BOOKS AND BYTES: USER EDUCATION IN ANIMAL HEALTH INFORMATION RESOURCES

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ABSTRACT

For several years, librarians at the Carlson Health Sciences Library at the University of California at Davis have been involved actively in educating library clients in the use of animal health information resources. Educational offerings by the library include classes, instructional materials, exhibits and instruction at professional conferences, and individualized instruction. Emphasis is placed on the use of a number of computerized animal health information resources, such as online databases, CD-ROM products, and current awareness tools. Classes cover the University of California's MELVYL* online catalog, the MEDLINE database available on the MELVYL system, veterinary CD-ROM products (VETCD, BEASTCD, and CABCD), veterinary current awareness services such as VIN, NOAH, CAB Access, and FOCUS ON: Veterinary Science and Medicine, and bibliographic file management software programs, including Endnote Plus and Reference Manager. As more animal health information resources become available in electronic format, they are incorporated into the structure of classes. A future veterinary information symposium will offer exposure to the Internet. Opportunities for "hands-on" practice are furnished to students.

For several years, librarians at the Carlson Health Sciences Library at the University of California at Davis have been involved actively in educating library clients in the use of animal health information resources. CHSL's educational offerings include classes, tours, instructional materials, exhibits and instruction at professional conferences, a future veterinary information symposium and individualized instruction.

As more animal health information resources have become available in electronic format, instruction offered by the library has changed to accommodate these resources. Emphasis has been placed on hand-on-experience which fosters learning and allows the students to experiment with using the resources. The students use the library's terminals, CD-ROM workstations and microcomputer facility.

Although the students may not have access to these same resources after they leave the university, they will have been introduced to some of the resources that are available. Vendors are continually improving existing products and introducing new ones. Librarians at CHSL change the content of classes to incorporate coverage of appropriate new products as well as improvements in products already addressed by past classes. The proliferation of computerized resources has resulted in a need for more assistance on the part of students, faculty and staff in the use of the software programs.

Central to the content of the library's instructional programs is the University of California's MELVYL* system. The on-line catalogs of books and periodicals held at the libraries at the nine campuses of the University of California are loaded of the MELVYL system. MELVYL also makes available journal article databases, such as MEDLINE, and access to databases outside of the MELVYL system via the Internet. Access to several databases on the MELVYL system is free for faculty, students and staff of the University of California. However, access to some databases is restricted to those faculty members, students and staff who have special accounts. The MELVYL system can be accessed in the libraries on campus or remotely by individuals using computers in their offices, dormitories, or homes.

A librarian from CHSL serves as the instructor for a major part of a three-unit, graded course offered by the School of Veterinary

Medicine. The course is normally taught in the fall quarter and is entitled: Preventive Veterinary Medicine 408: Research Methodology and Research Reports. It is a required course for veterinarians in the Master in Preventive Medicine program in the School of Veterinary Medicine. Approximately 75% of the students in the class are from countries outside of the United States. The course requires the students to work on research projects. The fact that the library instruction portion of the course is connected to research projects has been especially beneficial to the students. They are able to apply what they have learned about using the literature directly to their projects.

The lectures and laboratory sessions instructed by the librarian during the Fall Quarter of 1994 were: Lecture 2: MELVYL databases; Lecture 5 and Laboratory 1: MELVYL/MEDLINE, Internet; Lecture 8 and Laboratory 3: Printed Resources/CD-ROM; Lecture 9: Bibliographic Formats; Lecture 11 and Laboratory 4: Bibliographic File Management Software; and Lecture 15 and Laboratory 4: Current Awareness Tools. To enhance the students' understanding of information provided in the lectures, students were given ample opportunities for hands-on practice in the laboratory sessions.

The librarian explained the structure and use of the MELVYL system. She provided detailed instruction in the performance of online searching utilizing the MEDLINE database, including the use of medical subject headings and Boolean logic. The Internet was not considered in depth in 1994. Plans are being made to discuss the Internet in more detail in the future.

The printed resources that were discussed were *Index Veterinarius, Veterinary Bulletin, Science Citation Index* and *Biological Abstracts*. Databases available on CD-ROM that were addressed were CABCD, VETCD and BEASTCD.

The students working on their research projects have a keen interest in the correct bibliographic formats to use in references in their manuscripts. The most commonly used formats, such as the format used in MED-

LINE, were explained. After learning about bibliographic formats, the students were introduced to bibliographic file management software packages. These software packages allow for the creation of personal databases of bibliographic citations, the downloading of citations from online or CD-ROM databases and the formatting of references cited in manuscripts. The laboratory session allows hands-on practice for the students in the use of either the Reference Manager or the EndNote Plus software package.

Current awareness tools that were discussed include VIN, NOAH,. CAB Access, FOCUS ON: Veterinary Science and Medicine, Veterinary Librarian, Veterinary Update and CONSULTANT. CAS Access, FOCUS ON: Veterinary Science and Medicine, Veterinary Librarian and Veterinary Update are all floppy-diskette-based systems that furnish bibliographic citations and/or abstracts for journal articles. Most provide a document delivery service for the cited articles at an additional charge. Prices for these services vary from about $US180 to $US300. VIN (Veterinary Information Network) and NOAH (Network of Animal Health) are both dial-up systems. In addition to providing references and abstracts to articles, they offer the fulltext of Plumb's Veterinary Drug Handbook, electronic forums and information on continuing education courses. VIN costs $US30 per month for the basic service. NOAH costs $US26,95 for the basic service. In addition, it is necessary to pay about $US10.00 per month for employing CompuServe for NOAH or America Online for VIN. CONSULTANT is a dial-up system that supplies diagnostic assistance. There is a $US75.00 registration fee and then a charge of $US0.66 per minute for its use.

CHSL offers several workshops or classes for faculty, students and staff. Classes are not limited to veterinary subjects, except for the classes addressing veterinary databases available on CD-ROM. Each class provides time for hands-on practice using the various databases or software products. Classes that are regularly presented include: MELVYL/ MEDLINE classes, veterinary CD-ROM classes and bibliographic file management

classes. All classes are two hours in length. The MELVYL/MEDLINE classes are given weekly. The veterinary CD-ROM workshops cover the VETCD, BEASTCD and CABCD databases on CD-ROM. These workshops are presented about once per month. In these workshops, the veterinary-related contents of the CD-ROM databases, Current Contents and MEDLINE are compared. The monthly bibliographic file management classes discuss the bibliographic file management software packages EndNote Plus and Reference Manager.

Tours present an opportunity for instruction. Each fall the new, incoming veterinary students have a tour of the library as part of their orientation schedule. During tours lasting about forty-five minutes each, groups of veterinary students are introduced to the library resources available for their use. Librarians acting as tour guides briefly demonstrate the use of the electronic resources of most practical value to the students, such as the veterinary-related CD-ROM databases and the MEDLINE database on the MELVYL system. Tours are also made available for the benefit of pre-veterinary students and high school students in a veterinary apprenticeship program.

Librarians at CHSL produce an assortment of written instructional materials. These materials are valuable for students, faculty and staff who need help in utilizing information resources. Among the materials authored by librarians are handouts describing the various commands and features of databases available on the MELVYL system and veterinary-related databases on CD-ROM. The library also furnishes a class schedule and a newsletter each ascademic quarter. The class schedule outlines upcoming classes and has a tear-off section on the bottom for clients to send in to sign up for classes. Class size is kept small to facilitate learning and hands-on practice.

A few years ago CHSL presented an exhibit at the conference of the California Veterinary Medical Association. The exhibit supplied information about library services, plus demonstrations of databases on CD-ROM that were related to animal health. This fall

librarians plan to staff the Internet room at the Wild West Veterinary Conference for the states of California, Nevada and Oregon, to be held in mid-October.

Arrangements are being made for a veterinary symposium to be held in August or September. The symposium will be sponsored by CHSL and the Tri-Country Veterinary Association. The purpose of the symposium is to give basic training and exposure to the Internet, introduce various current awareness products and increase knowledge of library services. There will be lectures, demonstrations and hands-on practice.

Individualized instruction remains the backbone of the instructional services offered by the library. Instruction is given to clients at the Reference Desk on a daily basis, and individuals may request appointment for customized instruction.

There has been a growing need for animal health professionals to become knowledgeable about the nature and use of library resources, especially those resources in electronic format. Librarians at CHSL have endeavoured to fill this need for local professionals, students, faculty and staff.

* MELVYL is a registered trademark of the Regents of the University of California.