowing Your Users In the Electronic Age" was co-organized by Elsevier and KESLI.

Carol Tenopir from the University of Tennessee addressed the question "What does usage data tell us?" and examined how electronic journals are changing reading patterns. She highlighted the close relationship between end users and usage data, and why such data is important. Korean librarians, including Kay-Sook Park from the Electronics and Telecommunications Research Institute (ETRI), felt the presentation was a "good chance to learn more on what usage data can tell us about end-user behavior."



Joost Kollöffel, Elsevier Market Intelligence Manager, provided a detailed comparison of Korea's scientific research output with that of other countries. Cheong-Ok Yoon, Professor, Chongju University, and Hui-Chul Kim, Librarian, Hanyang University, presented a case study which examined usage data and Korean user behavior.

Following breakout sessions, representatives from five groups presented on the topic of "How to gather data to help us build better collections and design better products and services?" Sook-Min Kim, a librarian at Sungshin University, "appreciated this group discussion, which allowed participants to examine real problems and issues with other librarians." ■

Customer Relationships: A Month in the Life of an Elsevier Account Development Manager

Since 2003, Frenchman Olivier Diesnis has served as an account development manager (ADM) for Elsevier. His territory includes southern European countries from Portugal to Turkey, the Middle East and Africa. Library Connect's Daria DeCooman, account development and channel marketing manager for Elsevier in San Diego, interviewed Olivier to find out more about what his job involves.

Library Connect: In a nutshell, how would you describe the work of an Elsevier ADM?

Olivier Diesnis: We work closely with librarians to ensure long-term relationships with Elsevier and act as consultants, helping promote use of e-resources.

LC: What's the pace like in your job?

Diesnis: Hectic and dynamic! Most months, I travel 70 to 80 percent of the time.

LC: Please walk us through a typical month, in the life of an ADM.

Diesnis: Usually, I attend a library conference, visit universities, and give presentations at seminars. I also work closely with sales and customer service to ensure requests are followed up.

LC: How many institutes, librarians and languages might you encounter in a given month?

Diesnis: I meet representatives of around 25 institutions across 6 countries every month. Organizing regional or national Library Connect seminars means I and other Elsevier ADMs reach many librarians. I also work with four freelance trainers based in Spain, Italy, Turkey and South Africa. Employing them allows us to offer presentations and events in a range of local languages.

LC: How do you measure your success as an ADM?

Diesnis: Happy customers. Close relationships with librarians. Trust between librarians and myself and Elsevier. Increased use of Elsevier electronic products or acquisition of additional products.

LC: What do customers talk to you about? What do they expect from an ADM?

Diesnis: We discuss their needs and worries, and plans regarding digital libraries. Librarians expect excellent customer service, training and the latest information on new developments within Elsevier.

LC: What value do you think ADMs offer our customers?

Diesnis: Opportunities for librarians to keep abreast with developments at Elsevier and with initiatives led by their peers. Library Connect seminars facilitate communication

across institutes and geographic areas. Librarians are always eager to find out about projects undertaken by their peers or Elsevier at home and abroad.

LC: What value do your customer interactions bring to Elsevier?

Diesnis: We listen to librarians' needs and inform Elsevier. This customer feedback often leads to innovation in product development and improvement in Elsevier policies.

LC: What's an amazing place you've visited as an ADM?

Diesnis: Ataturk University in Erzurum, one of Turkey's largest universities. Erzurum lies 2,000 meters above sea level in eastern Turkey. No other publisher had ever given a presentation there and 250 librarians attended our Library Connect seminar. Also, Sultan Qaboos University in Oman. The university, located outside the capital Muscat, gives the feeling of really being in the middle of the desert.

LC: What prepared you for this job?

Diesnis: Working in an Elsevier publishing group from 2001-2003, I learned about the company, the industry, and scientists' needs. My master's degree in European business administration has also been helpful. And work experience I gained in the UK and the Netherlands has enabled me to adapt to different cultures.

LC: For folks interested in becoming an ADM or following a similar career path, what advice do you offer?

Diesnis: An ADM must stay fully informed about Elsevier products and services as well as industry initiatives. Strong communication skills and flexibility are key. ADMs must be comfortable giving presentations to small and large audiences. Language skills are useful. I speak English, French and some Dutch. Above all, ADMs need to be open-minded about other cultures and able to communicate with information professionals working in diverse capacities. But in the end, it's simple: You either love it or hate it!

LC: What are the best and worst aspects of your job?

Diesnis: Best: interacting with librarians from various cultures. One day you find yourself in Portugal, the next in South Africa, Syria or Iran. Worst: missing a plane!

LC: Would you apply again for the chance to become an ADM?

Diesnis: Yes, definitely. To quote a French proverb: *Les voyages forment la jeunesse*, or traveling helps you grow up. ■



Olivier Diesnis

Heading for Success: Customer-Focused Service Improvement at Griffith University in Australia

Griffith University has 25,000 FTE students and 7 sites across 5 campuses, in Brisbane and the Gold Coast. This article discusses two large projects Griffith's Information Services team is currently working on – the Service Quality Improvement Program and the Digital Repository Project.

Sanja Tadic, Manager, Information Services and Martin Borchert, Associate Director, Access Services, Griffith University, Queensland, Australia

Information Services staff work across Griffith's five campuses, providing integrated services that span traditional library, flexible learning and information technology infrastructures. A key element allowing us to deliver such diverse services is the provision of a client-centered help center which we call "InfoServices".

The InfoServices team provides university students and staff, as well as members of the general community, with reference, information technology, and information literacy support and training face-to-face, online, and by phone and email.

The Service Quality Improvement Program

We began implementing the Service Quality Improvement Program about a year ago. The aim has been to leverage the advantages of an integrated structure to offer a superior service that can provide Griffith with a distinct competitive advantage. One obvious advantage linked to high quality services is student retention.

The program is based on the implementation of Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) principles and management practice in our services. Flowing from this is the implementation of an integrated service desk tool for the management and delivery of requests for support and information from InfoServices.

The program develops and brings together the people, vision and standards, business

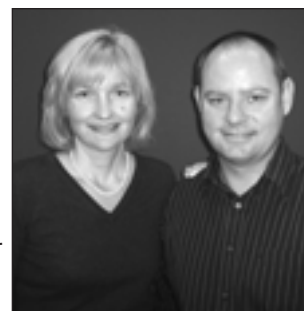
rules, processes, technology and collaborations required to provide a single point of contact. Benefits to clients and InfoServices alike include improved incident, problem and knowledge management; tracking of logged calls; provision of self-service resolution to clients via a knowledgebase; improved consistency of service; and clear communication via posted announcements.

The whole program has been a fairly big shift in the workflow of the Griffith Information Resources team. Previously our traditional structure meant students had to go to different places to get different kinds of help and support. Now they can just go to one place which acts as a single point of access for all services.

It has also been a significant change in terms of skilling up InfoServices staff. We have trained a large number of people in a diverse range of areas – from information literacy, to library support, to IT support. Already we've seen the benefits: this streamlined approach has made life a lot easier for our clients. The next change we're implementing is the service desk tool to make managing requests and reporting incidences a lot easier. InfoServices aims to absorb 80% of client queries at their first point of contact. Queries we cannot answer are escalated to either second or third tier support groups. With our new service desk tool we'll be able to record all requests and services we're providing. Likewise clients will be able to review the status of their requests online and see how they are progressing. This will help us to better manage client expectations. We classify incidents from levels 1-5, with level 1 being the most serious. We also have the capacity to post information on the status of incidents. This creates efficiencies, keeps our clients informed and means we have fewer follow-up calls. The important thing is to always keep the client informed.

We measure client satisfaction using different surveys throughout the year.

These help us to measure our performance and gauge how close we are to our goals. So far results have been better every year.



Sanja Tadic and Martin Borchert

The Digital Repository Project

The Digital Repository Project, developed by a team of six staff, provides improved return on investment from our digital collections of library and learning materials. It will make managing and using such collections easier for Information Services and academic staff. Students and academics will access many repository services using the familiar Learning@Griffith interface and will not need to learn a specialized interface.

The project primarily provides improved "invisible" content management systems and processes supporting development of our digital library collections and flexible learning program, Learning@Griffith, which uses the Blackboard learning management system. The project also offers some very interesting improvements in quality of service to students and academics.

Griffith has selected the Hive digital repository system and partnered with HarvestRoad to develop the system to meet Griffith's requirements. Hive is an independent, open and federated digital repository system which supports document versioning, workflow management and customizable metadata schemas for multiple collection types. As part of the Digital Repository Project, Griffith is tailoring the system to automatically "push" relevant examination papers into appropriate Learning@Griffith courses. Our collection of more than 10,000 digitized journal articles and book chapters used for course readings is also being managed within Hive. Academics can

Continued on page 14

Continued from page 13

search, select, check and “book” digitized readings to be available online for specified time periods and in accordance with copyright compliance requirements, via Learning@Griffith.

Hive is also being developed as a repository for the many and varied learning objects developed by Information Services education designers, in collaboration with academics, to be used in online courses via Learning@Griffith. Using

Hive, academics can search and browse subject-based collections of learning objects, and can share, reuse and modify these for their own purposes.

One hundred percent of the university’s academic courses have an online presence at Learning@Griffith and 70% are actively using the service. We run faculty workshops for academics to give them the necessary tools to use these services. In addition, subject teams including educational designers liaise with faculty

Explore More

- InfoServices at Griffith
www.griffith.edu.au/ins
- Service Improvement Program
www.griffith.edu.au/ins/org/sip/content02.html
- Learning@Griffith
www.griffith.edu.au/ins/learningatgriffith/

to implement course programs. There has been huge uptake of Learning@Griffith by academics and students. It’s a convenience that also greatly enriches the learning experience. ■

Success Story: Winning Website Draws Real Crowds into Virtual Library

During 2004, 24% of user sessions on ScienceDirect were generated by library websites. Due to increased implementation of link-resolving software and direct links from library websites to journal pages on publisher platforms, library websites are emerging as a leading source of ScienceDirect referrals.

Libraries across the world recognize the importance of their websites in promoting use of library resources. In Malaysia, a recent Library Website Competition sponsored by Elsevier encouraged libraries to focus on website design.

Each competition entrant attended a four-hour workshop, conducted by Elsevier account development manager Siaw Pae Kee, covering:

- Effective use of library websites to promote library resources.
- Guidelines offered in Library Connect practical assistance pamphlet number 5: *How to Design Library Websites to Maximize Usability*.
- Feedback on participants’ existing library websites.

Five websites were short-listed based on selection criteria established by Elsevier’s User Centered Design Team. Each was reviewed by a panel of judges from libraries in Hong Kong, Thailand,



MMU Library Director Aminah Abdullah Sani accepts the award for best library website on behalf of her team.

Singapore and Taiwan, who selected Multimedia University as the winner. The winning team, Zulkefli Bin Mohd Yusop, Kamal Bin Sujak and Siti Khabshah Binti Masrom, received two full sponsorships to attend the VALA conference in Melbourne, Australia, early next year. Second and third prizes were awarded to Universiti Sains Malaysia and Universiti Putra Malaysia respectively.

“The library homepage is the cheapest, fastest and most effective tool for the promotion of library resources, services and facilities,” explained winning team member, Zulkefli Mohd Yusop, Assistant Manager for Information System Management at the Multimedia

University Library. “An attractive and user friendly homepage can significantly increase use of online services.”

Aminah Abdullah Sani, Director of Multimedia University’s Library added, “The library homepage is the gateway to a library nowadays. Use of



1st Prize Winner – Malaysia’s Multimedia University; <http://vlib.mmu.edu.my/2005/>

online and digital resources, easily accessible through our new library website, has greatly improved our clients’ satisfaction and met their needs. This competition was a tremendous challenge — to meet our clients’ expectations, gain their attention and make them consistently visit our library homepage. It proved a very good collaboration between publisher and librarians, and I hope it continues.” ■



Full Moon: Reference Madness Continues

Tony McSeán, Director of Library Relations, Elsevier, Oxford, UK

There has been a continuing flow of corroboration for the theory that when psychotherapists find a case that's too weird for comfort they get the person off the couch and off down the road by suggesting the sharing of troubles with staff on the library reference desk. In a world where the Faversham Boat Yard in Kent (England) is run by a Mr. Sinkler we should probably not be surprised by anything much, but nevertheless spirits in the Full Moon editorial dungeon have been happily sustained by yet more responses to our requests for memorable reference questions.

Pride of place, yet again, goes to Fiona McLean who enlivened the last column and who seems to be living her life inside a lost episode of Monty Python. She was once asked by a library user, "How can you tell if a hedgehog has foot and mouth disease?"

Patricia Rey, who also seems to attract this sort of thing, reports that someone once brought a torn-off branch to the reference desk asking for the species to be identified so they could buy one for their garden. Continuing the nature theme, Randi Ashton-Pritting from the US recounts having taken a memorable telephone reference call some years ago when the reference interview went something like:

Caller: "What's the difference between a milk snake and a rattle snake?"

Librarian: "Would you please hold while I go and get one of our snake books?"

Caller: "Please hurry. One or the other is looking at me."

Those of us with research library experience know our users are far from immune to delusional beliefs — "everything's free on the Internet" and "my theory is absolutely true and only professional jealousy prevents my getting

published" to give but two examples. Alan Fricker, who works in an east London hospital worryingly close to where your author grew up, came up against something much more tabloidish when he was asked for a literature search on the conspiracy theory belief that "they" implant controlling microchips in people's bodies. Not much in the published archive, but the 32,500 pages retrieved by Google are testimony to its wide provenance. Fortunately, only around 5,150 of these people think the implanting is done by aliens and of these only 3,250 are pleased because of their superior surgical procedures.

Martha VanPelt from Washington State tells of a father, helping his child with a homework assignment on dinosaurs, who became dissatisfied with artists' impressions of said dinosaurs and demanded that, as duty librarian, she do her job properly and come up with some decent photos.

A last couple of examples before we move on to another theme next issue: Susanne Glynn from Australia reports having to cope with a sad student who came up to the reference desk and asked if they had the answer. When pressed for a touch more specificity the student was at a loss, and was only able to keep repeating that his lecturer had assured him the library would give him the answer. Eventually he wandered off none the wiser, leaving Susanne with an understandable mixture of bafflement and slight unease. Finally, Don Keast (also from Australia) tells of an elegant variation on the "All I remember about the book is its color" theme. His library was turned upside down trying to locate the green book which the reader remembered so well and needed so urgently. Eventually it turned up in a nice green binding, at which point the metaphorical light bulb flashed over the reader's head and they owned up to suffering from complete red/green color blindness. ■



Chris Jasek of Elsevier's User Centered Design Group answers your usability questions.

Q: How can I convince my co-workers that our library Web pages aren't very usable?

A: Opinions just don't seem to cut it when discussing usability and design; you've got to provide colleagues with data that's tough to brush aside. To get that data you're going to need to run your own usability test or have someone else run it for you. If your test data shows, for example, 7 out of 10 users could not locate the *Journal of Criminal Justice* you've found some pretty hard evidence that your library website is not very usable. In most cases the usability of your website will not be this disastrous, but as a result of testing you'll collect lots of data helpful in improving the efficiency, labeling and navigation of your website.

Your users deserve the best service and user experience you can offer and since most users access the library through your website it makes sense to pay a lot of attention to usability. For more information about library website design and running a usability test see our Library Connect practical assistance pamphlet, *How to Design Library Websites to Maximize Usability*. ■

Expert Usability Reviews at Internet Librarian

Chris Jasek, Manager with Elsevier's User Centered Design team, will speak twice at Internet Librarian in Monterey, California in October 2005.

On October 26, from 2:45 to 3:30pm, Chris will serve on the Track D (Intranets & Portals) panel "Expert Reviews of Real-World Intranets." Chris and other design experts participating on the panel will review specific library websites selected in advance of Internet Librarian and offer advice regarding the sites.

Chris will also deliver the presentation "How to Design Library Websites to Maximize Usability" in the Internet Librarian exhibit hall. Visit the Elsevier booth for more details and a copy of the accompanying Library Connect practical assistance pamphlet. ■



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STAYING CONNECTED

Upcoming Events 2005

The events listed here include:

1. [In orange] Library Connect seminars.
2. [In black] Industry events and conferences at which Elsevier will have a booth.
3. [In gray] Other Elsevier organized events.

AUGUST

- 14-18 IFLA, Oslo, Norway
19 4th ScienceDirect User Meeting, Seoul, South Korea
22 Library Connect Seminar, Islamabad, Pakistan
22-24 Information for Science: New Technologies, Moscow, Russia
24 Library Connect Seminar, Karachi, Pakistan
24 Elsevier—NACESTI Research Literacy Showcase, Hanoi, Vietnam
25 Library Connect Seminar, Lahore, Pakistan

SEPTEMBER

- 6 Library Connect Seminar, Chennai, India
7-9 24th Conference of Medical Libraries, Bialystok, Poland
7-9 KESLI General Meeting, South Korea
11-14 LIANZA 2005, Christchurch, New Zealand
13-16 ODOK Austrian Library Conference, Bozen, Italy
15-17 ADBU, La Rochelle, France
20-23 9th International Congress on Medical Librarianship, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil
26-30 AGMB Conference of Medical Libraries, Graz, Austria
26-27 Building the Info Grid, Digital Library Technologies and Services, Copenhagen, Denmark
29-Oct 2 2005 LITA National Forum, San José, CA, USA

OCTOBER

- 4-5 Library Connect UK Library Directors Forum 2005, Manchester, UK
12 Library Connect Seminar, Brussels, Belgium
16-19 ICIC (International Conference for Science and Business Information), Nimes, France
19-20 CONCERT 2005, Taipei, Taiwan
19-20 Korea Library Association Meeting, South Korea
19-22 Frankfurt Bookfair, Frankfurt, Germany
24-26 Annual Conference of Slovenian Librarians, Portoroz, Slovenia
24-26 Internet Librarian, Monterey, CA, USA
28-Nov 2 ASIST, Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

NOVEMBER

- 2-5 25th Annual Charleston Conference, Charleston, SC, USA
9-10 Informatio Medicata II, Budapest, Hungary
10 Library Connect Seminar, Rabat, Morocco
11-12 Hawaii Library Association Conference, Island of Hawaii, USA
29-Dec 1 Online Information 2005, London, UK
30-Dec 2 Library Fair 2005, Yokohama, Japan

About Library Connect Seminars

Library Connect seminars, organized by Elsevier's regional account development and channel marketing teams, offer librarians and Elsevier representatives opportunities to meet and discuss issues of concern for all types of information professionals.

Librarians play an active role in planning agendas for and giving presentations at Library Connect seminars. During these events, frank discussion and sharing of ideas and experiences ensure participants get the most out of attending.

Elsevier's Library Connect seminar program began in 2002. Since then almost 6,000 librarians have attended events held across the world. If you are interested in attending or organizing a Library Connect event, please contact libraryconnect@elsevier.com

For more information contact libraryconnect@elsevier.com

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