
Guest Editorial

All libraries, but especially those in the academic sector, are coping with the effects of what may now be termed the 'Googlisation' of information provision and retrieval. The key challenge appears to be how we can offer services which meet the increasingly sophisticated needs of our clients, and cope with the perceived 'threat' of competition. Across the age spectrum, our customers expect not only to retrieve information 24/7 and in the format of their choice, but increasingly expect to have an input into the design and delivery of the information they seek. The papers in this issue reflect these trends, and it is particularly encouraging to see the quality of student research being undertaken, examples of which may be found in the following pages.

Co-incidentally, three of the four papers presented here originate from Loughborough University, either from amongst researchers within the Department of Information Science, or reflect research conducted by staff in the University Library. This is purely fortuitous. Nonetheless, this does reinforce the comments above in relation to the strong imperatives existing currently for all in the information profession to understand and, perhaps more significantly, anticipate the methods customers use to access and evaluate information.

The first paper by Ahmed, McKnight and Oppenheim sets the scene with a heuristic evaluation of the Web of Science interface. Their results constitute an important critique of this interface, one used by significant numbers of researchers in a broad range of disciplines. Usefully, the authors identify the key positive and negative aspects of the interface, together with a range of both qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating interfaces.

The second section begins with an overview of a project undertaken at Loughborough University Library, which sought to establish the most appropriate means by which they

might deliver a reference collection and service to their community. Critically, their recommendations are firmly grounded in evidence-based data, and thus are robust and defensible, rather than merely intuitive. Moreover, their findings reflect a growing trend, in that they conclude that the traditional large print-based reference collection no longer meets the needs of their customers. Finally, of even greater importance arguably, was their observation that a critical outcome of the project was the provision of staff development opportunities for a wide range of staff, not in the somewhat sterile environment of a training day, but on a project of practical value to the library.

The paper by the two Andrews – Shenton and Johnson- is unique for a variety of reasons. Firstly, it reports research undertaken in a school rather than a university, and secondly, neither author appears to have any formal connections to Loughborough University currently. Interestingly, this research project examines effective means of ascertaining the attitudes of a predominantly teenage population to books and libraries, employing *SharePoint* software in an attempt to exploit pupils' familiarity with electronic surveys. Their conclusions reinforce the dangers inherent in making assumptions concerning differing user populations, particularly in respect of their information-seeking behaviour. Moreover, they identify significant limitations to the software tested here; *SharePoint* lacks the facility to analyse qualitative data and even the facilities for analysing quantitative data were found to be somewhat rudimentary, and thus of limited value in eliciting attitudes and opinions from customers.

The final paper returns to a university environment, and evaluates the attitudes of two groups of stakeholders towards the deposit of materials generated by research students in an institutional repository (IR). Open access publishing and the development of IRs is a relatively recent phenomenon, and it is interesting to read an evaluation focusing on the views of two key groups – research students and IR managers. Both groups express positive

views with regard to the deposit of research student output in IRs; the concerns reported reflected those of the wider academic community, especially in relation to the protection of intellectual property rights.

Finally, the three book reviews reflect not only contemporary concerns, but examine the work of pioneers in the field. In reading the review of the special issue of biographical studies, it would seem that the old adage still holds true, namely, *plus ça change, plus c'est le même chose*.

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