

CASE STUDY

Knovel[®]

University College London

Helping engineering students find answers to technical questions



SUMMARY

Knovel helps University College London (UCL) instill vital research skills to engineering students, to foster success in the classroom and beyond.

“I recommend Knovel to everyone. I think it’s important that we promote it. We want our students and staff to use it because it saves them time.”

— Lynne Meehan at University College London

THE KNOVEL ACADEMIC CHALLENGE

Launched in 2007 as part of a larger program called Knovel in the classroom, the Knovel Academic Challenge is focused on providing professors, librarians and other teaching professionals the tools they need to arm engineering and science students with the skills needed to enter into the workplace. In support of academic programs, Knovel also sponsors the Solar Decathlon and the Human Powered Vehicle Challenge.

With three years of experience tracking down information in the engineering disciplines, University College London (UCL) Subject Librarian Lynne Meehan is something of an expert at quickly finding the data engineering staff and students need. Of course, Meehan’s job is about more than just locating materials. She also needs to pass her vital research skills on to her students and staff. As she puts it, “I see this a key part of my job, showing students and staff how to save time researching and providing the tools they need to do it easily.”

And of all the research tools she has come across in her time at UCL, a key resource she recommends is Knovel.

Initially, the librarian reached for Knovel because it offered really good coverage of key engineering textbooks. Over time, however, Meehan and the UCL engineering library staff came to see Knovel as a larger tool for searches of multiple science and engineering resources all at the same time.

Simplifying the search for data

The librarian’s deeper understanding of Knovel’s technical data search and retrieval functionality arose when a chemistry student approached her for help finding the enthalpy of vaporization of cyclohexane. “I blanched at first,” she says as she laughs at the retelling. “You want to know what, sorry?”

“And that was it,” she says. “I crossed my fingers and did a search on Knovel and there it was. And I will always go to Knovel now when people have queries involving data.”

A valuable online resource

But Knovel didn’t end with data search, then or now. From there the librarian explored the interactive graphs and features, invaluable tools for engineering students trying to navigate through calculations.

She told the student to “put your own experimental figures in and see what you get as well.” After seeing first-hand what Knovel offers students, Meehan recommends it to all UCL engineering students. “I tell them it’s an important resource and lecturers accept it as a key academic source of information. I know it’s online and not in some dusty old hardback volume, but this is valid and you can actually do a bit more with it.”

After that eye-opening experience, Lynne Meehan “promotes Knovel as not only a big collection of books but it’s even better as a good data reference source.”

“This a key part of my job, showing students and staff how to save time researching and providing tools, such as Knovel, that they can use easily.”

– LYNNE MEEHAN
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON



Taking on challenges with Knovel

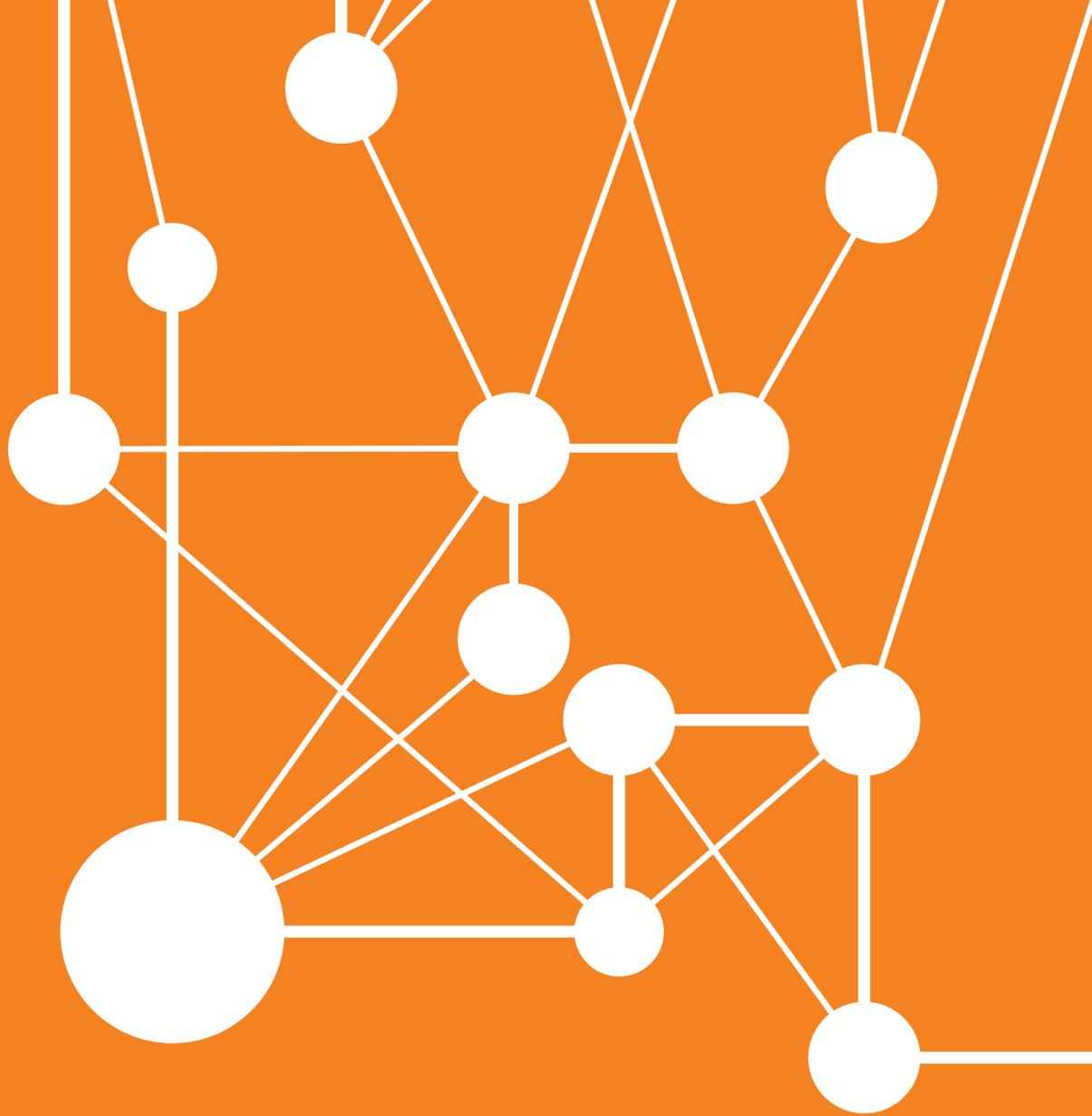
The librarian has always included Knovel in the library’s new student induction program. Actually, Meehan now uses the Academic Challenge, Knovel’s annual competition requiring students to research and answer three randomized technical questions during induction sessions.

Meehan’s strategy is that “the Academic Challenge may not be directly related to each students’ engineering discipline, but it is great for demonstrating and making use of all the powerful data and analysis tools available in Knovel.” Meehan also introduces Knovel to incoming engineering faculty, many of whom aren’t aware of the level of data within Knovel.

As for the students, getting them to sign on to the Academic Challenge has been

easy. It helps that every year UCL students have participated, a student from from UCL has won a prize. The Academic Challenge is just a first step in engaging students in their fields of study. As they become aware of the extent of technical resources and information available to them through Knovel, the librarian believes the students will embrace Knovel as a great place to go for engineering data.

Knovel is an invaluable resource for scientists, engineers and academics. The ability of users to access Knovel’s immense technical resources from any connected classroom, laboratory, and library or field location makes Knovel a go-to service. As Meehan’s students will know well before they enter the workforce.



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