

Travel Report:
Highlights of the Special Libraries Association
Annual Conference

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Denver, CO

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Opening Session with Al Gore

Al Gore gave the opening speech of the conference. He talked about the current information overload experienced by everyone from politicians to doctors. While much information is available online, he proclaimed that there is a need now, more than ever for information professionals to guide users through the deluge of information.

Synergy Session (Question and Answer/Discussion Session with Tom Hogan, Stephen Abram, Clifford Lynch and Eugenie Prime)

Why is Google so successful?

Eugenie Prime argued that it is not the simple search but rather the one click availability of the material. The library search may involve going to the stacks, another branch library, another database or requesting the material through interlibrary loan. Libraries have not been successful at offering the one click option.

Google is great for answering the “who, what, where and when” questions. Special libraries, however, concentrate on the how and why. Libraries provide a more comprehensive answer.

How can libraries deal with the different search strategies of the under 35 year old group versus the over 35 year old group?

The difference is not in the strategies but perhaps in the learning styles. Today, we are more aware of the different learning styles, such as auditory and visual learners. We now must incorporate the different learning styles in the way we conduct our business.

How to keep up with all the new technologies?

The speakers emphasized that information professionals should not get bogged down with learning all of the new technologies because many are obsolete before they are even implemented. Rather, information professionals and managers need to concentrate on knowing why we might need the technology and find the IT professionals with the necessary skills to help implement the ideas. Leadership needs to concentrate on core competencies such as creativity, communication, conviction, curiosity and character. Leadership also needs to transfer their social skills to their environment.

Web 2.0 technologies, where do we need to be?

Libraries need to be where the users are- in social spaces. Libraries may want to form virtual organizations to increase contact with users. As with any technology, libraries need to take time to learn what works. Web 2.0 technologies may require multiple iterations before they are successful.

How do library professionals market their importance to their corporation, university, etc?

Libraries need to demonstrate the following to be considered important to their institution and user base:

1. Services are perceived to be critical to the organization
2. The services are not substitutable. This is where libraries need to show their services surpass Google.
3. Essential for competitiveness

Chemistry Vendor Roundtable

Royal Society of Chemistry has released a new E-books package priced at \$17K (one time purchase). They have implemented a new technology, Project Prospect, that will provide enhanced HTML text moving E-book publishing away from PDFs to allow a more interactive reading experience. The enhanced HTML versions will provide links to chemical structures, articles, RSS feeds and other texts. RSC in cooperation with Cambridge University are offering other publishers the opportunity to have their text converted to the enhanced HTML version.

New Enhancements to RSC content (End of 2007):

- Links to PubChem
- Experimental data analysis
- RSS feeds
- Structure searching

BioRad- KnowITALL U (\$20K annual contract)

Biorad has digitized all of the Sadtler spectra. They also include some other important spectra sources from Wiley Interscience and other publishers. The spectra is accessible via a web-based platform. The database allows for functional group analysis, data mining (chemometrics). The database does include FTIR (Fourier Transform IR) which is now the accepted standard.

Elsevier- Scopus

The Scopus database offers searching of scientific literature including scholarly content, web content and patent searches. Scopus now includes the H-Index for each author which is a measurement of the author's impact in the field based on # of publications and citations to the author's works. Chemical structure summaries are also available in Scopus.

Website Usability

The web designers at Elsevier offered their critique of the UC Davis Library's site. The following were some key points they stressed when designing a website:

- Keep text large enough for visitors to read.
- Do not overwhelm visitors with text on the homepage
- Keep terms consistent throughout the site
- Limit the # of text colors. However, when using colored text, make it have a purpose and retain the colors through the various click-through windows.

How to Find Spectra and Crystallography information

This session concentrated on the various print and electronic resources available to search for spectra and crystallography. The session did emphasize that finding this data does involve knowledge of experimental processes and equipment.

60 Gadgets in 60 Minutes

This session provided an overview of some of the hottest new technologies from the much anticipated iPhone to some more obscure inventions such as the sushi thumb drive

(http://www.geekstuff4u.com/product_info.php?manufacturers_id=&products_id=434).

Many of the new inventions demonstrated center around multiuse products such as the new Blackberries with music and video capabilities.

Poster Session- Highlights

- One University is using webinar technology to provide instruction at satellite campuses using Breeze (Acrobat Connect) software.
- At the National Institute of Standards and Technology, each library staff member has developed a wiki which includes their contact information as well as their job description and responsibilities. The job description portion of the wiki has proven a valuable resource for referring questions to the right person(s).