London Health Libraries 'Library Assistants' Day' 2013

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Abstract

Library Assistants' Day is a yearly event comprising of presentations and workshops for Library Assistants working within healthcare libraries in London. The event is organised by the London Health Libraries network. The most recent event, held on 6th December 2013, explored the resources provided by NICE to promote evidence based practice for healthcare professionals, including NICE guidelines; Pathways, and smart phone apps. The event also included a training session using The Cochrane Library: focusing on search construction using MESH subject headings. The final session of the day provided helpful tips and advice for using Google and Google Scholar to complete complex search tasks.

I first attended Library Assistants' day in December 2012 as a graduate trainee; completely new to libraries and the healthcare sector. The event provided an opportunity to learn more about the role of the library assistant within the NHS and wider healthcare sector. The yearly event allows library assistants' to be informed of key issues affecting health libraries

and provides an opportunity for those attending to learn new skills to support their roles. It's also a great opportunity for library assistants within London and surrounding areas, to meet and share ideas. I came away from the 2012 event more informed about working in health libraries and I was eager to attend the event again. The 2013 event was held at the Royal Free Hospital in Hampstead on 6th December.

NICE resources for evidence based practice

The first speaker of the day was Jane Moore, Implementation Consultant at NICE. Jane introduced the resources provided by NICE for healthcare professionals, highlighting guidance and standards including: Clinical guidelines, Quality standards, Technology appraisals, Interventional procedures, Medical technologies, Diagnostics guidance and Public health guidance. For some time, NICE have been working towards making guidance more accessible, and to simplify finding specific information from lengthy guidelines. NICE Pathways is an example of this. The pathways consolidate information regarding evidence and recommendations in an interactive way, bringing together related guidance and linking to other NICE products. Each pathway contains: an introduction, information for the public, and information about relevant updates for healthcare professionals. From each pathway, you can link straight through the full guideline and quality standards information for the guidance you have selected. They are a great visual way of exploring and searching through lengthy guidelines, and I've found then a useful starting point for searching for key guidance information. NICE Pathways pull together information from published NICE guidance but do not include any previously unpublished information.

Jane told us that NICE have been working to make accessing guidance and advice easier. Some ways that they have done this so far include:

- Introducing quick reference guides for all guidance
- Drop down guidance finder utilising topic based browsing
- Searching by date or type of guidance

NICE have also been looking at ways to bring guidance to healthcare professionals directly to the point of need. They have produced three smart phone and tablet apps for Android and Apple, the NICE Guidance app, NICE BNF app and the NICE BNFC app. An NHS Athens account is required for access and once logged in, users can perform quick searches of content wherever they are. The NICE Guidance app also allows users to bookmark sections of guidance for reference use offline.

Searching The Cochrane Library

The second session of the day involved a training session on searching The Cochrane Library. I was particularly interested in attending this session as I had no prior experience of using The Cochrane Library. The session was led by Daphne Grey and Ziba Nadimi who are members of CLIST (Clinical Librarians and Information Skills Trainers).

The session provided a useful introduction to The Cochrane Library, explaining its function as a source of reliable and assured information on the effects of interventions taken in healthcare. Its purpose is to help support evidence based decision making and clinical care. You can access The Cochrane Library directly at www.thecochranelibrary.com, or through www.evidence.nhs.uk under 'journals and databases'.

Daphne and Ziba explained that The Cochrane Library consists of seven databases;

- Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews
- Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials
- Cochrane Methodology Register
- Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects
- Health Technology Assessment Database
- NHS Economic Evaluation Database
- About The Cochrane Collaboration

These databases are useful for accessing systematic reviews and for gauging the effectiveness of clinical interventions, for example comparing the effectiveness of one treatment, against another, or for searching for an appropriate intervention for a specific purpose. The databases use MESH subject headings and a 'search manager' facility to pull together the different elements of your search. You don’t need to log-in to perform searches, but you can register for an account which will allow you to save searches and to sign up for alerts and information about particular areas of interest. When using the search manager facility, you need to combine your searches in a new search field using the numbers allocated to your search terms, i.e. #1 AND #2. I found this session really informative, and the supplementary material provided with the session, was fantastic also.

Searching Google and Google Scholar

The final session of the day, was led by John Nyman of Imperial College London, who presented on 'Searching Google and Google Scholar'. This

session was really engaging and provided some excellent suggestions on using Google to perform more efficient search tasks.

How Google works

John firstly explained how Google works, and the algorithms that enable its results. He summarised the process by which Google finds and retrieves sites;

- Google uses 'Googlebot' a web crawler to find and retrieve pages from the internet
- Retrieved pages are stored in an index database, sorted alphabetically by search term
- A query processor is used to match user generated search terms with those terms in the index, retrieving web pages in order of relevance

John explained that Google uses over 200 formulas and processes to turn a user query into results.

Important formulas that shape the results we see include:

- Page ranking: determines the importance of a particular webpage: counts the number of times a webpage is linked to elsewhere and assesses quality of those pages
- On Page (Keyword-Specific) Ranking Factors: searches for keyword use anywhere in the title tag
- On Page (Non-Keyword) Ranking Factors: assess that unique content is present on the page
- Site Wide (non-link based) Ranking Factors: assess the popularity and trustworthiness of the domain

Problems with Google

John then described some things to be aware of when using Google, such as the Supplemental Index. This contains indexed pages that are not thought to be important. Unfortunately, there is no way of telling if your search results contain supplementary material.

Searching Google

John gave us some handy tips on how to focus our search using Google, including searching by file type and date range. We also talked about Google's advanced search facility, which allows you to filter results by reading level and usage rights.

Some key things to be aware of when using Google to perform advanced searches are:

- Google uses AND to combine all words included in search box. When performing an advanced search you do not need to combine words with AND but if your search requires other Boolean operators, like OR (|) or NOT (-) you will need to include these using the designated symbol before the search term
- Stop words like ‘and’ and ‘in’ do not get searched, they are disregarded from the query
- There is no requirement to use wild cards or truncation when searching Google, as synonyms and variations are automatically searched

Google Scholar

The presentation then moved on to a discussion on Google Scholar. Google Scholar searches across disciplines and sources to retrieve

articles, theses, books and abstracts from a wide range of academic and professional sources. John informed us that you can search by Author by using the author operator, (i.e. Author:smith) and you can use the sidebar to limit the year range of your search. You can configure Google Scholar to access your institution's full-text e-journals, in the settings menu, so users can directly access links to your subscribed content when searching. This would be particularly helpful if you are using Google Scholar in information literacy sessions with users. Finally, John pointed us towards some other search engines which we might find useful, including:

www.bing.com

http://blekko.com

https://duckduckgo.com

http://www.zuula.com

The resources, presentation slides and hand-outs for the event can be viewed at: http://www.londonlinks.nhs.uk/2013-events/december/lhl-library-assistants-day/ Details of other events organised by the London Health Libraries network can be found here: http://www.londonlinks.nhs.uk/events.