

# On the circuit

## E-books: how to make them work Multimedia Information and Technology Group (NW) group seminar Liverpool John Moores University 10 November 2004

Report by Shirley Ward, Subject librarian, University of Bolton

This seminar sought to illustrate some of the varying e-book activities currently in place and was well attended by publishers and the further education (FE), higher education (HE) and public library communities. The three papers given on the day covered consortium purchasing of e-books, the views and activities of JISC and an insight into some current research into e-book activity.

*David Whitehurst*, from the University of Manchester, talked about e-books from the NoWAL (The North West Academic Libraries) perspective. He suggested that the role of e-books in an academic library was felt to be:

- to ease the access to heavy demand titles
- to allow more access to out-of-print titles
- to make available more reference material
- to make available research monographs, which were often not bought because they are very expensive for the amount of use they would get
- to create a searchable database (a whole collection, not just individual titles)
- to facilitate remote access to information.

NoWAL decided on a 'big bang' approach in order to make a huge impact with e-books in member libraries. In December 2003 NoWAL chose netLibrary as its supplier. The project group approached a selection of content by looking at popular publishers, the publication date and the subjects covered. As a result, 77 publishers and 12,000 titles were chosen. Material costing over \$100 was excluded.

In February 2004 NoWAL signed a 30-month contract with netLibrary. This allowed 'browse only' access and three simultaneous users per title.

MARC 21 catalogue records were then supplied to all member libraries.

Usage statistics between February and October 2004 are as follows:

Total accesses	116,744
Number of titles accessed	9,512
Percentage of titles accessed	89.7%
80% of use was from 2,688 titles	
Total turnaways	3,008

Phase Two of the project will involve increasing the number of titles that NoWAL has access to, and replacing some of the little-used titles with ones which are likely to be more popular. This should take place in February 2005.

NoWAL are planning to evaluate the effect of the initiative on teaching and learning and to discover whether it has the same effect as the move to electronic journals.

*Carolyn Rowlinson* of the University of Stirling followed with a paper discussing the role of the JISC e-books working group. Its remit is to negotiate with suppliers in relation to the needs of HE, FE and sixth-form colleges. Various collections already available are Encyclopaedia Britannica, Wiley InterScience, Taylor & Francis and the Gale Virtual Reference Library.

The working group have commissioned various studies which are detailed on the JISC web site (<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/collections>). These include e-book mapping, the future for e-books in UK FE and HE, marketing and the promotion of e-books, and free e-books.

The final paper, presented by *Linda Ashcroft* from Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU), reported on research undertaken by the Information Management Group, part of the School of Business Information. In 2002/03 e-books were seen as just another resource. There was an increase in publishing activity, but only a slow penetration of the academic market. In 2003 LJMU started research into the extent of e-book provision in UK universities. A questionnaire was sent out in 2003 and repeated in 2004.

In 2003, 42% of libraries provided facilities to access e-books, but not many purchased any titles using free e-books instead. By 2004, 68% were providing facilities to access e-books and were also buying titles. Research in the United States showed that the most heavily used e-book subjects in 2002 were economics and business, computer science, and medicine and health. In 2004, UK research showed that these subjects are still the most popular.

Interactive reference books, such as those published by Knovel, are also becoming popular mainly in science and engineering. In 2004, 66% of university libraries subscribed to Oxford University Press electronic material, with netLibrary the second most popular.

User needs were researched and the following conclusions reached:

- There has been a growth in distance learning and e-learning, and a change in learning patterns.
- 96% of university libraries with e-books make them available off-campus.
- 80% of e-books are Athens-authenticated.

Other findings included:

- Collaboration between academic and library staff is important, so that academics can cascade the information to their students.
- Libraries should be proactive and create awareness amongst academics.
- Marketing and publicity is vital.
- Access to e-books should be via the libraries' OPAC.

Linda went on to describe some of the ways that e-books are promoted in university libraries, such as via the OPAC; subject listings of e-books available; training sessions arranged for end users; FAQs and information displayed on the library web site. Graphics are also important, as is two-way communication with users. Linda concluded by emphasizing that the main point is to "promote awareness to the right people through the right people".

The speakers' presentations are available on the MMIT(NW) web site (<http://www.bolton.ac.uk/learning/mmitnw>).

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## Internet Librarian Monterey Conference Center, Monterey, California 15–17 November 2004

Report by Dan Tonkery

If you are looking for a way to keep up with the latest trends for webmasters and web managers, or if you are an information professional seeking an opportunity to interact with many of the movers and shakers in the fast-changing area of our profession, then the Internet Librarian meeting in Monterey, California, may be a good choice.

The eighth conference was organized along lines very similar to last year, with the program arranged in tracks covering such topics as E-Resources and

Digital Libraries, Search Engines, Content Management, Information Discovery and Search, as well as a group of other exciting topics selected for the

mixed audience. The 800 or so attendees represented a wide range of skills and came from various different types of library, with a heavy representation from e-resources librarians and technical information specialists from the corporate library world.

A favorite keynote of mine was delivered by *Patricia Martin*, the author of *Made Possible by Succeeding with Sponsorship*. Her message was a call for librarians to think 'out of the box' and look for opportunities to obtain financial support for the library or museum through creative approaches to working with companies in the local area. She has been successful in building sponsorship at the national, regional and local levels. Much of her advice was based on common sense but required librarians to begin thinking about fund-raising in a new light.

The Monterey location is an added plus as it draws from a number of the companies from Silicon Valley. Many of these young developers and programmers do not travel to ALA or other library-oriented meetings and it is amazing to see how these non-library types are building services which impact the library profession. There were speakers from Yahoo! Search, Ask Jeeves, and Vivisimo, which provided some insight into where these mainstream search engines or businesses are heading.

Of course the entire conference was buzzing about the impact that Google Scholar might have on the database business that many of us have built or worked in over the years. The impact that Google is having on traffic has not been lost on the publishers and creators of databases. There is a

new gorilla in town. The usage traffic that Google and other public searching platforms are generating to publishers' sites after only limited access is simply staggering.

Many of the speakers felt that we are on the frontier of a new era where academic and research traffic may shift to Google and other services, and these new services may become the leading search services for our traditional library-based searching. The genie is out of the bottle. Google has plans to license massive amounts of high quality content. Let the fun begin ...

As I tried to sleep at night while worrying about the changing world, it was comforting to fall asleep listening to the sounds of the barking sea lions that one can hear from the beach nearby. Come to Monterey next fall and enjoy the meeting and the town! Added to the rich program of speakers and attendees that are leading the way on many of the issues is the meeting location, and now the price is right, given the dollar exchange rate. Just in case anyone is not up on their American geography, the Monterey Conference Center is located in Monterey, California, which is one of the hot spots on the Pacific Ocean. You are only a few miles from Carmel, Big Sur and Pebble Beach. Given the exchange rate, the quality of the program, and the meeting location, some UK serials librarians and a few publishers may want to add this to their conference calendar for next year.

One can follow the program plans for next year at <http://www.infoday.com/>