

Postcard from SE1

I'm sat in my office overlooking the Minor Injuries Unit of Guy's Hospital at London Bridge on a dreary Friday morning awash with filing, a bloated inbox, unopened mail and a severe headache post-England's dramatic exit from Euro 2004. The dull but persistent thump, thumping intensifies at the prospect of a morning attempting to re-establish order out of the anarchy resulting from another typical week at the e-information coalface.

Early in June the 26th UKOLUG AGM agreed to change the name of the Group from UK Online User Group to the UK electronic Information Group (UKelG) with effect from 1 January 2005. It is an essential change of direction to future-proof what has been a hugely successful collective of e-information professionals from a multiplicity of sectors and backgrounds. Our basic remit remains unchanged, but we have to deal with a much wider and complex information landscape in the 21st century.

On the same day of the AGM we held the meeting I'm an information professional – get me out of here! which was designed to address the essential paradox facing the profession; that those people with the responsibility for upholding good practice in information retrieval and knowledge management essentially are drowning in a sea of e-data, failing in many respects to practice what they preach to their customers on a day-to-day basis. It was an invaluable day, documented elsewhere in this issue of eLucidate, and hopefully will pave the way for an ongoing dialogue on information management strategies that this Group can articulate and act upon.

One aim for the day was to identify concerns and needs within the information community to enable us to define our future role and services. There is a growing need to address the tools and software packages that process information for us; to begin to evaluate their role in reducing infoglut and filtering the information landscape for relevant, focused and timely information. The Group's reference management training and awareness days, alongside our attendant web environment on the subject, have proved to be immensely popular with members, primarily because they enable the information professional to make informed decisions about leading bibliographic management tools. I feel that there is huge potential to expand this portfolio of support to other areas of activity.

An issue that arose from the "Get me out of here!" meeting was that the email clients that habitually we all use are not necessarily the best tools for effective

email management. Are organisations considering the practical functionality of email software as an information management tool when they acquire it for their workforce? An outcome of the meeting was the need to provide a checklist and comparison chart that will enable individuals and organisations to evaluate email clients against crucial information management criteria: effective threading and sub-folder capabilities, for example.

Taking the bull by the horns I launch my office re-organisation, sorting out the hard copy filing and attacking the unread email mountain. I am struck by the sheer complexity of arising issues that the profession is facing, reflected in the nature and diversity of my filing classification system and 'to do' list. E-collection development and budgetary considerations, e-mail and other computer-mediated communication technologies, the increasingly complex area of legal compliance (freedom of information, data protection, copyright, computer misuse...), records, content management and the establishment of institutional repositories, e-publishing, marketing and communications, equality and diversity issues surrounding access to electronic information, e-literacy and training, sector-specific developments (in my case HE/NHS with a huge range of attendant concerns and considerations), network and information security, staff development and training, research support, virtual teaching and learning. The list goes on.

The demands on the information profession are huge and growing and I hope that this Group will lead the way in mapping the territory and maintaining a community that shares ideas, experience and best practice. I am keen to hear your views on our services and web resources. Are there any training needs that we are overlooking? Do you have any suggestions for improving existing services?

As this is my first few weeks in a new post I'd like, on behalf of the management committee, to thank the outgoing Chair Chris Armstrong for all of the support he has given the Group during this transitional period as we settle into being a CILIP Special Interest Group. I'm sure in his position of Vice Chair he will continue to be a source of great support and benevolent encouragement to us all.

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