

PCCAS - A Collaborative web-based Current Awareness Service

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Background

Current awareness services (CAS) aim to provide targeted information that will enable users to keep up to date whilst avoiding information overload. Primary care librarians and knowledge managers from Trent and South Yorkshire have been sharing information and resources to produce CAS on health management issues, the Trent Information Bulletin and the related Daily Health News since 2001. We wanted to find a way to save editorial time and equally to improve the service and decided a shared web resource might be the best way to achieve this.

The Process

After discussions among the editorial team and with primary care colleagues in Trent and South Yorkshire, we decided to develop a Web based networked information service, to be managed collaboratively by the editorial team.

There is a core editorial team, plus a group of contributors drawn from most primary care library services in Trent and South Yorkshire. The editorial team each take responsibility for a key area of work, currently: editorial policy, technical issues, communications, and health promotion services. The editorial and technical members of the editorial team represent the PCCAS collaborative on the NLH Primary Care Current Awareness Management Group. Contributors expect to spend a couple of hours a week updating their categories. Decisions are taken collectively but editorial leads can make decisions alone when necessary. Contributors get some "benefits in kind", by being able to download and repurpose the content of the database and look at usage figures. There may be potential for CPD benefits as well, as with the MORE collaborative in Canada¹.

As we started to work on the database structure others became involved in discussions on Dublin Core, metadata tags, indexing and RSS technology and other interoperability issues².

Key requirements

- Central database for editors to enter and output data
- Search options for users to find items
- Personalised e-mail alert option
- Links to printable bulletins

NHS Trent Improvement Network
Connecting People with knowledge and innovation

Search Site: 60

Current Awareness - Database - Details

Categories	Children's NSF Modernisation and Management Health Promotion
Title	School Nurse Practice Development Resource Pack
Subject	School nurses Public health Child health services
Source	DH Department for Education and Skills
Year of publication	2006
Url	http://www.dh.gov.uk/assets/000004/000004_1_22519.pdf
Abstract	This is an update of the previous pack issued in 2001. It identifies the key policy drivers influencing practice, the child-centred public health role of school nurses and how they can contribute towards delivering on key Public Service Agreement targets.
Created by	Ailsa Sherratt

Figure 1 Sample record and abstract

The results

As a result of this collaboration the Keeping Up to Date Service was launched on the Trent Improvement Network (TIN) website. Contributors enter data into the database, from their local workplace. We encourage contributions from other librarians, but control access to the database to maintain consistency. Indexing is fundamental. We assign up to five terms from the Department of Health (DH) Taxonomy, thus using a specific health management vocabulary.

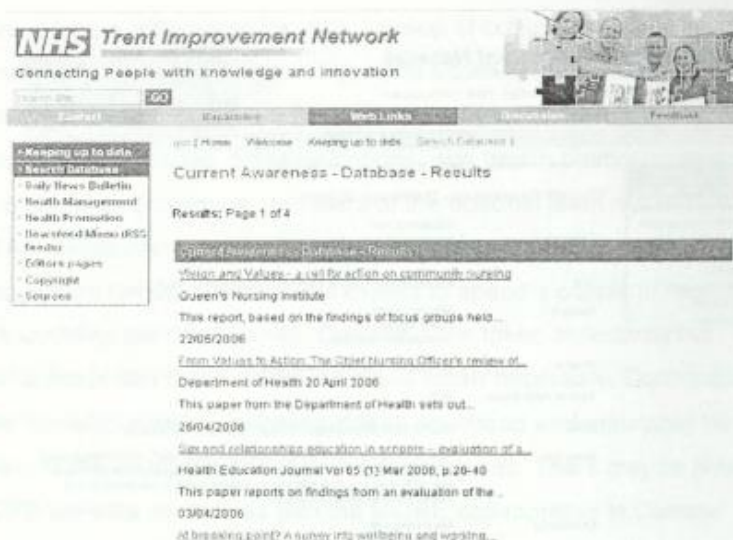


Figure 2 Search for nursing/ nurses

Content

A good Current Awareness service is based on four main factors³

- Knowing what topics to cover
- Knowing who wants what
- Knowing the sources for obtaining the latest information
- Supplying the information regularly and reliably

With support from the National Library for Health (NLH) we have been able to set up newsfeeds using RSS technology. RSS is software that reads XML code, with which each record is tagged, picking up new records as they are added and feeding them individual PCs or Web sites⁴. These newsfeeds are part of the NLH RSS directory and will thus contribute to the

new personalised MyLibrary service. Content that was originally circulated locally is now used nationally (and indeed internationally).

Benefits

The main benefit to the editors is that we each concentrate on discrete sections of the service, saving time. Equally, it allows us collectively to develop a better service.

The benefits in terms of using the information are that it can be made more widely available and used in more than one way, although it is only input once, which fits well with the "do once and share" philosophy being promoted by the National Knowledge Service.

Lessons learned

- Collaborative working has been a success. The dynamics are important and compromises necessary, but there is a gain in sharing work and knowledge.
- We gained access to a web platform with greater functionality than might otherwise be available locally and shared costs.
- The EIBS technology has worked well and is easy to use. We only needed funding from NLH to add the RSS capability
- The involvement of NLH was an unexpected bonus and has led to new partnerships and opportunities, but also more development work
- We have all learned something new but have also been able, through Dublin Core and the taxonomy to apply traditional library skills in a new environment
- RSS is a good technology for sharing content with other websites and

thereby bringing more traffic to the originating website

- If the infrastructure is right, it is possible to re-purpose content quite easily. Output formats are important here and are one area we could improve even more.

The future

- NLH launched MyLibrary in May 2006. Our service is one of the first local RSS contributions
- More contributors will join the service from other NHS regions to strengthen existing coverage and expand to cover new categories, perhaps for professional groups such as nurses and AHPs. The current agreements between participants will be formalised into a Memorandum of Understanding and a similar Memorandum between the collaborative and NLH is under discussion
- A national launch for the service is being planned with NLH with promotional leaflets and training materials for new contributors in the summer.

Acknowledgements

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