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Check Out the Insert About Minitex Reference Services and Reference Referral in this Issue!

This month we’ve included the colorful insert describing Minitex Reference Services and our reference referral service. Please pull it out and post it for staff in your library to see. When you don’t have the resources to answer a reference question, contact us! We will use the collections of the University of Minnesota Libraries (the 15th largest research collection in North America), along with the collections of Hennepin County Libraries and the Minnesota Historical Society, and the expertise of subject specialists to answer your patrons’ questions. Please also note on the backside of the insert that we offer instruction on ELM and a variety of reference-related topics too! If you would like more copies to pass out to library staff, please let us know by sending us an email at <mtxref@umn.edu>.

Libraries Help People Succeed, Say Numerous Reports, Anecdotal Evidence on Random Website

Matt Lee

The American Library Association put out its annual report, “The State of America’s Libraries,” this month <http://www.al.org/ala/newspresscenter/mediapresscenter/americaslibraries/index.cfm>. The survey upon which the report is partially based finds that the majority of Americans “feel the public library improves the quality of life in their community” and “plays an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed.” School libraries are seen as essential to the educational experience by “96-plus percent” of Americans, but funding for school information resources has decreased over the last year. Academic libraries are seeing large increases in student usage and electronic content.

The report provides insight into trends affecting the library industry as a whole, such as social networking and Google partnerships, and also provides more specific coverage by library type. No matter what type of library you work in, you’ll likely find both familiar issues and new information.

A large-scale study from the Information School at the University of Washington provides additional evidence about Americans’ heavy reliance on library resources and services. “Opportunity for All: How the American PublicBenefits from Internet Access at U.S. Libraries” reports on a survey of nearly 50,000 regarding technology in libraries. Citizens from all walks of life - from younger people to older people, and those with and without computers at home - report that access to computers
at libraries is vital to them. They use library computers to accomplish both mundane and life-changing tasks – often with the assistance of library staff. Of the 77 million Americans who used public library computers, 2/3 were helped by library staff.

The report finds four main areas where access to library technology is of critical importance to Americans: employment, education, health, and making community connections. Peruse the executive summary for more detail <http://impact.ischool.washington.edu/documents/OPP4ALL_ExecSumm.pdf>.

The fact that a library association and library school find great value in libraries is perhaps unsurprising. Nor is it surprising that you and I, as library people, understand this value intrinsically. For a potentially more surprising look at how library users value their libraries, with some good-natured swearing, check out the replies to an Ask Reddit question: “Do you use your local library?” <http://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/bqiwaq/do_you_use_your_local_library/>. This is feedback direct from the folks who use our libraries, and seems to confirm the assertions put forth by our industry's recently published reports: libraries help people succeed at a lot of different things and in a lot of different ways. (hat tip to Librarian.net for the Reddit link)

**Scrolling on the Web**

*Beth Staats*

According to an article by Jakob Nielson, “Web users spend 80 percent of their time looking at information above the page fold. Although users do scroll, they allocate only 20 percent of their attention below the fold.

“During the Web’s first years, users often didn’t scroll Web pages at all. They simply looked at the visible information and used it to determine whether to stay or leave.

“Today, users will scroll. However, you shouldn’t ignore the fold and create endless pages for two reasons:

• Long pages continue to be problematic because of users’ limited attention span. People prefer sites that get to the point and let them get things done quickly. Besides the basic reluctance to read more words, scrolling is extra work.

• The real estate above the fold is more valuable than stuff below the fold for attracting and keeping users’ attention.”

This article offers some interesting data on eye tracking, scrolling behaviors, and web design implications. It was presented at the annual Usability Week Conference. *Internet Magazine* calls Jakob Nielson the “king of usability,” and *The New York Times* calls him the “Guru of web page usability.” For more information on Jakob and usability visit his web site at <http://www.useit.com/>. You can access the full column on “Scrolling and Attention” here <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/scrolling-attention.html>.

**Mary Wagner Awarded Fulbright Scholar Grant**

*Matt Lee*

Mary Wagner, the long-time associate dean of the library school at the University of St. Catherine, was recently awarded a Fulbright Scholar Grant. The award will help Mary continue her work in Africa. To learn more about that work, past and future, we asked her some questions.

**Q**: What work have you done in Africa in the past?

**Mary Wagner**: I taught high school English language and literature for three years at a rural high school in Lesotho in the mid-1980’s. In 1991 I returned to Lesotho on a Library Fellows program through ALA and worked at the Institute for Southern Africa Studies housed at the National University of Lesotho. More recently, during the January term, I have taken undergraduates studying issues of social justice in post-Apartheid South Africa to Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town.

**Q**: What work are you planning for your upcoming appointment, and how long will the project last?

**MW**: The Fulbright award is for 11 months. I will be at the University of Zambia working and teaching in the School of Education and the Department of Library Studies. In addition to teaching and curriculum development, I hope to establish service learning opportunities for students to work with the Lubuto Library Project, a NGO providing libraries, books and early literacy skill development to HIV/AIDS orphans and street children.

**Q**: How does the upcoming project compare to previous work you’ve done in Africa?

**MW**: I think somewhat similar - teaching and working with literacy development. Zambia however, is a new culture with new languages to learn. I expect to learn much just as I did when living and working in Lesotho.

**Q**: Is there anything members of the MN library community can do to be helpful with, or become involved in, your project?

**MW**: Currently, I don’t have enough details about my work in Zambia to give specific answers to your question. I will communicate about the work I am doing and would like to
organize use of technology to engage MN librarians and
the library/information science students at St. Catherine
University with the library science students at the University
of Zambia. How that will work is yet to be discovered! For
more information on the Lubuto Library Project, see <www.
lubuto.org>.

Q: What are your plans upon project completion?

MW: When I return I hope to share my new learnings with
colleagues and with the library and information science
students at St. Kate’s. Hopefully, there will emerge ideas
and possibilities to continue linking Zambians interested in
libraries with the MN library community.

I think I can safely speak for the MN library community with
a hearty congratulations to Mary on this prestigious award,
and with a wish for safe travels and fulfilling work! We will be
eager to hear about your experiences and all you’ve
learned. ■

Adaptive Technology Services
Carla Pfahl

Recently, I attended a session at the University of
Minnesota on Disability Accommodations and Resources: A
Demonstration of Adaptive/Assistive Technology. The session
was specifically geared for University Libraries’ staff to
introduce what resources and technologies are available for
people with disabilities. However, I was surprised to find out
there are also some great features built into many computers
that are ready to go without the need to purchase additional
software.

While the University of Minnesota may have some unique and
higher-end technologies available to meet the needs of its
students, staff and faculty, the University’s Disability Services
department is very aware of, and takes into consideration,
the varying degrees of technologies students will have after
they graduate. Disability Services works to incorporate that
knowledge into its programs.

Besides what is available at the University of Minnesota, did
you know that there are free technologies already built into
many computers? Both Macs and Windows 7 have some
assistive technologies included in the hardware of their
computers. Apple also includes assistive technologies with
3G versions of iPod Touch, iPhone, and the new iPad.

Also, all Mac computers built on the OS X operating system
and Windows 7 from Microsoft include many built-in features.
Both companies have begun to listen to users’ needs and
integrate assistive technologies into the overall operational
structure of their products as well as making them more
compatible with external software and equipment.

Here are five things you can do with your OS X Mac or
Windows 7 PC right now without needing to purchase
additional software:

1. Voice recognition to control the computer and/or
applications (speech to text)
2. An alternative, simplified user interface for
cognitive and learning disabilities
3. Screen Magnification
4. Screen reader (text to speech)
5. On-screen keyboard with mouse functionality

Phil Kragnes, University’s Disability Services, demonstrated
the use of a screen reader and Voice Over screen reader
with the iPod Touch and iPhone. He said, for his needs as a
person with very low vision, having a mobile device that not
only gives access to information and applications outside of
the office but that also allows him to access and connect to
applications from his work computer off-site is invaluable,
has saved him a great deal of time, and has allowed him to
be more productive.

Kragnes and Erik Eklund, also from Disability Services,
demonstrated many of the programs the department
provides at the University including JAWS for Windows
(screen reader), <http:/ /www.freedomscientific.com/
products/fs/jaws-product-page.asp>, Zoom Text Xtra by
Ai Squared (screen reader), <http:/ /www.aisquared.com/>,
Dragon/NaturallySpeaking by Nuance Communications, Inc.
(speech recognition, speech to text),<http:/ /www.nuance.
com/naturalspeaking/>, Kurzweil 3000 by Kurzweil
kurzweiledu.com/kurz3000.aspx>.

Apple’s statement of accessibility and more information
about built-in assistive technologies and accessories:

Microsoft’s statement of accessibility and more information
microsoft.com/enable/products/windows7/>.■

Disability Services will have a new website in July 2010,
<http://accessibility.umn.edu>, that will include information
about web accessibility, federal and state laws, the correct
structure and coding to use to make a site web accessible,
and adaptive technologies currently available on the
market. ■
ELM Spotlight

Educator’s Reference Complete and the Professional Development Collection
Beth Staats

In celebration of National School Librarians Month, I thought I would highlight two ELM databases aimed at media specialists and school library workers, Educator’s Reference Complete (ERC) and the Professional Development Collection (PDC). Educator’s Reference Complete, a Gale product, and the Professional Development Collection, an EBSCO product, both are great resources for any educator -- from the school teacher and administrator, to professional librarians and those studying in the field at the collegiate and graduate level. ERC and PDC both complement the library that utilizes the ERIC database because they provide full-text results for many of the journal titles found in ERIC. Both ERC and PDC cover multiple levels of education from preschool to college and every educational specialty, such as technology, bilingual education, health education, and testing. They also focus on issues in administration, funding and policy. Both databases contain educational reports published by the U.S. Department of Education.

With so much in common I wondered how searching would compare? So, I ran searches for a few topics of interest. First I ran a subject search for “bullying” in both databases. In ERC, I got 152 full-text academic articles, 148 full-text magazine articles, 13 ERIC reports, 80 full-text newspaper articles, and no multimedia. In PDC I retrieved 212 full-text academic journal articles, 152 full-text magazine articles, 162 book reviews, and 24 full-text articles from trade publications like School Library Journal. When going in through the subject index, each database offered a variety of subdivisions related to “bullying.” While PDC offered just 12 subdivisions of bullying, ERC offered well over 30 of them which can make for a much more exact and fruitful search.

Library Journal’s E-Reference Ratings says that “although” Educator’s Reference Complete is “not the most comprehensive education resource, this database would fill a substantial gap in the holdings of libraries that use ProQuest’s Education Journals, ERIC, and Wilson’s Education Full Text. With information dating from 1980 to the present, ERC’s more than 7.2 million articles from over 1100 periodicals and 200 reports from the U.S. Department of Education are worth noting. Such unique journal titles as Focus on Learning Problems in Mathematics, International Journal of Social Education, and School Arts are easily accessible through Gale’s PowerSearch interface, with quick tabs for intuitive navigation. Both basic and advanced search options are available; however, one frustration is the inflexibility of the limiters.”  <http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA6707589.html>

While ERC content dates back to 1980, some full-text information in the Professional Development Collection dates as far back as 1965. A few of the titles dating back to 1965 include American Behavioral Scientist, Sociology of Education, Child Development, and Journal of Conflict Resolution. Something else unique to PDC is the inclusion of the Teachers Editions and Guides for Weekly Reader. A couple other valuable features of PDC is that it contains, when available, author-supplied abstracts and native PDFs. According to some reviews of the product, the Professional Development Collection claims to be the most comprehensive and most valuable collection of full-text education journals in the world. As Minnesota residents, we are quite lucky to have access to these complementary, comprehensive education databases.

New ELM Tutorials
Matt Lee

We’re creating a series of short tutorials to promote the ELM databases. It’s our hope that these tutorials will be useful to you, your staff, or even the people who use your library by providing an introduction to content and navigation of some of these databases. Please view, use, and share as desired.

• Encyclopedia Britannica (4:06)
• Kids InfoBits (3:21)
• Points of View Reference Center (2:59)

• Consumer Health Complete (3:18)
• Student Research Center (3:38)

You can find them on our ELM tutorials page <http://minitex.umn.edu/Reference/Tutorials.aspx> or intermingled with all of Minitex’s tutorials and self-paced (i.e., archived) webinars here <http://minitex.umn.edu/Training/Browse.aspx?Filter=SelfPaced>. This is a growing collection, so keep an eye on these pages.
Modern Web Browser Security: Best Practices
Michael Berkowski

During the last few years, web browsing has become an increasingly risky practice for users who don't take steps to protect themselves. By and large, we have all become well trained not to click on suspicious links and to heed security warnings presented to us by our web browsers, but a new type of threat became popular in 2008 and 2009 that even the most vigilant browsing can't always prevent.

In the past, the web browser software itself was the most common avenue for malicious attacks against your computer, where-by malicious websites would attempt to compromise the web browser. This avenue has now shifted in large part to the supplementary applications, or plugins, your web browser uses to display different types of multimedia. Some common examples include Adobe Reader for PDF documents, Adobe Flash for rich web content, and Apple Quicktime for certain media. If allowed to fall out of date, these programs can leave your web browser exposed to widely known and exploited vulnerabilities.

Plugin vulnerabilities are commonly exploited by malicious advertisements, even on well known, high-profile websites. This happens because the ads are often provided through multiple tiers of resellers, making it difficult to identify and remove the dangerous ones. Without even requiring a mouse click, ads can make use of your browser’s plugins to deliver malicious instructions via rich Flash content, a PDF document you never see, or a few other methods.

The first and most important practice to protect yourself from modern web threats is to make sure all your software is up to date. Vulnerabilities are usually repaired quickly by the software providers, but you may not receive updates automatically. Visit the websites of plugin providers frequently to download and install the latest versions. This practice alone goes a great distance in protecting yourself.

Another practice Minitex recommends to mitigate most ad-based attacks is to use a web browser with Flash content blocking and ad blocking capabilities. Advertisement blocking is a highly controversial practice, since it may deprive a website of its only revenue stream—paid-per-click or paid-per-viewer ads reaching your eyeballs. However, until ad providers are able to effectively prevent malicious content from entering their distribution channels, ad blocking is one of our strongest defenses. Our needs at Minitex are well served by using the Mozilla Firefox web browser in conjunction with both the FlashBlock and Adblock Plus addons. Google Chrome also supports a variation of the FlashBlock extension. We have not found comparably effective flash and ad blocking support for Microsoft Internet Explorer.

Finally, don't forget your anti-virus software. Anti-virus protection with up-to-date virus definitions may be able to warn you of an attack attempt and prevent access or damage to your computer or personal information.

FlashBlock for Firefox: http://flashblock.mozdev.org/
FlashBlock for Google Chrome: https://chrome.google.com/extensions

MinneWebCon: Crashing the Conference for MN Web Professionals
Matt Lee

When a security question on a form related to the 2010 MinneWebCon Conference asked for my favorite HTML element, I had to look up a definition to make sure I knew what that was. As an indication of my being in over my head, that experience couldn’t have been clearer. The conference itself, however, turned out to provide a perfect balance of practical advice related to the social web and insight into the current and future workings of some really technical information technicalities.

Content Strategy for the Web – Kristina Halvorson, Brain Traffic

Morning keynote speaker Kristina Halvorson encouraged the incorporation of a content strategy into web design - to more fully tie the actual written content of a site into its graphic layout and more accurately tie that content to an organization’s mission or bottom line.

How to Mix & Match Web APIs – Tom Hughes-Croucher, Yahoo! Open Strategy Group
APIs allow web developers to pull the content and/or functionality of certain web sites away from those sites and reproduce that content and functionality on their own site. Hughes-Croucher introduced Yahoo! Query Language (YQL) as a way to combine numerous APIs and push that content elsewhere. Kind of like Yahoo! Pipes, but with the coding exposed.

HTML5 Essentials – Marc Grabanski, MJG International

HTML5 is a new mark-up language to create websites. Some of its promised benefits include the ability to include video content rendered by the browser (rather than using Flash, Windows Media Player, etc.), inclusion of semantic tags (where the mark-up language actually describes what it’s creating), and automatic geolocation. Because different browsers work with these functionalities differently (or not at all), implementation of HTML5 is currently impractical – but likely won’t be for long.

Unconference: You Created a Social Networking Account... Now What? – Liz Giorgi and Kathy Jensen, University of Minnesota

As an “unconference” session, the presenters gave over most of the time to audience discussion related to monitoring, marketing, and measuring the institutional use of social networking sites like Facebook. Some key points of advice: empower users with a call to involvement, solicit positive AND negative feedback, and monitor conversations strategically (perhaps relying on users to police each other for inappropriate content).

Universal Design for Web Applications – Wendy Chisholm, World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and consultant

Afternoon keynote speaker Wendy Chisholm encouraged web designers to include those with disabilities in their web design – because it’s the right thing to do and often spawns innovative designs that get used much more broadly.

<video> Will Be Your Friend – Colin McFadden, University of Minnesota

In HTML5, browsers will render video content directly, rather than relying on video players like Flash or Windows Media Player. In theory, this standardizes the user experience because web designers won’t have to worry about users with all sorts of different and potentially outdated video players. In practice, however, different browsers prefer different video formats, so there are still some issues to solve.

You’re So Money & You Don’t Even Know It: The Power of Real on the Social Web – Meg Canada, Hennepin County Library, and Mykl Roventine, web designer

This lively and interactive session showed how being “real” resonates with social media users. In order to create an authentic institutional presence on the social web, or to add a “real” element to a conversation happening there, six elements must be in place: Personality, Honesty/Transparency, Serendipity, Timeliness, Compelling, and Resonance.

As a whole, the conference provided practical strategies to better use social media institutionally along with insight into technical things being thought about by web developers. And, to convey a note of personal relief, it turns out that HTML elements are exactly what I thought they were (whew). For what it’s worth, my favorite is <blockquote>.
Rivkah Sass (Library Journal’s 2006 Librarian of the Year).

When you register for the conference, click the lightning talk participation box and submit a title (or two or four). We want to hear what's new and cool with reference services at your library. What do you worry about when you think about our future? What do you hope for? Are you working on a project that you believe represents some of what the future has to offer us? We're looking for a nice mixture of practical, visionary, funny, dire, and inventive. Wherever you are in the library or your career - from library director to library student - you have something to add to this discussion. Your early submission will help us plan a better conference, but you will also have a chance at the conference to sign up to do a lightning talk.

Early bird registration is now available through 7/1/2010 for $250. Standard registration (after 7/1/2010) is $275. Registration includes all sessions on both days (including the keynote and plenaries), access to exhibits, as well as breakfast and lunch on both days. A special hotel rate of $89 (+tax) per night is available for reservations made before July 16. For more information about the hotel and travel, visit <http://www.bcr.org/referencerenaissance/index.html>.

### Minnesota Digital Library 8th Annual Meeting

**Thursday, June 10, 2010**
**10:00 AM – 4:15 PM**

**Minneapolis Institute of Arts**
2400 Third Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN

Registration deadline: Friday, June 4, 2010.

Learn more about session themes, find the meeting agenda, and submit your free registration at <https://www.minitex.umn.edu/Events/Conferences/Mdl2010.aspx>.

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The Institute of Museum and Library Services, a Federal agency that fosters innovation, leadership, and a lifetime of learning, and State Library Services, the Minnesota state library agency, support Minitex Reference Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA).
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**APRIL 2010**

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