

Information for librarians & information professionals working in Edinburgh - March 26th, 2008

RAISING THE PROFILE

INTUTE ENGINEERING ONLINE LIBRARY



Intute: www.intute.ac.uk

I work for Intute Science, Engineering and Technology <http://www.intute.ac.uk/sciences/> as the Engineering Content Coordinator. The service aims to highlight the best of the Web for higher education and academic research. It provides a variety of services including an online catalogue of relevant web resources, a searchable database of full text e-journals (<http://www.intute.ac.uk/sciences/ejournals.html>) and a news aggregator.

Intute is staffed by university librarians from around the UK. The Science, Engineering and Technology team is split between Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh and the University of Manchester. We all only meet up face to face three or four times a year. I communicate with my colleagues mostly by email or on Yahoo Messenger.

I maintain and update a database of over 11,000 catalogue entries for websites which are useful to the UK Higher Education sector. Each record consists of: a description (50 - 200 words) of the website's content and coverage; keywords; subject classifications; resource type information (is it a book? is it a tutorial? is it a database of materials properties information?); bibliographic details and contact details.

In addition to the catalogue I also contribute to journals, review the classification schemes we use, respond to user queries, create timelines for various subjects within engineering, write for our [blog](http://www.intute.ac.uk/sciences/blog/category/engineering/) (<http://www.intute.ac.uk/sciences/blog/category/engineering/>) and

produce supporting materials such as booklets (<http://www.intute.ac.uk/sciences/booklets/>).

I also work for Intute VTS (<http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/>), formerly the Virtual Training Suite, to write online training materials to teach UK engineering students how to use the Internet for research.

I joined the service in 1997, back when it was called Edinburgh Engineering Virtual Library or EEVL. Our logo back then was based on the Eye of Horus (a symbol of wisdom), so yes, we had The EEVL Eye... At that time there were four of us working on the engineering section which had around 3000 records - and we thought we were busy back then... EEVL then expanded out to cover computing and mathematics, and eventually joined up with other UK higher education portals to form Intute, where I now deal with the much-expanded engineering section pretty much on my own. There's a degree of overlap with other sciences so I collaborate with my colleagues on some of the catalogue records. We also recently put the materials science and materials engineering sections together, which was a challenge given the number of records and the different formats used historically.

Obviously, as an academic service, our biggest problem is continuing to secure funding. There is sometimes a perception that information remains static and that therefore it should be possible to reduce staffing and funding without reducing the quality of the service once it's set up and running. This isn't true in a library of physical books and journals, of course, and it's even



Intute staff at service launch

more inappropriate in a highly dynamic environment like the web where content can change daily.

I once did the sums and worked out that if I did nothing else but spend ten minutes reviewing each existing catalogue record once every two years, that would be a full time job on its own, and that is not taking into account the need to find new



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resources and to expand coverage in newly developed areas of technology, or into new curriculum areas.

So, as you can see, my next biggest problem is trying to keep the information in the database up to date and relevant to the user community. I tend to try to focus on particular areas and review them individually. Most recently I've been weeding out information on commercial company sites and also trying to take advantage of the trend for universities to make more course material available on the web by linking to that.



Intute VTS is also concerned with keeping information up to date. We've just finished an exercise in reviewing user feedback and evaluating the effectiveness of the tutorials.

As the online environment changes there are new sources of information and new challenges to be dealt with. Blogs, for example, were barely a factor in academic information when I first wrote a VTS tutorial, now they seem to be everywhere. And the reduction in costs of storage and the increased processing power of computers means that there are many more images, sound files, video clips and animations that can provide useful data for UK engineering students and researchers.

It's a constantly changing job, and there are new challenges all the time.

Nicola Harrison
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ELISA Visits Programme

Thanks are due to Morag Higgison of the Scottish Government Information Management Unit Library Services, and her colleagues, Neil Lynch and Lesley Thomson, for their hospitality to an ELISA visit on Thursday 13th March. Morag had kindly agreed to receive a group under the auspices of the ELISA visits programme organised by the ELISA Staff development & Training Group. We were a small group but we were made most welcome and treated to fascinating insight into this information unit sitting at the heart of Scottish Government work. Morag and Neil gave us a presentation on the core business of the library services and an interesting examination of how the service adapts to the changes in technologies and working practice. Their colleague Lesley explained the Unit's work in developing information literacy skills within the workplace as part of their partnership work with the Scottish Information Literacy Project. We were then shown around the remnant stacks of hard copy material and the staff work base.

We plan that the IMU library services will be featured in a future edition of TACIT so that more people can hear about the day to day work of this information unit, as well as the extraordinary challenges it faces. From an ELISA point of view the visit was a great success. The visitors attending were curious to see a service not usually open to the public. One visitor commented on how it is interesting to see which library and information skills can be transferred from one setting to another. Another visitor was pleased, as a solo librarian, to have the opportunity to meet colleagues and to exchange experiences. If you would be interested to know more, or would like to offer or suggest a visit - please get in touch - contacts and information on the ELISA website.

EVENTS

Publishing Scotland offer a wide range of courses to anyone interested in publishing and related areas. They are currently offering courses on digital publishing, copy editing, proofreading, grammar, e-marketing and editorial project management.

Book online at <http://www.scottishbooks.org/training> or email joan@publishingscotland.org. For further details, call 0131 228 6866.

PUBLISHING SCOTLAND in collaboration with Edinburgh University and Edinburgh, UNESCO City of Literature

BOOK SWAP

1st April 2008 11.00am to 2.00pm

Adam House, 3 Chambers Street, Edinburgh

As part of the celebrations to mark the 500th anniversary of printing in Scotland, readers young and old are invited to drop in your lunch hour, bring a favourite book, write a recommendation card and swap your book for another!

Scottish publishers are donating hundreds of books to get the event started and there are prize draws and giveaways too.

For further information, contact Publishing Scotland:

info@publishingscotland.org Tel: 0131 228 6866

Edinburgh City Libraries are holding their first **family history week** from 14th to 19th April 2008.

Here's a taster of what's happening:

- ◆ Ask the experts drop in sessions
- ◆ Talks on how the City Archives and the National Archives of Scotland can help you in your search for your ancestors
- ◆ Help and advice about how to get started with genealogy at Leith library
- ◆ Explore your local history with SCRAN
- ◆ Find out more about using the internet to research your family tree
- ◆ Learn more about the Scottish Genealogy Society
- ◆ Come along to a talk by Malcolm Cant, one of the leading writers on the history of Edinburgh

All the events are free.

To find out more visit [Family History Week - Events and Exhibitions](#) or call 0131 242 8000.

ELISA OPEN FORUM

"Next Steps: opportunities for staff training and development in libraries and information services"

Tuesday, 13th May 2008, 9.30 – 1.00

at the National Library of Scotland, Causewayside.

There are numerous pathways to developing your career and improving your job satisfaction. The ELISA Staff Training & Development Working Group are seeking to lay bare all the various opportunities that are available to people in the library and information profession at all levels -from formal qualification routes, to different ways of learning on the job; from following an established career path to transferring skills to other sectors. Join us for a morning of exploration by talking to the people delivering the training and engineering the development and to those who have been on the receiving end. Not only is this event a great chance to think about your next steps, and a marvellous opportunity to meet and talk with colleagues; it will also allow the ELISA Staff Development Group to find areas where co-operation and collaboration amongst ELISA members can improve opportunities for all staff in Edinburgh-based libraries. A final programme will be available in mid-April. The event is free of charge but booking is required. Please contact wendy.ball@edinburgh.gov.uk if you would like to attend.