Reference Management Day
UK Online User Group Meeting
Letchworth, 23 June 2004

Who should take responsibility for reference management software within an organisation - computing services or the library? Most of the delegates on this one-day course were librarians interested in evaluating the software on behalf of their researchers. Cocooned in Adept Scientific's training suite on a wild, wet day, we were able to explore the functionality of EndNote and Reference Manager.

The course was led by Tracy Kent, who has developed expertise with both packages through her work as a subject librarian at Birmingham University. She took us through a well-planned programme, interspersing presentations with plenty of time for hands-on, supported by detailed workbooks. We started with looking at what could be achieved by the software. New versions are continually being developed and the latest can store references to e-journals, e-books, multimedia etc as well as traditional bibliographic references.

Next we tried the various methods of inputting data: manual, connection files (e.g. for COPAC, zetoc, or PubMed records), direct export (for ISI and Ovid databases), import filters (for other databases). As a novice this seemed very complex. I could imagine researchers who use a limited number of search tools getting familiar with the import filters, but would students know the provider of a particular database in order to select the correct filter? After an excellent lunch we tackled maintaining the database integrity and outputting into manuscripts or subject bibliographies, and finally the support issues.

It was very useful having a 'real' librarian to discuss these issues with. Tracy willingly shared her experience at Birmingham on details like the best way to run training sessions, and the difficulties that arise from not centrally funding the software. Most of the delegates were trying to compare and contrast the two products, and it was really useful to have an overview at the end from Adept Scientific staff. They saw EndNote as a writer's tool, ideal for a single user, and Reference Manager as a corporate level research tool.

Two small niggles:
Several HEIs have found reference management software useful for undergraduate students, particularly at dissertation level, and I had hoped to compare the Adept products with CSA's RefWorks. It was an expensive day. I attended an information literacy event the same week for a fifth of the cost!

Overall though, it was an enjoyable, well-organised day. Tracy paced it well and managed to answer lots of questions besides allowing us plenty of time for exploring the software.

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Book Reviews

The Internet and Information Skills: a guide for teachers and school librarians
James E. Herring. Facet Publishing. London.
2004 ISBN 1-85604-493-9 192pp. £24.95

Written mainly for teachers and school librarians in secondary/high schools "across the world", this book will probably also be of interest to those in primary/elementary schools and possibly to some in further education. The book's global aspirations are backed by the author's experience in working with schools in a variety of English speaking countries and, throughout the book, examples are drawn from Canada, Australia, the USA and South Africa as well as Scotland and England.

The book is comprehensive in its coverage if patchy in depth. Starting with a brief overview of learning theories and teaching techniques, especially in the context of the Internet, it goes on to an overview of the Internet, especially in the context of teaching and learning. It finishes with a brief chapter on future developments of both the curriculum and the Internet. In between is the real 'meat' of the book covering: evaluation of websites, subject gateways, information skills, the author's PLUS model and the web, developing a school website and developing an instructional website.

It is encouraging to see that the following points recur throughout the book: the usefulness of teacher-librarian co-operation, the importance of information literacy for social as well as educational reasons, and the need to integrate Internet, and other ICT training, into the curriculum. The need for information literacy training within schools was well illustrated at a recent Multimedia Information & Technology Group meeting, 'The Google factor; information seeking, users and the Internet', where it was demonstrated that many students are still entering higher education without adequate information skills. This book aims should help to remedy this.

Each chapter starts with a list of what the reader should expect to achieve by reading it - usually these are a good guide to the chapter's content, but sometimes they are a little ambitious! Chapter 2,