COLUMN / CHRONIQUE

Current research

Compiled by Sandra Halliday

Rockliff S, Peterson M, Martin K, Curtis D. Chasing the sun: a virtual reference service between SAHSLC (SA) and SWICE (UK). *Health Info Libr J*. 2005 Jun;22(2):117–23.

Aim: In 2002, a discussion in the United Kingdom (UK) between South-west Information for Clinical Effectiveness (SWICE) librarians and a member of the South Australian Department of Human Services Libraries' Consortium (SAHSLC) raised the possibility of developing an after-hours virtual reference service between the two consortium groups. The aim of the service is to put medical practitioners in contact with a librarian when urgent help is required in finding clinical medical information after hours. **Methods:** A trial project has begun and has been given the name "Chasing the Sun". The service will make use of time-zone differences between the UK and Australia so that librarians at work in another country will be able to answer urgent patient-related queries that cannot wait until normal office hours. **Results:** This paper looks at the development of "Chasing the Sun", from initial concept, funding proposal, and trial project stage to implementation. It includes details of the groundwork, software evaluation, trials, outcomes, costs and benefits, future directions, and potential problems yet to be experienced or overcome. **Conclusion:** This service is the first of its kind between health libraries in the world and offers potential for future worldwide expansion.

Dee CR, Newhouse JD. Digital chat reference in health science libraries: challenges in initiating a new service. *Med Ref Serv Q*. 2005 Fall;24(3):17–27.

Digital reference service adds a valuable new dimension to health science reference services, but the road to implementation can present questions that require carefully considered decisions. This article incorporates suggestions from the published literature, provides tips from interviews with practicing academic health science librarians, and reports on data from students' exploration of academic health science library Web sites' digital reference services. The goals of this study are to provide guidelines to plan new services, assess user needs, and select software, and to showcase potential benefits of collaboration and proactive and user-friendly marketing. In addition, tips for successful operation and evaluation of services are discussed.

De Groote SL. Questions asked at the virtual and physical health sciences reference desk: how do they compare and what do they tell us? *Med Ref Serv Q*. 2005 Summer; 24(2):11–23.

The questions asked at the traditional reference desk are decreasing while questions asked at the virtual reference desk are on the rise. Over a 1-month period, the types of reference questions asked at an academic health sciences library were coded. This paper examines and compares the types of questions asked at the current day reference desk versus the virtual reference desk. This paper also reviews past literature examining the types of questions asked via virtual reference and the traditional reference.

Bridges J. Marketing the hospital library. *Med Ref Serv Q*. 2005 Fall;24(3):81–92.

Many librarians do not see themselves as marketers, but marketing is an essential role for hospital librarians. Library work involves education, and there are parallels between marketing and education, as described in this article. It is incumbent upon hospital librarians to actively pursue ways of reminding their customers about library services. This article reinforces the idea that marketing is an element in many of the things that librarians already do and includes a list of suggested marketing strategies intended to remind administrators, physicians, and other customers that they have libraries in their organizations.

Notess GR. Scholarly Web searching: Google Scholar and Scirus. *ONLINE*. 2005 Jul/Aug; 29(4): 39–41.

Google introduced a brand-new concept with Google Scholar (http://scholar.google.com) — specialized search aimed at finding scholarly information on the Web. Time will tell whether it becomes a major access tool and replaces some of the traditional indexing and abstracting services or it ends up as yet another orphaned initiative. Elsevier's Scirus, which has similar coverage to Google Scholar and has been around longer, is a less well known scientific search engine covering journal articles and Web sites. Each search tool covers different sources and presents different problems, such as freshness of the material and problems with search results. Despite all the limitations and problems, both offer some unique reasons to use them beyond just watching their future development. Both Scholar and Scirus have potential for information professionals and end users. At this point, each covers a certain segment of scholarly material, but plenty of problems remain. Other search tools continue to serve the scholarly community better.

Fichter D. The many forms of e-collaboration: blogs, wikis, portals, groupware, discussion boards, and instant messaging. *ONLINE*. 2005 Jul/Aug;29(4):48–50.

Spend time at any intranet or knowledge management conference and you'll collect dozens of horror stories about failed online communities. You'll also hear about successful initiatives and thriving communities. Each story has a nugget of truth about what works or what doesn't. Failures usually result from unusable software with overly complex routines, organizational readiness, governance, and communicating value to the individuals. Thinking about online collaboration requires thinking beyond just one application to a suite of tools and solutions. The good news is that some low-cost, easy-to-install tools have been gaining traction with enterprises such as wikis, blogs, and instant messaging. When choosing a collaboration tool, you need to know your workplace culture and environment. Consider your current IT infrastructure, resources, the needs and usage habits of your organization's users, the level of control and standardization management, and the size of the group involved.

Simpson SN, Coghill JG, Greenstein PC. The electronic resources librarian in the health sciences library: an emerging role. *J Electronic Resour Med Libr*. 2005;2(1):27–39.

This article will address the evolution of collection development in the age of e-resources. According to results from a survey conducted by the authors, there are some emerging "best practices" for librarians responsible for e-resources in academic health sciences libraries. This paper will present a model for managing e-resources using East Carolina University Laupus Library's Collection Development/Electronic Resources Librarian position. A brief online survey was sent to library directors via the Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries (AAHSL) discussion list. It was designed to gather information concerning e-resources librarians and how e-resources are handled in this group of libraries. The article will present what has worked for Laupus Library in relation to the responses from the AAHSL survey. The e-resources librarian is still closely tied to the technical services functions within the library. However, there are a number of attributes of the e-resources librarian position that are similar to information service (reference) and public service librarians. It has also been found that the e-resources librarian must work closely with the library's systems department as well as the information services (IS) department while keeping close ties with technical services.

Lovett DG. PDAs @ the library. PDA security: a conundrum for health care institutions. *J Electronic Resour Med Libr*. 2005;2(1):73–9.

PDAs are attractive devices for health care providers because they offer easy access to reference resources. They also may be used to store protected health information (PHI), confidential business information, and confidential personal information. PDA users need to be aware of their obligation to protect this information, particularly in light of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) regulations. Suggestions for ways to secure data stored on PDAs include protecting the PDA from loss and theft, protecting the PDA with a password, disabling infrared ports, encrypting data, restricting the PDA to either professional or personal use, following hospital policies and procedures for PDA use, backing up information, sanitizing the PDA when it is replaced, purchasing antiviral software, and purchasing a PDA with built-in security functions. Several security software options are also presented.

Wilczynski NL, Morgan D, Haynes RB, Hedges Team. An overview of the design and methods for retrieving high-quality studies for clinical care. *BMC Med Inform Decis Mak*. 2005 Jun 21;5(1):20 [e-pub ahead of print] [full free text on BioMed Central].

Background: With the information explosion, the retrieval of the best clinical evidence from large, general purpose, bibliographic databases such as MEDLINE can be difficult. Both researchers conducting systematic reviews and clinicians faced with a patient care question are confronted with the daunting task of searching for the best medical literature in electronic databases. Many have advocated the use of search filters or "hedges" to assist with the searching process. **Objective:** To describe the design and methods of a study that set out to develop optimal search strategies for retrieving sound clinical studies of health disorders in large electronic databases. **Design:** An analytic survey comparing hand searches of 170 journals in the year 2000 with retrievals from MEDLINE, EMBASE, CINAHL, and PsycINFO for candidate search terms and combinations. The sensitivity, specificity, precision, and accuracy of unique search terms and combinations of search terms were calculated. **Conclusion:** A study design modeled after a diagnostic testing procedure with a gold standard (the hand search of the literature) and a test (the search terms) is an effective way of developing, testing, and validating search strategies for use in large electronic databases.