
E-MAIL LISTS & DISCUSSION LISTS

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Introduction

This is a new venture for *LIRN*. As researchers we, and all members of the Group, will have had rewarding and frustrating experience with Discussion Lists. We would like to share these with members of the Group – and invite them to contribute more items in this vein. Initially we suggest you address your contributions to the List “*lis-lirg*” – so that they can be collated and published in future issues. Suggestions for extending the work – and for any similar Group ventures – would of course be welcome.

Contributions should give a personal assessment of the usefulness or otherwise of the List. This is not meant to be a neutral, factual or comprehensive listing: it is meant to share individual assessments of how useful lists can be to (busy) researchers in LIS. Comments should indicate how far there is lively discussion as compared to factual information and queries. Lists are open unless stated otherwise.

General LIS - UK

lis-link@mailbase.ac.uk The general catch-all list for librarians: largely to advertise meetings, courses, vacancies, news from LIC [MLAC to be], etc.

mcb-liblink-forum@mcb.co.uk Explanation reads “You have received this message because you are subscribed to the mcb-liblink-forum discussion area on the MCB server at www.mcb.co.uk/services/conferen/webforum/mcb-liblink-forum” Designed for formalised limited duration discussions on particular topics. [JWS]

General - international

IFLA-L-request@INFOSERV.NLC-BNC.CA
General and administrative news from IFLA

DIGLIB@INFOSERV.NLC-BNC.CA Digital Libraries Research mailing list run by IFLA. International, but in practice mostly American. I would not do without it. [JWS]

General - LIS processes & development

CIRCPLUS@LISTSERV.BOISESTATE.EDU a 'process specific' list, which deals with Circulation, Lending Services type issues. Very down-to-earth but very active. It has an archive located at: <http://www.escribe.com/library/circulation/> which enables searches for past postings by theme. Especially useful for practitioner research. Members are excellent at responding to queries/questions. I have conducted 'mini surveys' of lending services practices in the past using this list. [PG-L]

interoperability@mailbase.ac.uk Set up by Paul Miller as the UK Interoperability Focus contact. Aims to discuss issues related to the design, construction and ongoing operation of interoperability services within a cross-domain environment. Recent discussions have included thesauri and terminology controls. [NC]

lis-elib Useful for generally keeping up with what's going on in ICT developments in libraries.

Although its main aim is to promote discussion on the JISC Electronic Libraries Programme (eLib) and its projects, it tends to cover general IT library messages too. It is also a useful point for finding out more about some of the eLib projects themselves - all of which have their own lists. [CN]

lis-serials@mailbase.ac.uk

lis-e-journals@mailbase.ac.uk

Electronic publishing & copyright

liblicense-l@lists.yale.edu This is my favourite of all lists. It combines commercial considerations with principles and it covers developing practice in the whole area of dealing with publishers for electronic data. Very useful to keep up with what is going on in the States, where they are some years ahead. Consortia arrangements important. Mainly focused on academic journal information. High level - not afraid to mix in legal, economic and professional principles. [JWS]

ecup-list@kaapeli.fi Copyright developments internationally at high (legal and political) level. European focus. Important for people who want to keep up with copyright news weekly or monthly rather than annually. [JWS]

lis-copyseek@mailbase.ac.uk The nitty-gritty of copyright problems and queries. The answers are generally by experts and authoritative. Focuses on the universities photocopying CLA agreement, but is extending to electronic copying issues. If copyright grabs you, then this list will. Closed list: librarians only. [JWS]

Performance measures & statistics

camile@mmu.ac.uk : for performance indicators and library statistics. List Manager
majordomo@mmu.ac.uk So far good intentions rather than active. [JWS]

Lis-perf-measures@mailbase.ac.uk Set up in 1998 by Northumbria University to follow up their biannual International Conferences on Performance Measurement. [JWS]

Research projects and programmes - UK

Research projects & programmes - Europe

lis-european-programmes@mailbase.ac.uk Factual announcements of Programmes, calls and seminars. [JWS]

Public libraries

lis-pub-libs@mailbase.ac.uk The only general list for UK public libraries. General, miscellaneous topics. Level not very inspiring as yet. I gave up for some months and may do so again. But it will come alive one day. [JWS]

lis-publib-research has hardly got off the ground - 2 or 3 messages a month, and those mostly LIC News repeated elsewhere. But this should be the place for us. [JWS]

There are a few others akin to lis-publib-research in that they are not fully used but have great potential. The following three (with their mailbase descriptions) have been followed by NC:

public-info To discuss access to public information as part of the process of gaining economic & social advantage from info, publishing & the media. Keywords: Regulatory Framework; Universal Access; Education; Health Care; Environmental Benefits; Electronic Publishing & Archiving; Encryption & Verification [NC]

digital-culture This one is growing slowly. Recent changes in technology have led to critical debate about its actual & potential effects on cultural production. In photography, for example, this has been articulated around what it constitutes as a practice & notions of authenticity. This list explores these issues & related subjects. [NC]

best-value-uk-local-government A forum for the UK local government (including police and fire) best value initiative. It will allow researchers and practitioners working with both pilot and non-pilot authorities to discuss how best value - economic, efficient and effective delivery of services - can be achieved.

LISTS OF LISTS - SEARCHING

Generally I do not subscribe much any more to separate lists but use the mailbase archives extensively, especially for research purposes as the site has good search facilities by key words and a number of lists can be searched simultaneously. [CN] So - Lists of Lists become important!

General information on UK Discussion Lists can be had:-

Email mailbase-helpline@mailbase.ac.uk

Web <http://www.mailbase.ac.uk>

This website is incredibly helpful. It requires no expertise to navigate and provides list descriptions by subject category, a listing of list members, and (usually) an archive of messages sent in the recent past. [JWS]

What are the equivalent sites for USA, Canada, Australia, South Africa, Scandinavia, etc?

<http://INFOSERV.NLC-BNC.CA/> The National Library of Canada has a similar website with details of lists in Canada and the USA. Also hosts the IFLA lists. Gives instructions for joining, &c. Since it covers all disciplines, it is less easy to navigate for LIS lists – and more streamlined. It makes E-mail discussion lists seem big business! Six separate search programmes are available – of variable quality. One, as an example, produced this listing:

- Libraries/Archives/Records Management
- Educational & Training Discussional Mailing List
- * Library and Information Technology Association List
- * Library Collection Development List
- * Library Computer Lab Supervisors
- * Library Council of Washington - List
- * Library Events in Southern California
- * Library jobs and events
- * Library jobs and events
- * Library Lab Employees
- * Library Public Relations List
- * Library Service to the Deaf Forum
- * Library Services
- Library Tech Services Division

“To get a list of the addresses on a particular list, you may use the "who" command, followed by the name of the lis. Note that many list owners allow only a list's subscribers to use the "who" command, or disable it completely, believing it to be a privacy violation.” [JWS]

The scene in the USA seems relatively to be richer - but with real overload problems!

P G-L has contributed the following exploration - where we do not have pointers from personal experience - but which readers may nonetheless find useful. This is an initial investigation into agencies and websites which keep track of discussion groups with facilities for enquirers to identify those likely to be of use to them and with instructions for how to subscribe to any subsequently chosen. One of JWS' friends recommends www.liszt.com as first choice

Retrievals to date include:

www.scfn.net/menus/production/main.html

Suncoast's Free-Net site. Main Menu lists categories including "Education & Libraries", within which the Libraries menu includes Library & Information Science Resources, a subset of which is "Library Science Discussion Groups" (You might be able to get to this direct using the following URL: www-scfn.netthpl.lib.fl.us/menus/production/libtalk.html) Within this are listed:

- Ariel (ARIE-L)
- Business Librarians (BUSLIB-L)
- CD-ROMs (CDROM-L)
- Circulation, reserves, etc. (CIRCPLUS)
- General Library Discussion
- Government Documents Librarians (GOVDOC-L)
- Reference Librarians (LIBREF-L)
- Library and Information Science Research (LIBRES)
- K-12 Libraries and Librarians
- List of Library-Oriented Listservs & Electronic Serials

On the day searches were attempted, problems were experienced with some of the links.

www.topica.com/partner/ecosoft Ecosoft Corporation offers the opportunity to search for mailing lists here. Claims to offer "the Internet's most comprehensive directory of email newsletters and discussion lists" Typing "libra*" in the search box with the radio button "Email lists" produced thirty different categories, e.g.

Education/Libraries
Arts/Education/Libraries
Health & Fitness/Medicine/Libraries
Within Education/Libraries there is a subgroup LIS (Library and Information Science) which yields forty odd lists including:
Prison and Jail Librarians Interest Group
Elvis-live
LIBRES (Library and Information Science Research Electronic Journal)
SLIS-RESEARCH-METHODS

An investigation of the intriguingly titled Elvis-live reveals it to be an acronym for Electronic Library Virtual Information Service: Library Information for Virtually Everyone. Details of this list are scant - just brief purpose and how to join.

Some lists have fuller information, e.g. Prison and Jail Librarians Interest Group defines purpose, states the list type (i.e. unmoderated discussion), subscription mechanism (requiring owner approval), the existence of an archive (readable only by subscribers), date of creation, owners, how to subscribe, statistics (i.e. number of subscribers, average number of messages per day). In both the above cases one can subscribe directly from the entry in the topics directory.

www.scout.cs.wisc.edu/index.html The Internet Scout Project has a section entitled NEW-LIST within which there is a sub-section NEW-LIST Archive. (Try direct URL to www.scout.cs.wisc.edu/caservices/new-list/new-list_nav.html) A simple search using the word "library" produced 27 matches with a star system indicating the best matches. The two retrievals awarded the four-star treatment in this system were Dragon's Library News (an open mailing list for the Science Fiction and Fantasy FanFiction Archive) and the Jewish Home Library. BUS-LIB, on the other hand, the Business Librarian's Electronic Discussion List was awarded only one star! An alternative search using the keyword "librarianship"

brought up only two hits - one of which was BUS-LIB again and the other being PRT-LIBN - Philosophy Religion and Theology Librarian's List. This is disappointing as the Internet Scout Project is a reputable site.

Perhaps some LIRN readers can try out more sophisticated search strategies in this one and see if they can come up with the goods?

paml.alastra.com Publicly Accessible Mailing Lists claims to be the "Internet's premier Mailing List Directory" adding "We might not be the biggest, but we personally guarantee that our listings are the most accurate." There is an A-Z search facility and entering the "L"s reveals Libraries under which there are more than 40 lists, including

AACRL
BIB-MED
ERICNews
GENEALIB
SERIALST

www.lsoft.com/catalist.html L-Soft terms itself "the official catalog of LISTSERV lists" and claims to provide up to date information about nearly 33,000 public listserv lists. The list search option form allows users to search for lists whose name, host name and/or title matches their search string. Multiple topics may be searched using a comma as a separator.

Searching for "librarianship,academic" retrieved 133 list names, many of which, from their brief descriptions were purely academic but it did throw up AFAS-L@LISTSERV.KENT.EDU, the African American Studies and Librarianship list which, one is also informed, has a membership of over 500 subscribers. Also derived by this search string are several other sites of potential interest, among which the following have over 300 subscribers: ALF-L@YORKU.CA, the Academic Librarian's Forum, FISC-L@LISTSERV.NODAK>EDU Fee-Based Information Service Centres in Academic Libraries, H-HISTBIBL@H-NET.MSU.EDU, Discussion List for the Study and Practice of History Librarianship and LIBEX-L@MAINE.MAINE.EDU Exhibits and Academic Libraries Discussion List. Entering, for example, ALF-L, one gets additional details of features such as archives, digests, indexes and database functions and information on how to subscribe.

www.liszt.com LISZT describes itself as a "ginormous directory of Internet discussion groups: mailing lists, newsgroups and IRC chat channels". It proudly claims that Yahoo Internet Life recently named its mailing list directory one of the ten essential websites. Using the advanced searching option and the truncation "librar" retrieved 230 mailing lists all of which looked relevant although some appeared to cater for local or minority interests. There was no indication of size of membership.

LIRN Readers might like to explore this further and report back on any treasure trove!

WWW Gateway LWGate's Mailing List service claims to "present information about a set of mailing lists...and provide a hypertext interface to list archives which exist on the NetSpace server." A list of mailing lists available has been "broken down alphabetically" into bizarre groupings:

2400FULTON-APRIL
ARCHICAD-CSOCWORK
etc. etc.

Entry into JEEPTECH-MORRIS, in the hope that LIBRARY might be embedded within proved disappointing although it did retrieve JESSE (Open Forum, Library/Info. Science Education) and MLA-L (Music Library Association Mailing List).

There is probably a more effective way to search this. If you find it, let us know!

catalog.com/vivian/interest-group-search.html

This List of Lists is "one of the largest directories of special interest group e-mail lists...available on the Internet" Inputting "library" in the "single keyword or phrase" search box produced over twenty pages of lists together with their names, subscription addresses, owner names, last update and descriptive paragraph. Retrievals included **WEB4LIB@LIBRARY.BERKELEY.EDU** for Library-based WWW Servers and Clients; **LM NET**, the Library Media Specialists Network and **CONSDIST@LINDY.STANFORD.EDU**, devoted to the conservation of museum, library and archive materials.

http://tile.net/lists A reference guide to Internet discussion and information lists. Lists are listed by name, description and domain. Entry into the alphabetical listing by description under the letter "L" produced an eight page list with about a dozen entries beginning with the word "Library" and including Libraries/Archives/Retcords [sic] Management Educational & Training Disssussional [sic] Mailing List, Library Collection Development List, Library Public Relations List and Library Services to the Deaf Forum.

Information given about each list is very brief consisting of how to subscribe or unsubscribe and the owner's address.

Searching by the key term "library" resulted in over 400 matches with many intriguing acronyms. Constraints of time prohibited delving further. Volunteers please to follow up on lib-contact, lib-docex, lib-ulac, lib-unag, library-alert, libsearch, etc. etc!

www.n2ht.com/KOVACS Directory of Scholarly and Professional E-Conferences by Dianae K. Kovacs is now in its 14th revision. This site "screens, evaluates and organizes discussion lists, newsgroups...mailing lists, interactive Web chat groups etc...on topics of interest to scholars and professionals..."

A keyword search here using "library" selected 25 matches. These were listed purely by list name which was not very informative - e.g. CJC-L, which proved to be a communication channel for ACRL's Community and Junior College Libraries Section while TQMLIB, more obviously, was Total Quality Management for Librarians. Information is given about how to subscribe, whether or not the list is moderated or archived and a contact address.

www.scfn.thpl.lib.fl.us/bbs/usenet.5 Library-Oriented Lists and Electronic Serials by Charles W. Bailey Jr. This has the advantage over Kovacs (above) that it is profession-specific but, unfortunately, appears to be out of date (revised 18/1/1994) It aims to provide "brief information about selected BITNET and Internet Lists and electronic serials that are of interest to librarians...open for general subscription"

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

I would like to invite LIRN readers to help us build up our own resource file of sites which are of particular relevance to researchers. There appear to be national differences in that Americans are much more willing to engage in debate on discussion lists while we English tend to be more reticent and do more 'lurking' or send replies only to the list poster rather than to the whole list! [PG-L]

Compared with other fields, I know of few lists in the [UK] library field where real discussion takes place. We tend to use email lists for quick queries and announcements more than for debate. This is partly because the discussion often takes place behind the scenes with replies going to one person who then summarises for the list. This has advantages in curtailing huge volumes of traffic, but it does not promote discussion and debate.

The best list I've ever subscribed to was **disability-research** which had (and I imagine still does have) fantastic international debates, often very detailed and academic, often rather puerile and idiotic. I always wondered if this one worked particularly well because the disability research community traditionally had fewer opportunities for getting together in discussion than other research or professional communities. It was also the most international list I've ever subscribed to. [CN]