

Mini-profile:

a day in the life of an e-resources librarian

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I have been out of the office for a few days, so I check on the e-mail backlog first. Internal messages include the usual crop of responses to me from academic liaison librarians about JISC and CHEST consultations and offers. In addition, as it is the season for subscription reviews, there are requests for usage figures and pleas for central funding to support items they find hard to afford from their subject funds. Amongst the external messages, the lib-license ones focus on open access, and one about PNAS catches my eye. Apparently the 2005 institutional site licence will automatically include an institutional open access membership giving our authors a 25% discount on the \$1,000 open access submission fee. I already have figures for our full text downloads, but will need to find out more about our academics' authoring activity to evaluate the significance of this change. Having noted this and other items to

follow up, I look at the priorities on my 'to do' list.

Digimap is at the top, and time is running out as the agreement expires at the end of August. We have already decided to renew, although the cost seems rather high relative to our usage, but I need to establish how it can be funded. The Computing Service has previously contributed, so I contact my opposite number there to sound him out about future commitment and get a clearer idea of how much Library money will be needed. My analysis of the usage figures has revealed significant use by departments which are not already contributing financially, so I discuss the position with the relevant liaison librarians. It transpires that commitments for the next academic year have already been finalized, so I need to look at some initial central funding. This will be contingent on the liaison staff collecting some qualitative information

about the role of Digimap in research and teaching. Clearly it is also desirable to plan further ahead for renewals falling due in the summer and I think about possible mechanisms for that.

Nature Publishing Group usage data is next on my list. Concerns about NPG pricing policies and how content might be packaged for a NESLi2 deal have been raised at Electronic Library Team meetings, and I need to report back on the usage figures. They are COUNTER compliant and up to date, but I am puzzled by the inclusion of downloads for non-subscribed titles. When I telephone Nature, they are not able to give me an immediate definitive response, so they put me in touch with a statistics guru in their New York office. The issue could take time and effort to resolve, but I do need to quantify the content delivered by major subscriptions.

Prompted by a consultation e-mail from JISC about electronic access to the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, I discover we have already got the first year's access as part of a pre-publication order for the 60-volume print set. This seems at odds with our move towards zero physical collection growth, but apparently it was specifically funded by a benefactor. We will be able to join the JISC deal later on if we wish, but this will depend on an examination of issues relating to both print and electronic usage. What level of electronic usage would be needed to justify paying for access if we already own the print? What are the costs of maintaining access to print? As I schedule a review date, it sounds like a case of more questions than answers at this stage, in other words a typical e-resource debate.

Time for lunch and today it is a free one as we have a presentation by a visitor from La Trobe University in Victoria. I am interested in her comments about the Australian approach to consortium purchasing of e-resources, but it is the locations that really captivate me. I daydream about a study tour that includes the delights of Bundoora, Bendigo and, best of all, the idyllic Mount Buller in the Victorian Alps, home of the pigmy possum.

Returning to the real world of my tower block office in South Yorkshire, I pick up on some user support matters escalated to me by staff covering the e-service enquiries. One relates to a user who cannot read an e-journal article because of

problems with Adobe Acrobat and another is from a Mac user trying to connect to our CD ROM server. I unravel these to my satisfaction and contact the users from our shared enquiry e-mail identity so that the other library staff can read the responses. The solutions remind me that I will need to review our standard Library answers for the new session to ensure that they accurately reflect new technical developments such as Athens Devolved Authentication.

Continuing in my user support role I get a query from the education librarian about changes to the interface for the JISC deal education datasets. These had originally been scheduled to be in place for the start of academic year 2004/5, but there has been no update on progress for some months. I contact the JIBS User Group as well as Dialog, because I know the former is often involved in evaluating interfaces for JISC-funded services. Sure enough, replies from both sources indicate work is in progress and they promise to keep me posted. I underline my concern that the timing is now rather awkward in relation to information skills training for the incoming students. This is particularly critical for an area like education where a substantial number are distance learners who have their contact weekend early on, and are largely dependent on e-mail and telephone support thereafter.

Still thinking about the new session, I switch back to my collection development hat when an e-mail announces confirmation of my year-end expenditure figures. I need to examine these and assess likely price increases with the help of the serials librarian, in order to estimate the amount of headroom we will have next year for new e-resource developments. At the moment we are using level funding as a planning assumption, as it will be some time before fund allocations for 2004/5 are finalized, but we need an outline plan now. There are bound to be new products we would like to acquire from the content point of view, but these will undoubtedly need to be prioritized. As usual this year we had to strike a balance between recurrent and one-off purchases to make full use of the cash available in this financial year. The spreadsheet shows we managed to spend our full allocation despite the vagaries of late invoices and currency fluctuations. On this positive note I log off and head for home.