THE VIEW FROM A SPECIAL LIBRARY

Michael Archer

A description of the design and organisation of a pharmaceutical research library and the steps taken to try to ensure cost effective administration and utilisation of one of its most expensive resources - the journal literature - by use of journal consolidation, alerting readers to arrival, databases of holdings and contents pages.

Michael Archer is Principal Information Scientist, Astra Charnwood, Bakewell Road, Loughborough LE11 5RH, UK
michael.archer@charnwood.gb.astra.com

Introduction

Astra Charnwood is one of five research and development companies within the international Swedish organisation Astra AB - the other four being in Sweden.

Located in Loughborough, on a 50 acre site, the company operates as a Division of Astra's UK subsidiary, Astra Pharmaceuticals Ltd, which now employs over 1,750 people.

More than 900 of those people are employed at Astra Charnwood, a rise of over 200 since May 1995 when Astra purchased the site from Fisons.

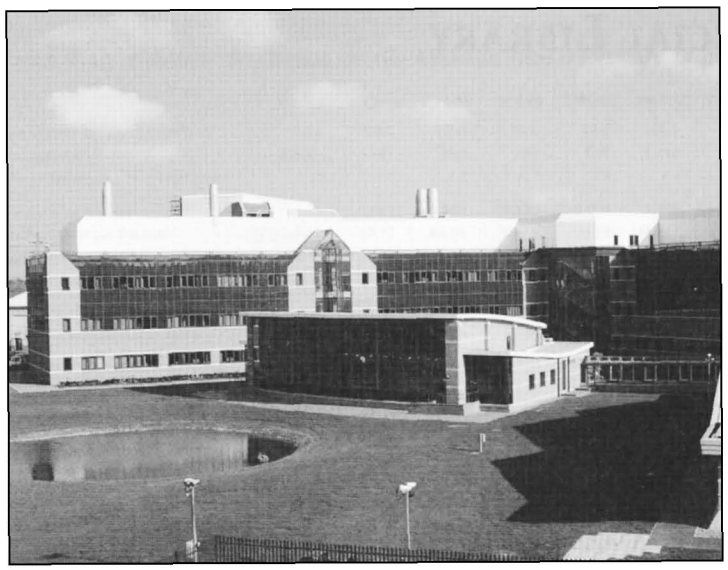
Since that time substantial investment in new facilities and laboratory equipment has been made. Further construction is underway, with new Pharmaceutical and Analytical Chemistry laboratories due for completion, and other new facilities planned.

Research at Astra Charnwood is focused on novel approaches to inflammatory and immunological mechanisms, with development projects focused on cardiovascular, respiratory and central nervous system diseases.

The building

Part of the existing facility is the Information Centre, built at a cost of £1.5m and opened in 1993. The building has a North wall consisting of an 18 foot high window, giving excellent light for reading and giving an open airy feel. The open feel is continued in having low level shelving in the central areas of the library. The library is designed with services being supplied through a hollow floor covered by metal plates. This allows for the possibility of placing computer work stations anywhere within the area if the need for hardcopy storage is replaced by electronic access.

The journal display area is immediately in front of the window and designed to display 400 journals in a relatively small area by using angled, Perspex holders. At present the computer workstations are situated near the back of the library where there is less light under the mezzanine floor of the office area. Here also is the main entrance, next to the Reference Desk, which is staffed during the working day and the machine room housing the photocopiers and microform equipment.



The exterior of the Information Centre

The department

The department serves the needs of everyone on site, not only research scientists, graduates and PhDs which make up 60% of employees, but also marketing, engineering, environmental and regulatory staff. It is different from many information services departments in having a large proportion of staff working on systems development. Of 17 employees, six are systems staff, working mainly on research and chemically related databases and services, but also on more traditional information systems. This means we are able to exploit new developments in information practice more rapidly than some departments which need to rely on outside IT support. The value of this will be seen later. The other staff, working under the Director of Information Services are scientific services, five information scientists who are also science graduates, working on literature searching and current awareness, and a team of one graduate and two assistants working on supplying a library service. We have two other senior information scientists, including myself, who are managing the development of the departmental systems and policies. I am at present concentrating on ensuring the department fully exploits the 'Electronic Library'. The above department is part of Information Systems and Services, reporting to the Vice-President ISS, ensuring not only that information and computing functions work closely together, but that they also have a high profile within the Company.

As is clear above we have a large proportion of our staff working on the development of our systems and it is not surprising to find that we are at the forefront of technology in many areas, particularly in terms of library management.

The journals

As with all research based information departments our main source of information is the journal literature. The library subscribes to some 350 mainly science and technology titles the majority of which are supplied from our subscription agent using their consolidation service. Our agent has the journal issues delivered to its offices in the UK, US and Holland and checks them into their management system. Sticky labels containing SISAC bar-codes and the initials of the information scientist who scans the title, are

The interior of the Information Centre

The Library Service Manager, Sue Cooper with the author

attached and they are delivered to us twice a week in a box with a disk containing check-in details. It is a very rapid job to check-in the journal issues and pass them out for scanning. Even though the department is very automated we are still of the opinion that one of the most effective current awareness services is produced by scanning current journals to produce subject related bulletins for our research scientists which are delivered electronically. This will continue because of its speed and high relevance until databases improve their timeliness greatly and search software becomes far more intelligent. With the advent of electronic journals this might not be far away.

When considering taking journals by the consolidation process we were of course concerned about the timeliness of receipt. We looked carefully at and were impressed by the efficiency of our agent's systems and assured ourselves of a high quality of service by negotiating a service level agreement with them to control the length of time they took in their processing. We did not take weekly journals through this system and closely monitored delivery of other titles. Some anomalies came to light. We had not appreciated that the *New England Journal of Medicine* was printed concurrently in the US and UK until it started arriving weeks later than expected - but it was a better quality copy. We also found some US journals which were always sent airmail, so consolidation slowed delivery of these. After nine months a basic survey was carried out, comparing the average delivery date for the previous two years with the consolidation delivery date for 'equivalent' issues of the journal. This was a very rough comparison and made no adjustments for changes of publication patterns or problems in a particular year. Approximately 100 UK titles, 100 US and 60 from other countries were analysed. The over-all results were that UK titles were delayed about five days by consolidation, whereas US and other countries' titles were arriving about 10 days earlier. We feel this is an effective compromise when staff time saving and efficiency of claiming is taken into consideration.

Although we do not have the perilous financial problems associated with academic libraries we do need to justify our expenditure in all areas. We review our subscriptions on a regular basis. For the major survey, carried out every two years, a subject classified list of subscriptions is sent to our departmental information contacts - which we call Infolinks - to rate journals as essential or useful.. We score essential votes as 3 points and useful as 1 point and carefully examine any journal scoring less than 6 points. For these journals we would look at their usage in other systems as mentioned below, whether the title is included in Adonis, as well as asking for comments from the information specialist for the subject. Finally a list of proposed cancellations is sent to Infolinks for their approval. We then, as far as possible, balance the cost of new journals with that of the cancelled titles. Our philosophy is that once we have committed ourselves to the large expense of subscribing to journal titles we must make cost effective use of this resources and this is done by the use of some simple, but effective systems - Alert, Contents and LIBDOC.

When the journal issues arrive we ensure that the customer knows about them as soon as possible. The Journal Alert system allows readers to create a list of journal titles in which they are particularly interested as a personal profile and to receive electronic mail notification the next morning when any issues

of these titles have been checked in. The profiles are maintained by the readers, the electronic mail is sent automatically and by printing out the profiles an indication of the usage of titles is readily produced for the renewal procedure. This is a very cost effective means of trying to ensure full utilisation of the journals purchased.

As a result of the subscription agent receiving the journal issues at their site, they are able to scan the contents pages, convert them to text and supply an ASCII file of the data in a structured format on a daily basis by file transfer protocol (FTP). This is used in a current awareness system running parallel to the Journal Alert and also read into a Trip database, producing an index of our journal contents - an index of the hardcopy database. We were the first company in the UK to take this contents page information in 1993 and this has now built up into a very useful, focused, cost effective database.

Document supply

When designing the new Information Centre in 1991, the directors of the company suggested that an economy could be made in the space for journal storage as "most information was now available electronically". Very far sighted of them, if a little premature! This did mean however that they were supportive of our subscribing to the Adonis system of journals on CD-ROM, the first major experiment in electronic journals. We have been using the Adonis system since 1991, initially restricting use to library staff to replace an inter-library loan request, but latterly on open access for all library users. We encourage readers to take copies only of journals not held in the library as we hold a copyright licence from the Copyright Licensing Agency (CLA) for taking copies from our holdings. Copying an article from Adonis, for which a royalty fee is paid, would in effect mean we are paying twice. In the past we have avoided taking on expensive subscriptions if they were on Adonis, however this year is the first time that subscriptions have actually been cancelled because they were on the system. This situation is under review as the publication schedule of Adonis is not as reliable as our readers require. If rapid publication on CD is not achieved, the future of Adonis, if it has one, may well be in the archiving of journals subscribed to in electronic format.

For the last two years we have been running an automated inter-library loan system which we call LIBDOC. Readers can enter requests from their own work stations and the system checks the library holdings and Adonis for the journal. Electronic mail replies are generated if the journal is held in the library informing readers that we do not photocopy for staff, researchers have to arrange to do their own copies. This policy is rare amongst pharmaceutical companies, but is accepted by readers because it has always been so. Whether the company still needs a copyright licence is open to debate, but we have one - who dares not? The article and loan requests for the day are listed and reviewed mid-afternoon, with items marked as being available from Adonis copied before the remaining requests are sent via Arttel2 to the British Library Document Supply Centre. The policy is to send off the requests rapidly to the British Library with many documents being returned in 2-3 days, and then to spend the professional time sourcing the failures which are reported by electronic mail.

The future

I have described above what I consider to be a relatively advanced set of systems for the management and utilisation of the journal literature. We are now planning future systems and I see two major challenges facing us. The first is integration. The systems described above are to a great extent separate. For example readers can view information on the issues of a journal which has been received, but they are not then able to immediately view the contents page. They must leave the holdings system, start up the contents system and search for the journal issue again. To rectify this lack of integration we have recently initiated a project to investigate the modern library management software which is becoming available. Library software in which one is able to link contents pages or scanned images to journal issues would appear to solve the above

problem and also help with the second challenge of the near future - that of the electronic library.

The electronic library

Well, where are we with the electronic library? Do users want it? During a recent presentation I gave to departmental representatives from our site Infolinks - I suggested that on average we would be paying perhaps 20% extra for electronic versions of journals and was asked why do we not just buy 20% more paper journals with the money! With questions of access, licensing, copyright and archiving still not answered satisfactorily, why do we not just buy more paper journals? The obvious answer in a corporate library is that we must keep up with the competition. Electronic access should be faster access and to know something before the competition gives that edge which is the difference between success and failure. In an attempt to answer the question posed by our Infolink we are just instigating a project to look at user reaction to and usage of electronic journals. It is essential in this and indeed in all areas of our work that we take our customers along with us. My own belief is that we must make use of electronic journals, but we must make use of them for what they are good at - rapid notification, current awareness and searching. They are not good for reading or archiving. There is still a place for paper and even possibly CD-ROM in the latter applications for which they are particularly suited.

Conclusion

In this paper I have indicated how here at Astra Charnwood we use new technology to make efficient and cost effective use of our expenditure on journals. The management of the subscriptions is carried out effectively using consolidation, the selection of titles is helped by knowing what users are looking at in our Alert and Contents systems and these, along with the efficient document request system squeeze the last drop of possible use out of the journals.