From the President

By Carol Schuetz,   Carol_Carson@baylor.edu

As most of you read this newsletter, fall has begun to overtake the country. For those of us in the academic arena, this means another semester is coming to a conclusion. One of the privileges of the institution that I work for is the honor of serving as a marshal for commencement. As we line our students up in the order in which they will graduate, I often hear "You're the library lady" or "thanks for helping us with our project". In a way, it's like having your own mini fan club. It also serves to remind me of the great responsibility that we, as librarians, have to the information community. In providing instructional services, each of us can have a "mini fan club" made up of the library patrons that we help each day.

As we approach the end of this year, we can reflect back on the events of this year and our part in them. For many of us, this can be done by looking back at the instruction classes we have taught or the many patrons we have helped. National events from this summer also worked to shape the landscape of America. The losses, both in human lives and material possessions dramatically changed life for many of us along the Gulf Coast. It will be many months before life returns to normal for our colleagues in these areas. Many of us devoted time and efforts, both financial and physical, to help in the recovery of these areas. Colleagues in these areas will remain in our thoughts.

I would like to encourage all of you to continue to participate in LIRT. For many of us, times have become very tight and travel maybe difficult. Nevertheless, please consider joining a LIRT committee. We need new, fresh ideas and members to carry them forward. To remain a vibrant, contributing organization, we need new people to come in and participate on a LIRT committee. Without new leadership in our ranks, LIRT can not hope to survive in the future. As you look through this issue of the newsletter, please look at the committees and see if there is not one you could serve on and contact us.

Midwinter is weeks away and we hope to see many of you in San Antonio.

LIRT Program at 2006

The LIRT Annual Conference Program Committee is collaborating with the Teaching, Learning, and Technology Committee on a Technology Fair for the 2006 conference. Dr. Tim McGee, Associate Professor and Director of the Instructional Design and Technology Program in Philadelphia University's School of Design and Media, has agreed to open the fair with a 45-minute presentation on "Instructional Design for Teaching and Learning in Libraries." The remainder of the program will be the technology fair with demonstrations by vendors and e-Posters. The Conference Program Committee will be sending out requests for e-Poster submissions in November. The Teaching Learning and Technology Committee is working on recruiting vendors for the fair.

Julie Elliott, Co-Chair, Conference Program Committee

INSIDE

From the Editor

Although it's been merely three months since I last addressed you in these pages, it feels like a lifetime ago! As I mentioned in my last column, my wife and I traveled to China in August to adopt a little girl. Her name is Maya, and she is home with us now in Central Pennsylvania. It was an exciting trip, both from the perspective of experiencing another culture, and from the perspective of the life-changing nature of becoming a parent!

In the past three months, there have been a number of other life-changing events for people living on the Gulf Coast, and as of this writing, in south Florida. Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma have wreaked havoc on the lives of folks in those areas, including damage to libraries and other educational institutions. As librarians, we usually think of how natural catastrophes like these affect the physical well-being of collections.

While the thought of water-logged books and swamped computers is heartbreaking, another result was brought to my attention recently from my colleagues at Penn State's University Park campus: displaced students from colleges and universities in New Orleans taking classes there until their schools reopen. To instruction librarians, this poses a unique challenge—how to familiarize students to a new library as quickly as possible.

Have any instruction librarians at academic or public libraries faced this challenge? What were your experiences and how did you deal with the situation? I'd love to hear from you. Drop me a line at jak47@psu.edu and I'll put something together for our next issue.

-- by Jeff Knapp

Discussion Forum at Midwinter 2006: The Instruction Balance

The Teaching Methods & Education Committees are co-sponsoring the IS Discussion Forum for Midwinter 2006. This Midwinter's event will blend the IS Discussion Forum format and the traditional Teaching Method Brainstorming structure.

Our discussion will focus on how librarians are maintaining a balance with increasing instructional duties without losing track of other responsibilities. Members from the Teaching Methods Committee will initiate a conversation on strategies and avenues librarians can take to maintain their regular work duties, while instruction and information literacy become the main priorities in our departments. There will be plenty of opportunities to share insights and experiences about to what extent the focus on information literacy and instruction is changing our profession, how is it being addressed, and how librarians are adapting. Be prepared to actively share, discuss, process, and formulate new ideas!

Date: Sunday, January 22, 2006
Time: 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.
Location: TBA (Check the official ALA Midwinter Program)

For additional information, contact Anna Van Scoyoc, Chair, Teaching Methods Committee at avansco@emory.edu or Lori DuBois, Chair, Education Committee at ldubois@williams.edu.

News Bites

Have you published an article?

Found a new job or received a promotion?
Have you discovered a great teaching technique?
Share you news with LIRT.
Contact the LIRT Newsletter committee with your News Bites

Production editor:Carol L. Schuetz ©American Library Association

by Lisa Williams,   williamsl@uncw.edu

Federated Searching: Simplicity or Mass Confusion?

Almost a year ago I wrote an article for *LIRT News* (December 2004) titled "Keeping up with Technology" and it turns out that I took a lot of my suggestions to heart. In the past year Randall Library, at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, has switched over from using Microsoft's *FrontPage* to Macromedia's *Dreamweaver* for designing web pages, and from Adobe's *Photoshop* to Macromedia's *Fireworks* for photo editing. I've created a weblog for the reference department and we are establishing RSS feeds for it, including our Table of Contents service and other academic news feeds. I have been exposed to TechSmith's *Camtasia* for recording web pages, and the chat software we currently use, *24/7*, is merging with OCLC's *QuestionPoint*. Finally, we have added several new databases, we have seen upgrades in some of the older ones, and many of us have had the opportunity to attend conferences and learn about new database products.

How did I keep up with all of the changes? I attended free library-sponsored workshops. I received tutoring from a co-worker on how to use *Photoshop* and *Fireworks*. The University of North Carolina system's consortia offered a free workshop on *Camtasia* and I attended a session at ALA annual on the merging of *24/7* and *QuestionPoint*. I have trained myself in the use of the blog and changes with the databases. This is my job. If I do not keep up with technology, how can I expect the library users to use our electronic resources effectively?

In my previous article I asked the question, "*How do librarians keep up with technology?*" Now I want to know how the library user keeps up with our changing technology. Library instruction sessions usually cover at least two or three databases in an hour and a reference transaction usually covers one or two databases. There is not truly an opportunity in a classroom instruction session or a reference transaction to include all of the databases a researcher might need. This made me think about the necessity of having so many databases, the frustration of keeping up with their changes and upgrades, as well as how some of the under-promoted databases are being discovered by users.

A possible answer for database promotion is to go with a federated search engine. A federated search engine is designed to search the databases a library subscribes to and will sort the results by database. Many libraries are now using the federated search engine as a portal to all of their databases. Doing so means that the researcher only has to learn one interface and run one search. This sounded like a perfect solution until I had the opportunity to attend a session called, "What Does Ronald McDonald Have to Do with the Library: The Effect of Federated Searching on Research and Instruction" at the May 2005 LOEX conference. This session was presented by Susan Cooperstein (Loyola/Notre Dame Library) and Liz Kocevar-Weidinger (Longwood University). It discussed the pros and cons of federated search engines in libraries. If I weighed the end results of the information I gathered, I left the session with more cons than pros. Here are a few examples from the presenters and members of the audience of how federated search engines do not work well:

The two biggest complaints were that you are not able to limit searches like you do in individual databases and not all databases can be searched through a federated search engine. Here are other reasons why federated search engines do not work well:

1) Results sometimes do not give full citations, so you do not know if it is a book or an article.
2) Sometimes you only get 10 results and it is difficult to retrieve the rest—you must keep refreshing the screen to retrieve more results.
3) Some vendors will give results ranked by how fast the database returns results—not by relevancy.
4) Some vendors will not let you export results to bibliographic management software.
5) Many vendors do not let you click on a subject link in the list of results.
6) Most do not give a search history or let you save a search history.

There were a few positive comments about federated search engines. For instance, because of the standard interface, they are a great tool for students who do not get library instruction in a classroom setting or are distance learners. Also, some vendors allow you to search databases grouped by subject instead of searching your entire list of databases.

A Google search for information on Federated Search Engines retrieves Information Today's "The Truth about Federated Search Engines" from WebFeat. WebFeat is a major federated search engine provider. This article compiles a list of the five most common misconceptions of federating searching - repeating some of the issues listed above.

It may be a long time until the issues relating to federated search engines and the growing number of databases are corrected. Until then, we should rely on what we ourselves have learned while keeping up with technology: be patient, and be open-minded. Suggesting any helpful database for the library user exposes them to many different tools and teaches them to be open-minded and to try new resources. Maybe they will never need to use all of the databases a library has to offer, but at least they can feel comfortable about using the ones we librarians have trained them on or those they have discovered on their own.

by Mitch Fontenot, mfonten@lsu.edu

Using Macromedia's Flash
for a Library Research Tutorial

Flash, a Macromedia software program used to create dynamic appearing presentations, was used to develop a tutorial for the LIS (Library and Information Science) 1001 classes for Boolean operators or connectors. Sigrid Kelsey, Electronic Reference Services and Web Development Coordinator Librarian at Louisiana State University Middleton Library, and Kristin Whitehair, LSU School of Library and Information Science student developed the five minute tutorial as part of a field experience between Middleton Library and the School of Library and Information Science, in order to assist students with the complex idea of Boolean connectors. Many hours of painstaking work as well as trial and error went into the making of this tutorial, and the result is a successful one that is a great help to students and instruction librarians.

Boolean operators are not an easy thing to teach to the online generation. In fact, they have great difficulty in grasping the concept that "and" gives you the fewest results while "or" gives you the most, thinking of "and" as a plus sign. This *Flash* tutorial uses the analogy of two pizzas; one pepperoni, one olive, to demonstrate and illustrate the relationships of the Boolean connectors; and, or, and not. The tutorial starts off with a catchy tune and is entitled "Boolean Searching: A Pizza the Action."

In the first demonstration, a student demonstrates how "and" works when the two pizzas merge together and the search result is the part of the pizzas that overlaps. In the second part, the Boolean connector "or" is demonstrated by the two pizzas merging and the resulting demonstration illustrating all of both pizzas as the search result, including the overlap. The third part demonstrates "not" with the search "pepperoni not olives" with the result of the overlapping pizzas showing only the pepperoni section without olives. An introduction and conclusion to the description of the Boolean operator is included with each part.

Interspersed between the three parts are more "serious" examples of searches. These examples use the same operators to further illustrate what the operators actually do and are more likely to be used by a college student, such as "vaccines and virus," "virus or fever," and "virus not computers." The tutorial wraps up with a recap of the power of Boolean operators, as well as their applicability when using search engines and searching online catalogs, indexes, and databases.

Flash has great applicability in library research tutorials, especially those such as Boolean operators which can be challenging to teach. *Flash* works well with very finite subject tutorials lasting approximately five minutes. In my opinion, tutorials lasting significant amounts of time may not work as well with *Flash*, as it can be labor intensive and time consuming. However, it is well worth the effort as an enhancement or tutorial to the library research class, and an excellent teaching tool to the online generation. It is also my opinion that a steady diet of online research without regard to learning print research does not bode well for honing one's research skills in the long run, and a tutorial such as this one can be a great advantage to overcome this challenge to those who are so inclined. Plan what subjects you feel would be appropriate for a *Flash* tutorial, such as Boolean operators, scholarly versus popular sources, etc., and then run with it. Plan your script, music, characters, etc. in advance of sitting down with *Flash*. It may be a labor of love for a small tutorial, but if it adds to the overall educational experience and drives the point home to the online generation, it is well worth the time and investment.

Mitch Fontenot is Reference/Information Literacy Librarian at Louisiana State University Middleton Library and would like to thank Sigrid Kelsey, Electronic Reference Services and Web Development Coordinator Librarian, for her invaluable assistance with this article. If you are interested in taking a look at the tutorial, it is located at http://www.lib.lsu.edu/ref/flash/Boolean.html.
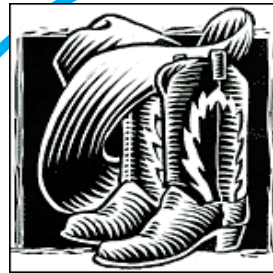
I'll see you in San Antonio

ALA Midwinter, January 20-25, 2006

**Come for the meetings
Stay and meet other LIRT members**

Congratulations to Linda Goff and her appointment as ALA/LIRT Representative to the IFLA Information Literacy Section Standing Committee.

Please read about Linda's trip to the World Library and Information Congress in Oslo, Norway on page 7.

By Sharon Ladenson (ladenson@mail.lib.msu.edu)

Check These Out!

As the "Check These Out" columnist, I am pleased to review recent literature on information literacy and library instruction. The articles listed in this column focus on government documents and information literacy. What are some distinctive challenges of teaching patrons how to locate government documents? How can we meet such challenges? Is it really possible to teach first year students about government documents? What are some effective ways to teach patrons how to access online documents? Check these out, and enjoy!

Asher, Curt, Hua Yi, and Shayne Knapp
"Effective Instruction Needed to Improve Students' Use of Government Documents." Journal of Government Information 29 (2002): 293-301.

During the 1998-1999 academic year, Asher, Yi, and Knapp conducted a study to compare usage of print and online government documents at the California State University, Bakersfield. In order to gather data, the authors collected and analyzed circulation data and transaction logs from public printers. The findings indicate that five percent of documents printed came from "gov" domain sites, and during most of the year, less than one percent of all materials checked out were government publications. Given the low usage of government documents, the authors strongly recommend that faculty require students to use documents for research; that librarians provide group and individual instruction on finding government information; and that faculty and librarians collaborate to ensure that library research is required for all majors (and that instruction on finding and using government documents be included in such efforts).

Downie, Judith A.
"The Current Information Literacy Instruction Environment for Government Documents: Part I." DttP: Documents to the People 32.2 (2004): 36-40.

Although government document resources are not often covered in general library instruction sessions, Downie stresses that such resources need to be included in order to effectively foster information literacy. Research illustrates that faculty do not often request that librarians specifically cover documents in library instruction sessions, and consequently, students do not commonly use documents due to their lack of knowledge. The author illustrates how incorporating government documents into instruction sessions can help librarians to promote the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education. For example, one performance indicator of the first standard is the ability to identify a wide variety of formats and types of information. Librarians can convey this concept by illustrating that raw data is one critical type of information, and by teaching students how to access such data using Census documents.

Downie, Judith A. "Integrating Government Documents into Information Literacy Instruction: Part II." DttP: Documents to the People 32.4 (2004): 17-22.

Downie outlines ways to overcome potential obstacles to including government documents information in library instruction. Some common challenges include (among others) making efforts to provide information about online government sources when faculty members discourage students from using electronic resources; the lack of cataloging for some historical collections of documents, making them less easily accessible; and the difficulty of using the online indexes and library catalogs to identify current documents (which can get lost among listings of numerous periodical, monograph, and other electronic sources). The ways to face such challenges include working with faculty and instruction librarians to teach students to critically assess and evaluate electronic resources, rather than discouraging students from using them (for example, students could be required to assess the political bias or slant of a government organization that produces online information on a specific topic); identifying digitization projects and electronic indexes for historical materials, such as Yale Law School's Avalon Project; and identifying finding aids specific to government documents, such as *GPO Access*. Downie encourages documents specialists to share their knowledge with colleagues and students by emphasizing the similarities between documents and other information sources, working with instruction librarians to identify assignments specific to documents resources, participating in reviews of library instruction programs, and encouraging instruction librarians to add government resources to handouts and other instruction materials.

Hollens, Deborah.
"'Documents to the…Freshmen!' Early Exploration of Government Publications." DttP: Documents to the People 32.4 (2004): 15-17.

The author argues that instruction specific to government documents should not be limited exclusively to upper-division undergraduate and graduate students. As Government Information Resources Coordinator at Southern Oregon University, Hollens has successfully taught first year students about government documents for more than twenty years. She describes her methods for engaging students: exposing them to various agency reports (including documents from the Government Accountability Office (GAO)), and Congressional hearings specific to prominent "hot" topics (such as, among others, assisted suicide, terrorism, performance enhancing drugs,

Check These Out

or cloning). Students also review various government statistical publications. As the students examine and discuss the content of print copies of reports, hearings, and information presented in statistical compendiums, they learn not only about the nature of the depository system, but also about the role of various agencies and branches of government and the information they produce. Hollens points out that handling government publications physically facilitates access to electronic documents linked in library online catalogs and *GPO Access*. For example, after learning about the role of the GAO and examining the print reports produced by that agency, students recognize the reports more easily, and begin to search for them in the library catalog, as well as on the GAO site. Hollens also shows first year students various online sources for searching government information, such as Hannon Library's "Government Resources" page, Idaho State University's "Meta-Subject Index to Government Information at Idaho State University," Google's "Uncle Sam" search engine, and the University of Michigan's "Documents in the News" and "Statistical Resources on the Web" pages.

Wilhite, Jeffrey M. "Internet versus Live: Assessment of Government Documents Bibliographic Instruction." <u>Journal of Government Information</u> 30 (2004): 561-74.

After developing a digital video to teach students about print and electronic government publication resources, the author decided to conduct a study to compare the effectiveness of Web-based and live bibliographic instruction for University of Oklahoma (OU) students. Three groups of students (44 students in total) from an OU Business Communications class participated in the study: one group received instruction in person, another group received the digital video presentation, and a control group received no formal instruction on government information resources. Students in all three groups took pretests designed to determine basic knowledge of the OU Government Documents Collection. Members of each group also took a posttest to determine the effectiveness of each method of instruction. There was no statistically significant difference between the overall posttest scores of the live instruction group, and those of the Web-based instruction group. However, the evaluation section of the posttest yielded very different results for the live instruction and Web-based instruction groups. For example, when asked, "Was the information presented to you in a clear and understandable fashion?," 100 percent of the live instruction group answered "yes," while in Web-based instruction group, only thirty-three percent answered "yes." Furthermore, when asked to provide written comments on the best or worst parts of each instruction session, live instruction group members contributed all positive comments, while the Web-based instruction group members contributed entirely negative comments. The author notes that the Web-based instruction group was very "loud and talkative," and, consequently the distracting noise level might have contributed to the students' dissatisfaction with the session. Nevertheless, the author continues to provide live instruction session for all students who visit the OU documents collection, since this is the method that they evidently prefer.

LIRT Meeting Schedule

ALA Midwinter 2006

Check the LIRT web site http://www3.baylor.edu/LIRT/ for updated information on locations of meetings and the discussion forum.

Saturday, January 21:
8:00 - 9:00 am: Executive Board I
9:30 - 11:00 am: Steering Committee I
11:00 am - 12:30 pm: All Committee Meetings I

Sunday, January 22:
10:30a.m. - 12:30p.m. LIRT Discussion Forum

Monday, January 23:
8:30 a.m. - 9:30 am: All Committee Meetings II
9:30 a.m. - 12:00 pm: Steering Committee II
12:00 to 1:00 pm: Steering Committee Lunch (optional)

Tuesday, January 24:
9:30 - 11:00 am: Executive Board II

Important Notice

Beginning with this conference, our meeting times have been scheduled using ALA time blocks. This is the schedule which appears in the conference catalog:

Saturday, January 21
LIRT Meetings
8:00 - 10:00a.m.

LIRT Meetings
10:30a.m. - 12:30p.m.

Sunday, January 22
LIRT Discussion Forum
10:30a.m. - 12:30p.m.

Monday, January 23
LIRT All-Committees Meeting II
8:00 - 10:00 a.m.

LIRT Steering Committee II
10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Tuesday, January 24
LIRT Executive Board II
8:00 - 10:00 a.m.

* For Saturday and Monday meetings, we will be following our traditional times as listed in the top meeting times.

by Linda J. Goff, ljgoff@csus.edu

REPORT FROM THE WORLD LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CONGRESS
71st IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE AND COUNCIL
Oslo, Norway August 13-19, 2005

My first inkling that I might be able to attend the International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) conference was in January of 2004 when the LIRT was asked to nominate someone as a representative to the IFLA Information Literacy Standing Committee. It could have been in recognition of my long-term and active membership that LIRT Executive Committee nominated me, (or maybe it was my willingness to pay my own travel expenses), but in February, 2005, I received notice from the ALA Executive Board that my nomination had been accepted by IFLA and in March my official letter of appointment for a four year term arrived from IFLA headquarters in the Hague.

IFLA has 115 member countries and most of them were represented in the cacophony of voices I heard when checking in to the conference in Oslo, Norway. Luckily English is one of the official languages of IFLA. All programs offered simultaneous translations in five languages via headsets, so librarians and information professionals from all over the world had little trouble understanding each other. Attendance at IFLA would dispel the stereotype of librarians as quiet or reserved. When they weren't intently listening to programs, the IFLA delegates were engaged in lively discussions of common interests.

The Information Literacy Standing Committee met twice, the day before and the day after the main conference, so I was invited to sit in on the discussion of the previous year's activities before officially joining the ILSC. Jesús Lau from Universidad Veracruzana, México chairs the committee and reported on the publications and programs. Many similar reports are available at the committee's web site: http://www.ifla.org/VII/s42/index.htm

The IFLA conference coincided with Norway's Centennial celebration of independence from Sweden and also the opening of the newly remodeled National Library, so other activities abounded. The Opening Ceremony on Monday was attended by King Harald V of Norway, so delegates were asked to be in their seats early. The ceremony included music, drama, and speeches and was capped off with a parade of national flags carried in by over 100 volunteers.

The structure of IFLA is not always clear, so I attended the US caucus meeting on Saturday and the orientation for newcomers. IFLA consists of 44 sections, and 8 divisions grouped by interest or geographic region. One representative from each division make up the Professional Committee and the Governing Board has 10 members elected by Council plus the Professional Committee members. IFLA membership is automatic if you are a member of a national association that belongs to IFLA. Council meetings are open to all members.

I was lucky to have a friend and colleague, Sharon Chadwick, from Humboldt State University as a traveling companion, so we divided up to attend more meetings. I attended sessions from the Knowledge Management, University Libraries, Information Technology sections as well as the Information Literacy program done jointly with the Management and Marketing Section.

Monday, August 15 was the official reopening of the National Library of Norway. IFLA delegates were invited to view the opening ceremony with the King on a mega screen monitor from the park across the street.

Library visits are integrated into the IFLA program and I was lucky to visit the National Library the next day when it opened to the public. I also toured the Nobel Peace Prize Library and had the thrill of standing at the podium where the peace prize winners are announced!

A Cultural Evening is traditional at IFLA and Tuesday we were bussed to the Norwegian Museum of Cultural History, an open air museum featuring 155 historic buildings from different regions of the country. We were each issued an IFLA backpack containing a boxed meal and a small pad on which to sit to eat our dinner as we wandered through the park. Entertainment abounded culminating with a troop of medieval acrobats, jugglers, and fire eaters.

The Information Literacy program "Information Literacy: A Voyage of Discovery for Citizens" was held on Wednesday and was jointly sponsored by the Management and Marketing Section. It was divided into two parts. During the first, presentations were given by librarians from Singapore, India and Germany. It was followed by an interactive workshop focusing on learning more about our users and it allowed us to interact with others in the audience more freely. That was where I ran into Valerie Bannerman from Winneba, Ghana who was a visiting scholar at my library several years ago, studying how to start an information literacy program. It was great to hear that her program is now well established

The closing session on Thursday featured Korean dancers and drummers inviting us to the conference in Seoul next year.

On Friday my standing committees met to work on our strategic plan, divide up the work assignments for the year, and to set the program topic for the next conference. We are planning for one of our most ambitious projects to be funded by UNESCO. The major undertaking will produce a snapshot survey of international activities relating to Information Literacy. Our committee divided up the world and I got Canada and the U.S. I also will be a co-convener with Barbara Ford and Jarma Saarti from Finland of a program on "Transitions to College" jointly sponsored with the University Libraries Section. I've always thought the best way to get started is to jump in with both feet. Wish me luck!

We need your words
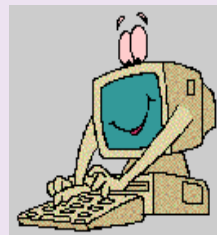
Articles are needed for the
LIRT Newsletter

See Contributor's Guidelines at
http://www3.baylor.edu/LIRT/guidelines.html

Tech Talk *continued from page 11*

"Podcasting Explosion." Business Week Online. May 23, 2005 <http://www.businessweek.com/technology/tech_stats/podcast050523.htm>

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—. "Stanford U. Makes Podcasts of Lectures, Games, and Music Available Through Apple iTunes." Chronicle of Higher Education: Daily News October 21, 2005. <http://chronicle.com/daily/2005/10/2005102102t.htm>

As always, send questions and comments to:
Snail Mail: Tech Talk
   Billie Peterson-Lugo
   Moody Memorial Library
   Baylor University
   One Bear Place #97148
   Waco, TX 76798-7148
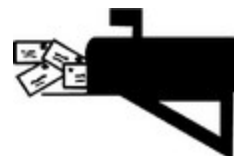
   E-Mail: Billie_Peterson@baylor.edu

Join a LIRT Committee

For a list of standing LIRT committees, please see page 12

Our online volunteer form can be found at:

http://www3.baylor.edu/LIRT/volform.html

Dear Tech Talk: Some of the technological "geeks" in the library have been waxing poetically about "podcasting;" but when I ask them about it, they look at me like I've come from another planet! Personally, I think podcasting sounds like an extraterrestrial being— what in the world is it? —Pondering Podcasting Possibilities

Dear PPP: Admittedly "podcasting" does sound like something out of a science fiction movie, but it's neither the offspring of a science fiction creature nor something that only "geeks" could possibly understand or use. Using the definition from the Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcast), "Podcasting is a method of publishing audio and video programs via the Internet, allowing users to subscribe to a feed of new files (usually MP3s). It became popular in late 2004, largely due to automatic downloading of audio onto portable players [iPods or MP3s] or personal computers."

First, there are a couple of misconceptions to clarify: (1) The term, "podcasting" is a bit of a misnomer – podcasts are neither limited to Apple iPods, nor are they broadcasts in the same sense that radio or TV programs are broadcasts; and (2) people often used the term (podcast) interchangeably when referring to the downloading of audio files or referring to the concept of subscribing to specific audio content – the second definition is the accurate use of the word.

Does this concept of "subscribing to a feed of new files" sound familiar? Perhaps reminiscent of RSS feeds? (See the September 2003 Tech Talk column for an overview of Really Simple Syndication.) As a matter of fact, podcasting uses RSS technology, but takes it to another level. Adam Curry (the former MTV VJ) was always looking for new music on the Internet and was frustrated by the amount of time it took to find the music. David Winer wrote a new version of his RSS software to handle audio files—adding an "enclosure" tag, which provides information on where an audio file is located, the size of the file, and the file type. Adam Curry then used AppleScript to create a "podcatcher," which was a rudimentary aggregator that could "subscribe" to feeds from sites that used Winer's new RSS technology and automatically download audio files from those sites. Curry then made his "podcatcher" program open source— hoping that more knowledgeable software developers would take an interest and fine tune his creation—which they did. (Biever)

The growth of podcasting in the past 18 months has been remarkable. According to the Wikipedia, there were 24 hits in Google for the word "podcasts" on September 28, 2004. On October 20, 2005, there were 78.6 million hits. Another growth indicator: on November 1, 2004, there were about 212 podcasts on feedburner.com (Podcasting Explosion); by October 20, 2005, this number was over 21,000. One more indicator: 22 million people in the U.S. own iPods or other MP3 players; more than 6 million of them have

downloaded podcasts; and podcasting is expected to reach 12.3 million households by 2010. (Crofts, et. al.)

So, why podcasting; why now?

- The cost of MP3 players continues to drop, making them ubiquitous within the American lifestyle;
- Life is complex and busy; time-shifting—listening to or watching programs at one's convenience— is an essential part of a busy lifestyle;
- There is too much advertising on the radio; podcasts do for radio programming what TiVo has done for TV programming, both with advertising and time-shifting;
- With the large media conglomerates, radio programming is too homogeneous; like with blogs, podcasting provide individuals an inexpensive outlet to express new—perhaps radical—ideas;
- Associated with the homogeneity of programming, there is a movement toward "personalized media," selectively listening to or watching items of personal interest;
- Right now, there are few, if any, restrictions on podcasts because, unlike radio, they are not regulated by the FCC.

Already, some libraries and librarians are already experimenting with podcasting. Greg Schwartz (http://www.openstacks.net/os/), Karen Schneider (http://freerangelibrarian.com/), Michael Stephens (http://tametheweb.com), David Free (http://www.tametheweb.com/ttwblog/archives/001106.html), and David King (http://daweed.blogspot.com/) have all written about and experimented with podcasts on their blogs. (Gordon-Murnane) The School of Library and Information Science at the University of Missouri uses podcasting for programs aimed at professional librarians and library school students. (http://lisradio.missouri.edu) The St. Johns University Libraries have created "podcasts of library lectures, student service learning essay winners, an audio tour of the Queens Library, and some invited faculty and student papers which reflect on academic life and St. John's experiences." (http://www.stjohns.edu/academics/libraries/podcast.sju) A media specialist (Kathy Ishizuka), uses podcasts to promote reading. At the Worchester Polytechnic Institute, the library has "Library Audio to Go: Podcast" (http://www.wpi.edu/Academics/Library/Borrowing/Podcasts/)—where they provide podcasts on "MESHING with the Medical Professionals: PubMed," "Secret Ingredients of the 10K—Beyond the Financials," "Ever Heard of Gahooyoogle?," and others. OPAL (Online Programming for All Libraries) provides podcasts of archived learning opportunities. (http://www.opal-online.org/)

Libraries could use podcasting as a marketing and library news tool. At future library conferences, podcasting could be used to resolve the dilemma of wanting to see two or

more presentations offered during the same time slot. Although not strictly a library, the Spoken Alexandria Project (http://www.spokenalex.org/) is creating a free library of spoken word recordings, consisting of classics in the public domain and modern works (with permission). Libraries might consider how to incorporate these audio classics with programs for their communities. Other examples of working with podcasting and books can be found at Yahoo!! Podiobooks (http://dir.yahoo.com/Arts/Humanities/Literature/Electronic_Literature/Podiobooks/).

Ultimately, the real key is to identify and develop podcasts that will appeal to the user, so they will want to subscribe to the feed. One way to keep up with what libraries are doing in this area is to subscribe to the bibliocasting listserv (send the following message: subscribe bibliocasting firstname lastname to: listserv@listserv.syr.edu). There is also an experiment of podcasting the listserv; the URL for this podcast is: http://drew.syr.edu/iis4/pod/pod.xml.

Creating podcasts still requires a bit of technical expertise and will require a commitment on the part of the library administration and staff. Gahran describes the basics of working with podcasts:

1. Create and edit the audio content—probably the most challenging aspect of the process, but not an insurmountable challenge. The audio files must be MP3 compatible and can be created using low-end technology or more sophisticated audio editing and mixing software and hardware.
2. Post and announce the audio content online on an RSS 2.0 enabled website or blog—so there is a webfeed that supports "enclosures".
3. Download and listen to audio files on the computer using Windows Media Player, Real Networks RealOne Player, or QuickTime Player, or subscribe to podcasting feeds and synchronize MP3 players with the "podcatcher" and retrieve newly-acquired audio files.

Librarians also need to know how to find podcasts—both for their own interests and in order to support questions from clients. Googling "podcast" is one approach, but a more effective approach is to become familiar with podcast directories and search engines, such as those listed below:

- AllPodcasts: http://www.allpodcasts.com/
- Blinkx.tv: http://www.blinkx.tv/ (unique because it searches audio and video content)
- iTunes Podcast Directory: http://www.apple.com/podcasting/ (must download iTunes 6.0)
- iPodder.org: Podcasts: http://www.ipodder.org/directory/4/podcasts
- NPR Podcast Directory: http://www.npr.org/rss/podcast/podcast_directory.php
- Podcast.net: http://www.podcast.net/
- Podcast Alley: http://www.podcastalley.com/index.php
- PodcastDirectory: http://www.podcastdirectory.com

- PodFeeder: http://www.podfeeder.com/
- Podscope: http://www.podscope.com/
- PodSpider: http://www.podspider.com
- Public RadioFan: http://www.publicradiofan.com/podcasts.html
- Yahoo! Podcasts: http://podcasts.yahoo.com/
- Yahoo! Search – Audio Search – http://audio.search.yahoo.com

There are many more podcast directories and search engines, many of which can be found at:

- Google Directory: Computers > Internet > On the Web > Podcasts > Directories: http://www.google.com/Top/Computers/Internet/On_the_Web/Podcasts/Directories/
- Podcasting > Directories in the Yahoo! Directory: http://dir.yahoo.com/News_and_Media/Internet_Broadcasts/Podcasting_and_Audioblogging/Directories/
- Where to Submit Your Podcasts: Best Podcast Search Engines and Directories: http://www.masternewmedia.org/news/2005/05/20/where_to_submit_your_podcasts.htm

Once you start exploring the podcasting directories and search engines, you may discover some podcasts of interest. Although a "podcatcher" isn't required to listen to these files, the software is available at no or very little cost. Adam Curry's iPodder is available at: http://ipodder.sourceforge.net/. Another podcatcher is Doppler Radio (http://www.dopplerradio.net/). For other options, go to the Podcasting Software category in the Yahoo! Directory (http://dir.yahoo.com/News_and_Media/Internet_Broadcasts/Podcasting_and_Audioblogging/Software). This directory also identifies software that assists in the recording, assembling, and publishing of podcasts.

No new technology is without its warts, and podcasting is no exception. Currently, the most obvious issue associated with podcasting is that of copyright. The very nature of podcasting involves making a copy of an audio file and storing it on another device. In most instances, there are two copies made: one associated with the podcatcher on a personal computer and another copy that is transferred to an MP3 player.

Not surprisingly, one of the main areas of concern with copyright is within the realm of music. The RIAA has FAQs that deal with webcasting (streaming audio; http://www.riaa.com/issues/licensing/webcasting_faq.asp); however, podcasting is completely different from streaming audio, and a quick search of the RIAA web site produces no information whatsoever on podcasting. In addition, if a user wanted to obtain permission to use some music in the background of a podcast, she would have to obtain two different permissions—one for the musical composition and another for the recording that is being used!

For now, one solution to the copyright issue, especially as it applies to music, is to use music that is within the public domain. The following sites can help identify some of this music: Public Domain Music (http://www.pdinfo.com); The Internet Archive (http://www.archive.org); OurMedia (http://www.ourmedia.org); or Creative Commons License – Yahoo! http://search.yahoo.com/cc).

Gordon-Murnane brings to the table all of the issues associated with classification, tagging, metadata, archiving, and indexing podcasts. Look how much podcasting has grown in 12-18 months; how many podcasts and podcast sites will be available in 5, 10, or 15 years? How will podcasts be accessed in the future? Will podcasts be archived and preserved? There is clearly a role for the expertise of information professionals within the podcasting realm. Librarians can do for podcasts what they have done for the web through the implementation of sophisticated search tools comparable to the Librarians' Internet Index or InfoMine. The knowledge and expertise developed through partnerships like that of the Library of Congress and Portico (http://www.loc.gov/today/pr/2005/05-217.html) will provide the tools for preserving these files for the future.

Librarians must care and learn about podcasting because all indicators show that podcasting will soon be an integral part of life, and librarians need to discover how they can slip their presence into and make use of the podcasting environment. Librarians must be confident as they help clients obtain information from podcasts, which means they must know how to find that information, in the same way they use Google efficiently to mine information from the Internet. Librarians must help identify quality podcasts and podcast sites and provide the indexing, archiving, and preservation of these files. Podcasting is not a passing fad—it's an evolving information resource.

Additional Resources

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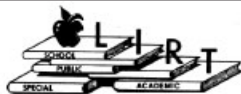Lewis, Peter. "Invasion of the Podcast People." Fortune 152.2 (2005): 204+.

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Standing Committees

Library Instruction Round Table

Adult Learners - Assists library professionals to understand, find information or promote ideas on learning styles, teaching methods, and training resources most often associated with adult learners.

Conference Program - Plans the LIRT program for the ALA Annual Conference. Makes arrangements for speakers, room, handouts, and activities during the program.

Liaison-This committee shall initiate and maintain communication with groups within the American Library Association dealing with issues relevant to library instruction and shall disseminate information about these groups' activities.

Long Range Planning - Develops short and long range plans for LIRT. Implements planning and operations for the activities of LIRT. Chaired by president-elect.

Newsletter - Solicits articles, prepares and distributes the LIRT newsletter. The Executive Board of LIRT serves as the Editorial Board for the LIRT newsletter.

Organization & Planning - Is responsible for long range planning and making recommendations to guide the future direction of LIRT. Reviews, revises, and updates the organization manual of LIRT. Recommends to the Executive Board, and through it to LIRT members, the establishment,functions,and discontinuance of committees and task-forces. Maintains the Constitution and Bylaws of LIRT and recommends amendments to those documents. Prepares a slate of candidates for LIRT offices and maintains records on procedures, candidates, and election results. Solicits volunteers for LIRT committees and maintains files of prospective committee appointees.

Public Relations/Membership
Publicizes LIRT purposes, activities, and promotes membership in LIRT. Develops brochures and news releases to inform members, prospective members, and the library profession about LIRT activities. Sponsors an exhibit booth at the Annual Conference. Organizes BITES (meals for instruction librarians to meet for food and discussion) at conferences.

Publications - Establishes, maintains, and disseminates LIRT Publication Guidelines. Solicits ideas for publications and advises as to the appropriate means for publication.

Research
Identifies, reviews, and disseminates information about in-depth, state-of-the-art research concerning library instruction for all types of libraries. Pinpoints areas where further investigation about library instruction is needed.

Teaching, Learning, & Technology
Identifies and promotes use of technology in library instruction, with special attention given to technologies that enhance learning and can be easily adapted to a variety of different learning environments.

Top Twenty responsible for monitoring the library instruction literature and identifying high quality library-instruction related articles from all types of libraries

Transition from High School to College
This committee builds and supports partnerships between school, public, and academic librarians to assist students in their transitions to the academic library environment.

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c/o Lorelle Swader
American Library Association
50 E. Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611