

ACTEA Librarians eNews #9, May 2004

The mission of ACTEA is to promote quality evangelical theological education in Africa by providing supporting services, facilitating academic recognition, and fostering continental and inter-continental cooperation.

Greetings fellow Librarians and Information Specialists!

I am sure you are well into 2004 by now and enjoying the challenges and triumphs you experience in your particular institutions.

In this issue read about:

1. Gift books for theological libraries
2. Collection Development Policy (part 2)
3. Digital Libraries and Digital Librarians
4. Electronic Books
5. Do we need electronic databases?
6. Your Letters

1. Gift books for theological libraries

ACTEA Librarians eNews is pleased to pass along the following announcement from the Evangelical Literature Trust to our readers. Many ACTEA-related school libraries have benefited greatly from the annual gifts of books from the Evangelical Literature Trust. If you haven't taken advantage of this opportunity yet, you are especially urged to heed this announcement.

"The Evangelical Literature Trust has now formally become part of the Langham Partnership International and our new 2004/5 Grant Catalogue is now available.

We shall be sending copies, along with other special offers, to all institutions already on our mailing list. The catalogue can also be found on our web site.

Please look out for your copy arriving.

If you are the librarian for an African theological institution and wish to learn more, visit our website at: www.langhampartnership.org

and look under Langham Liberateure OR contact Tina Lowe, Langham Literature Administrator at: tina@langhampartnership.org

2. Collection Development Policy (part 2)

In the last issue of eNews one of the focuses was collection development policy (CDP). Because it is so important, a few more words on the subject may be appropriate.

The collection development policy translates the educational and research programmes of the school into a bibliographically useful tool. The focus is the intellectual content of the library and reflects the intersection between the educational programmes of the school and current movements in theological enquiry.

How many of us give much thought to collection development? Are we more concerned with fines and daily administration of the library? Do we leave it to faculty to choose "haphazardly"? Are our collections lopsided because the librarian has allowed one faculty member to hog the budget or because he/she has allowed only one point of view to predominate when it comes to book/database selection? Collection development is an

intellectual task which should make a significant demand on a librarian's time.

What distinguishes a library from a collection of books is not primarily the organisation and classification system which libraries use, but the deliberate fashion in which the aggregation of books has been assembled. ³Whether you are planning a library of 2,000 monographs or 20,000 monographs you should work through essentially the same bibliographies, catalogues and books lists. The pool of potentially desirable titles is about the same in both cases² (1995: Williams). Reviewing this information is intellectually demanding and takes time.

Most libraries of note have a "Special Collection". If you visit any of the large universities in your country you will find that they are extremely proud of their Special Collection. Should theological libraries have Special Collections - collections within the larger collection which emphasise one particular subject? I recently visited a university which has an outstanding collection of old Bibles, for instance.

If you feel you are not qualified to have a say in the development of your library it is time to challenge yourself! Take a degree in theology through a correspondence course university. Suggest to the principal of your college that you sit in (with the students!) on a couple of lectures per week in the interests of being able to provide a quality service in the library.

Don't feel guilty about asking for a full day a month away from your campus so that you can do the rounds of the local bookshops, libraries and publishers, either to purchase books or to update yourself with what is on offer. You could also scout around for electronic resources and get ideas for your own library. Most will say "we do not have time." My answer is, "Make time! You owe it to your institution and library!"

As librarians and information workers we need not be apologetic about asking leadership if we can have time out for professional development. Ultimately your college will benefit!

3. Digital Libraries and Digital Librarians

In past editions of Librarians eNews I have talked about the need for us to look beyond the walls of our own institutions and to move towards libraries without walls.

Digital libraries and digital librarians exist to break down barriers in the dissemination of information/knowledge. If you want to "move with the times", you will have to think bigger than your own library!

A really useful article on the subject of Digital Libraries and Digital Librarians is

"The role of a digital librarian in the management of digital information systems" by V Sreenivassul, *The Electronic Library*, Volume 18:1 (2000): 12-20.

Most of Sreenivassul's ideas are expressed in my brief summary below.

Basically Digital Libraries are electronic libraries in which large numbers of geographically distributed users can access the contents of large and diverse repositories of electronic objects - networked text, images, maps, sounds, videos, catalogues of merchandise, scientific, business and government data sets - they also include hypertext, hypermedia and multimedia compositions.

Information is stored mainly in an electronic or digital form. The digital information collection may include digital books, digital scanned images, graphic, textual and numeric data, etc. A digital library is expected to provide access to the digital information collections.

A digital library can be:

1. machine-readable data files
2. components of any National Information Infrastructure
3. online databases and CD-ROM information products
4. computer information storage devices on which information resides

5. computerized networked library systems

Streenivassul says that the following definition of a digital library is probably the most acceptable:

"A digital library maintains all, or a substantial part, of its collection in computer-processible form as an alternative, supplement, or complement to the conventional printed and microfilm material that currently dominate library collections."

As might be expected, Digital Librarians manage large amounts of data, preserve unique collections, provide rapid access to information, facilitate dealing with data from more than one location and make for multiple learning environments. They help perform searches that are not manually feasible and very importantly "offer to protect the content of the owner's information."

What specifically are the DL's tasks?

1. To manage digital libraries! - same as the "traditional librarian", but the format differs.
2. Organize digital knowledge and information - also "traditional tasks" - format differs
3. Disseminate digital information from the computer-held digital information
4. Provide digital reference services and electronic information services
5. Provide "knowledge mining" from the emerging knowledge warehouses
6. Handle the tasks of massive digitisation, digital storage process, and digital preservation
7. Provide universal access and retrieval of digital knowledge, ultimately access to all
8. Catalogue and classify digital documents and digital knowledge.

I am sure you recognise many of the tasks/concepts of traditional librarianship in the above list. Digitalisation is not as scary as it sounds. Librarians have been organising information and making it available since before Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran library! We have two extremes - Qumran was severely limited access (only the initiated!), whereas the Digital Library is the ultimate in access.

What I find particularly heartening is the concept of "breaking down walls" and an eventual "universal library" with "universal access". What are the prospects for Digital Libraries in the Third World? If you have access to a university in your country an interesting article to read is:

Witten, I. "The promise of digital libraries in developing countries." *The Electronic Library* 20:1 (2002): 7-13.

If you have access to the internet but don't have access to a university you might like to look at Emerald's Library Technology Journals (some are free!).

www.emerald-library.com

4. Electronic Books

Dr Thoms R Kochtanek (Library Technology journals from Emerald) has written an interesting article "Developments in e-Books". The history of electronic books goes back as far as 1938 when H.G. Wells published "World Brain", an encyclopedia of all recorded (human) knowledge. Kochtanek maintains that this "concept piece set off ideas for what became both the digital library revolution and the notion of the electronic book." Another interesting development in the direction of e-Books was made in 1968 when Alan Kay created a mock model of a computer with a high resolution screen for viewing text. He suggested that electronic books "would be commonplace in the near future"! In 1999 netLibrary launched an internet-based e-book service which began the e-Book revolution.

Are we likely to see e-books in the theological library any time soon? According to Dr Kochtanek content is the driving force behind the e-book movement (popular fiction at this stage according to Kochtanek).

Project Gutenberg archives books that are out of copyright (and are therefore free of the

expenses associated with copyright). They are really inexpensive. Project Gutenberg meets the demand for out-of-copyright works in electronic form.

For information on e-books Kochtanek suggests the website: www.e-books.org

<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/books> is web site that provides access to about 20,000 titles freely readable over the internet.

According to Kochtanek problems associated with e-books at present revolve around content and the limitations of internet-based technologies. The physical appearance of e-books does not yet approach the resolution of the printed page. What Kochtanek calls "personalised technologies" (hand held devices) will probably be the technology of the future for the e-book.

It would seem that e-books will not replace our faithful paper copies (at least in African theological libraries) just yet!

5. Do we need electronic databases?

This was a question posed by the editor of University of Natal Library Bulletin (No 313, November 1999).

Renee Damonse lists the following as being advantages of Electronic Databases (ED):

1. Less time consuming than the traditional paper format copy - search a number of months and years simultaneously (instead of restricting you to searching one copy of a paper journal at a time).
2. A string of terms/keywords can be combined - impossible with paper journals
3. If you use online ED, these tend to be more up to date than paper formats.
4. ED offer online help
5. Very important - ED take up less physical space.
6. ED allows a "virtual library" for networked databases, reducing the need to leave one's office to use resources in the library.
7. Networked databases make information accessible to a greater number of people than the paper format.
8. Some commercial databases allow users to request materials not available in the user's library online. With the use of Ariel software and e-mail these requested documents can be delivered to one's computer in the office.
9. One's OPAC could be designed to allow one to e-mail records to oneself, which can later be incorporated into a bibliography.
10. OPAC can also be accessed in one's office, again reducing unnecessary trips to the library just to check the database.
11. Acquiring ED makes sure that the librarian keeps abreast of the needs of the computer literate students who are increasingly demanding electronic formats.
12. Keeps librarians abreast of developments in the rest of the world.

What are the disadvantages of Electronic Databases (according to Damonse):

1. High Cost of ED when compared with the paper format (escalate 20% per year).
2. Constantly changing computer requirements necessary to run the databases mean constant upgrades of equipment.
3. Libraries are often at the mercy of database vendors and suppliers and shrinking budgets of the parent institution.
4. The cost of a single stand-alone access as opposed to a network purchase or lease can also vary greatly. Many libraries can only afford the single user option.
5. ED downtime due to problems with hardware, software or networks.
6. Online databases are at the mercy of a very slow and costly internet service.
7. The problem of leasing rather than owning the ED.
8. Those who do not like using computers!

Do Librarian eNews readers have any comments to make on EDs? I would love to print your views the next edition of Librarians eNews!

6. Your Letters

Korklu Laryea (Deputy Librarian, Akrofi-Christaller Memorial Centre, Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana) writes:

"I have recently enjoyed reading No. 8 of the ACTEA Librarians eNews forwarded to me by one of my colleagues, Allison Howell. I think it is the only newsletter of its kind on the continent and hope it lasts many years."

Happy to have you on board as a reader and hopefully a future contributor to Librarians eNews.

Well, friends, hope to talk to you again later in the year. Please write and send in your ideas for the next eNews. This is your newsletter, and we need to hear from you! Your contributions can be on any relevant topic and of any length. Ask questions from your fellow librarians or let us know of one of your challenges.

How are all the wonderful friends I made at the Librarians workshop last year (Kenya, September 2003)? Write, guys!

God bless.

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