

Current research

Compiled by Gillian Griffith

Bar-Ilan J, Fink N. Preference for electronic format of scientific journals — a case study of the science library users at the Hebrew University. *Library & Information Science Research*. 2005;27(3):363–76.

The article reports the results of a survey on the use of printed and electronic journals in a science library. In May 2003, when the survey was conducted, users had already been exposed to electronic journals for a number of years; most of the scientific journals were accessible in electronic format while the print format was still available. The major findings are that more than 80% of the respondents frequently use and prefer an electronic format, irrespective of their rank or age. Most previous studies found an inverse relationship between e-journal usage and age, but these results indicate that by now users of all ages switched to the electronic format not only in terms of usage but of preference as well.

Mattana J, Charitou M, Mills L, Baskin C, Steinberg H, Tu C, Kerpen H. Personal digital assistants: a review of their application in graduate medical education. *Am J Med Qual*. 2005 Sep–Oct;20(5):262–7.

Personal digital assistants (PDAs) have become widely used in medicine and may be especially useful in achieving the goals of graduate medical education. The complex challenges that residents and their program directors in graduate medical education programs confront may be met more readily with the use of these devices. The PDA's ability to serve as an informational database, an organizer of patient-specific information, a tracking tool that can be used by program directors to enhance curriculum design, and a tool for conducting education research are some of the ways that these devices might favorably affect residency training in graduate medical education programs.

Dexter N, Shearer B, Nagy S. Partnering with PDAs: The Florida State University College of Medicine Medical Library experience. *J Electronic Resour Med Libr*. 2006;3(1):9–16. In press.

Medical librarians are aware of the opportunities that PDAs provide in delivering library content to clinicians and other users. However, the time and expense required to learn to use this technology are significant. This article describes a project designed by Charlotte Edwards Maguire Medical Library at Florida State University College of Medicine to deliver PDAs, software, and training to hospital librarians. The deployment of the PDAs is described along with recommendations for similar projects.

O'Shea DI. PubMed on Tap: medical research at your fingertips. *J Electronic Resour Med Libr*. 2005;2(4):121–30.

The National Library of Medicine has developed several information resources specifically designed for use on PDAs. This article looks at one of those applications, PubMed on Tap, and discusses some of the benefits and limitations of using it in hospital and academic settings.

Watson EM. Subject knowledge in the health sciences library: an online survey of Canadian academic health sciences librarians. *J Med Libr Assoc*. 2005 Oct;93(4):459–66.

Objectives: This study investigated whether Canadian academic health sciences librarians found knowledge of the health sciences to be important and, if so, how they acquired and maintained this knowledge. **Methods:** Data were gathered using a Web-based questionnaire made available to Canadian academic health sciences librarians. **Results:** Respondents recognized the need for subject knowledge; 93.3% of respondents indicated that subject knowledge was “very important” or “somewhat important” to doing their job. However, few respondents felt that holding a degree in the health sciences was necessary. Respondents reported devoting on average more than 6 hours per week to continuing education through various means. Reading or browsing health sciences journals, visiting Web sites, studying independently, and participating in professional associations were identified by the largest number of participants as the best ways to become and stay informed. **Conclusions:** Although more research needs to be done with a larger sample, subject knowledge continues to be important to Canadian academic health sciences librarians. Continuing education, rather than formal degree studies, is the method of choice for obtaining and maintaining this knowledge.

Williams TL, Lindsay JM, Burnham JF. Online vs. print journals: new challenges for academic medical libraries. *J Electronic Resour Med Libr*. 2006;3(1):1–8. In press.

In recent years many published articles have compared costs, benefits, and various pros and cons of acquiring print versus online full-text journals. However, for medical and scientific titles where currency is of the essence, do medical libraries still have a choice of whether to get one or the other? This paper will discuss costs, archiving, and future concerns faced by the University of South Alabama Biomedical Library. The authors conclude that acquiring electronic journals has become more critical than print only when both are not affordable.

Forrest DV. The librarians. *Am J Psychiatry*. 2005 Oct;162(10):1820–3.

The library, with its tangible books and journals, allows for a heuristic, exploratory sojourn and a collegiality be-

tween librarians and users that electronic information loses. Here, Forrest discusses the crisis that libraries are facing because of electronic journals.