

FACILITATING ACCESS AND ADDING VALUE : TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL LIBRARY STAFF AND CLIENTS

M. SCOTT

CSIRO Information Management & Technology, meryn.scott@csiro.au

ABSTRACT

As a large geographically dispersed scientific research organisation, CSIRO has a strong culture of working with virtual teams and improving and reinventing the delivery of library service and training opportunities for library staff and clients. In this distributed environment, library staff require training and appropriate technologies to facilitate access to library resources and services for their client groups. Clients also require flexible and convenient library training programs.

CSIRO Library Services has enhanced the delivery of desktop training programs to clients through the use of collaboration technologies to provide improved training opportunities, using web conferencing. An effective training program, developed by CSIRO's Information Specialist team, provides clients across the Organisation with desktop access to advice on the use of databases, bibliographic management software, information resources, and other library services.

CSIRO Library Services has also developed new current awareness products which are delivered via the desktop. These products include subject portals across specific disciplines relevant to CSIRO research interests, and a series of current awareness sites, titled Info Updates. Aligned with CSIRO research capabilities, the Info Updates service assists researchers to identify key information such as news items, journal articles, conference information, web sites, and other relevant sources, quickly and efficiently.

Together, these new initiatives provide CSIRO library staff and clients, regardless of their geographic locations, with access to quality desktop training programs, relevant current awareness and subject specific information which enhances the delivery of library services across the Organisation.

1. INTRODUCTION

CSIRO has a large number of physical locations across Australia and while many library clients are situated in the major centres, other clients work from remote or regional areas without a site library. Increasingly the library service is challenged with providing a standardized level of service to remote and regional staff which is equivalent to that which is delivered to clients with access to major library centres.

The CSIRO library staff are divided into three functional groups to deliver services. The Information Support and Library Collection teams provide collection management support and document delivery services to CSIRO clients across Australia. The Information Specialists Team provides database training, information retrieval services, citation analysis, current awareness services, reference management software training, publications assistance and patent searching assistance and training. Traditionally the Information Specialist teams have been physically located with clients in the regional areas but with changes in research directions and the increasing emphasis on desktop delivery of services, technological options have been sought to extend the value and benefits of the specialised library services to clients.

2. TRAINING PROGRAMS DELIVERED VIA COLLABORATION TOOLS

2.1. Library Staff training programs

In order for library staff to retain their own skills, keep up to date with new databases and changes to current database interfaces a schedule of database and software training programs was implemented to support the subsequent delivery of training to clients. Priority for the training was allocated to the most common and most frequently utilized databases such as **Cambridge Scientific Abstracts**, **CABI** and **Web of Knowledge** and bibliographic management software products such as **EndNote**. The training programs were delivered using CSIRO's collaboration and videoconferencing software, **Cisco Unified MeetingPlace**. This enabled in-house presenters to train other library staff in databases in which they had expertise. This included bibliographic management software, and scientific and patent databases.

Vendor sponsored training was also promoted where this was an appropriate option to deliver training in new databases or to provide refresher courses in the use of databases which had introduced major interface upgrades. Vendors used their own Webinar software or attended CSIRO library sites to provide the training through the **Cisco Unified MeetingPlace** collaboration tool. **Cisco Unified MeetingPlace** functionality enables the desktop of the presenter to be shared with multiple participants across many sites. Participants could share their own desktop screen to demonstrate or illustrate specific problems and the vendors or presenters could actively examine the problems of the participants and offer immediate technical solutions for the identified difficulties. The software also enabled the recording of these sessions which captured not only the audio portion of the presentation, but all of the presentation activity which demonstrated the capability of the database by capturing and streaming the screens of the presenters. The recording function ensured that those staff unable to attend training sessions did not miss valuable opportunities to consolidate their skills.

2.2. Client training programs

Client training programs were delivered to provide database and bibliographic management software training so that every client could have access to desktop group or individual training regardless of their physical location. The collaborative training approach of having multiple trainers permitted the library staff to have “hands-on” training with clients who were located on the major library centre sites but also to provide the same training sessions to clients located remotely by running the training session through the **Cisco Unified MeetingPlace** software. The logistics of setting up the training involved inviting clients to accept a training session and then offering the choice of attending the session at the major library centre or via their desktop utilizing the collaboration software **Cisco Unified MeetingPlace**. This enabled the trainers to present the session with one trainer in the major library centre facilitating the session and the other trainer in any other location sharing the training session presentation. The trainers could present two distinct modules of the training or toggle the presentation from one trainer to the other in smaller sections.

Having the variety of two presenters from different physical locations in the training sessions reinforced with the clients that they could access library staff from any staffed location. With the reduction in physical library sites it is critical that clients understand the concept of remote delivery of services and they become comfortable with library staff from many locations. Library clients are being encouraged not just to contact their local library staff but to consider the entire library staff network available and accessible for their enquiries. Introducing as many library staff to clients through the training programs encourages familiarity and facilitates trust and relationship building. This encourages clients to contact alternate library staff when their own location is not staffed.

Through the desktop delivery of training, remote clients felt involved in the presentation and could submit questions and received immediate feedback. If a client wanted to share their own screen and demonstrate a problem in real time to the trainers, this was also a viable option. The opportunity was available for the clients in the live session to have their own problems demonstrated and solved via the presentation screen and all clients, including those at remote locations, were able to observe all of the problems and their resolution.

3. CURRENT AWARENESS PRODUCTS

Several new Current Awareness initiatives were introduced including a Subject portal project and a current awareness delivery system to enhance library services for regional clients. Both programs were put in place to complement the training initiatives and the focus on desktop delivery of services to all CSIRO library clients.

3.1. Info Updates

An Info Updates current awareness system was introduced using **WordPress** software. The division of subject areas for the Info Updates service was based on CSIRO's organisational matrix structure and selected to complement scientific capabilities. The matrix structure was designed so that CSIRO could separate capability management and output delivery. Innovative and responsive Themes and Streams of scientific endeavour could be created and disbanded as required to ensure flexibility and the ability

to respond to changes in research focus. Scientific capabilities refer to an enduring ability to invent technical solutions for multiple applications utilising a common set of technical skills, scientific infrastructure and scientific collaborations and relationships. These scientific capabilities needed to be supported through an updated current awareness system. The core research areas identified for the development of a subject portal were Agribusiness, Environment, Energy, Manufacturing, Materials and Minerals, Mathematics Information Communication Technologies and Business. For the library staff a Library and a Data Management Service blog were also established.

A blog was created and assigned to each of the major capabilities, that is, each area in which CSIRO has a cohort of expertise in a particular area. Categories were established so that each post would be categorized according to a subject index attached to each capability blog. Each blog was assigned a relevant set of categories and a tag index was created. When the tags were assigned to each blog, the selection resulted in the tag categories being listed on the Info Updates page. The tag became larger the more often it was selected so the most commonly assigned tags became the most prominently displayed.

Clients could also select tags in order to retrieve all of the posts which had that tag assigned. Clients were able to select a specific category, capability blog or a specific tag to track information that was of relevance to their scientific work. Clients could subscribe to the capability blogs via an RSS feed. The Library blog also assisted library staff in keeping track of new database releases and conference dates and other useful professional information to maintain a relevant level of professional development current awareness.

Library staff were trained in the process of adding items to each blog. The blogs were populated with information of relevance to that scientific capability, particularly news items, media releases from government sites, conference announcements and government policy statements relating to the capability areas. A group of Information Specialists was assigned to each Info Update category and charged with filtering alerts for suitable items to be added to the blogs. Each post could be viewed individually and graphics could be added to attract attention to specific articles and add interest to the text based view.

The Info Updates is a project which is a work in progress. The library community has been able to access some usage statistics on each portal and this will be utilized to enable the service to be more responsive and targeted in the future. There will also be an extensive re-assessment of the delivery system for the Info Updates when the library service intranet presence is migrated to a new content management system in the fourth quarter of 2010. The functionality of the new content management system will enable more targeted and direct delivery of alerts and announcements of new library updates and services.

3.2 Subject Portals

The Subject portal project was conducted to maintain a relevant set of stable information sources for scientists based around scientific capabilities and emerging areas of science. It was identified during a review of the Library Intranet that a Subject Portal structure could provide added value that would enhance the desktop delivery of services. While the Info Updates posts had a short term focus, the subject portals promoted more stable sites which had been investigated extensively for their suitability

and longevity. Only well known associations and organisations were listed. Selected databases were included to provide the scientists with suggestions on which data sets were the most appropriately aligned with their area of research. The Subject portals were based on the major CSIRO capabilities and reflected the main areas of scientific activity currently being undertaken by CSIRO. Portals were established in the areas of Business & Economics, Earth & Environmental Sciences, Engineering & Applied Sciences, Health & Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences & Mathematics and Social Sciences.

Each Information Specialist or group of Information Specialists was responsible for the resource discovery exercise involved in searching for and identifying useful resources for the appropriate Subject portals. The Subject Portal feature supported and extended the subject specialist knowledge of the Information Specialist staff and translated this expertise into an accessible online resource. Technological solutions such as the Subject Portals have assisted in providing access to specialist subject knowledge and skills not previously enabled by traditional library services.^[1]

The Subject portal team held regular meetings to discuss the creation of new categories and added content. Scheduled broken link reports provided the opportunity to re-analyse content and refresh sites where appropriate. Clients were also encouraged to suggest suitable content for the subject portals and to share their own useful favourite web sites. A promotional campaign was initiated when the Subject portals were launched. This included news items in the CSIRO-wide newsletter and a feature story on the CSIRO intranet. Library staff also provided access to the relevant subject portal when site newsletters or other current awareness emails were sent to targeted client groups. The subject portals are iterated on a regular basis and new sites and categories added when relevant to sustain their accuracy and relevance to researchers.

4. ACCESS INITIATIVES

4.1 Ask a Librarian

Providing equitable access to Information Specialist staff is both a responsibility and a challenge for the library community. With the increasing emphasis on desktop delivery of services not all clients have an information professional co-located on their site. Through enhancements to the Library Intranet the Information Specialist group has introduced the “Ask a Librarian” service. This is a common feature on many public and University library web sites which allows the client to submit queries without the complication of having to identify an individual with expertise in the subject area of their query.

The “Ask a Librarian” service provided a form for the client to complete to indicate the details of their information requirements. Timely monitoring was an essential element of the success of this service. Monitoring was approximately hourly and the dissemination of the tasks was undertaken immediately upon identification of the requirements. A traditional reference interview was often undertaken by the Information Specialist assigned the query to ascertain more specific and useful details. Responses to the queries were completed within the timelines which the client had indicated.

4.2 Federated Searching

Another initiative which the library community has promoted was the introduction of a federated search engine and a new electronic journals interface. This project identified some important technical solutions to enhance desktop delivery of services. The introduction of a federated search engine was selected to provide a more modern search interface for users to access a combination of the library catalogue and selected library databases.^[2] This was successfully implemented in early 2010 and has provided library clients with an excellent resource to commence their searches and provide a wider variety of results so they may make a more informed choice before selecting more specific native databases. For the more general searches it was an effective single source from which it was possible to search all major resources. This reduced duplication of effort and duplication of result sets.

4.3 Library Intranet Content Migration

The Library Intranet is a critical resource for delivering library services. Within CSIRO, the library site regularly experiences over twice as many hits as any of the other internal sites. The site averages over 13,000 hits a month and continues to grow in popularity. A further and ongoing enhancement to the library intranet is the involvement of the library community in migrating the library content to a new content management system to enhance intranet access. The new content management system consists of dynamic pages that may be customised by the user to suit their research needs. The system is being referred to as "MyCSIRO" because of its capability to deliver a customised web experience for each client. Historically CSIRO intranets have been managed by individual subject-based divisions consequently CSIRO currently has 26 separate intranets supported by eight different technologies publishing 52 separate newsletters.

The library intranet content migration project and the enhanced web pages which will result will support our regional and remote library clients by enabling clients to select relevant resources and hosting those resources on their own customized web pages. The library intranet management staff will be involved initially in the migration project to move all of the library intranet pages across into the new content management system. This has involved an extensive audit of all of the current intranet pages and revisions and corrections where appropriate. Nine library staff members are involved in the migration project. Continued improvement and an extension of the existing library services will be a valuable outcome of the migration project. Library staff will continue to contribute and be integrally involved in the maintenance of the Library intranet on the new and improved platform.

5. CONCLUSION

Adding value to library services represents a constant challenge to library staff to capitalize on existing and emerging technologies and discover ways to maximize the impact of these technologies. It is an ongoing privilege and responsibility to enhance our service and proactively modify our service models to deliver to science and support CSIRO's scientific research.

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