

CINAHL/Wilson databases available on the OPAC

At the beginning of this year, the University of Newcastle library added to its on-line catalogue the magnetic tape version of CINAHL, the index of nursing periodicals, and eight Wilson periodical indexes. The intention was to provide undergraduates with easy access to general purpose indexes whose scope included a high proportion of locally held material, and to provide access to the heavily used specialist index, CINAHL. What this meant in practical terms was that, in one momentous action, a library that had been building up its catalogue for thirty years in-

creased its size by more than 300 per cent in one week.

Is it legitimate to think of this mass of data as part of the catalogue? We believe so. Library catalogues traditionally point to the items in the library's own collection. When we loaded our periodical indexes we were able to link each entry to the serial holding statement in the catalogue, so the customer is told immediately which of the retrieved items is locally available. It turns out that we hold some eighty per cent of them.

As well as offering eight Wilson indexes, plus CINAHL — all updated monthly — the library

was also able to offer campus-wide access as opposed to the restricted number of separate CD-ROM workstations with limited networking in the libraries.

Library customers love the extra service (and why wouldn't they after the complexities of access to heavily booked CD-ROM workstations?). A snapshot of catalogue use for the eight days from 28 September to 6 October shows that 71.3 per cent of searches were on the standard OPAC, 16.2 per cent on the Wilson indexes and 12.3 per cent on the CINAHL database. The number of records retrieved were as follows: OPAC 6.2 million, Wilson 2.2 million and CINAHL 985 000.

The new service has lowered the pain threshold for information seekers, and isn't that what we're here for? From the perspective of library staff, databases on the OPAC system have meant teaching only one search system for OPAC, Wilson and CINAHL databases instead of three, and reduced to some degree the pressure on scarce CD-ROM workstations. Another bonus has been a reduction in the reliance on CD-ROM technology and the heavy service and system cost that this entails. The library's objective now is to transfer other database access from CD-ROM to remote or local servers wherever possible with the Innovative system being reserved for very high use general purpose indexes.

*Liz Blom, Tech Services,
Auchmuty Library*

NICS reborn

In a joint initiative, librarians from Lismore TAFE library, Ballina High School and Richmond-Tweed regional library have worked together to re-establish the Northern Inter-libraries Cooperative System (NICS).

This pioneering cross-sectoral libraries cooperative was originally established around twenty years ago, but went into abeyance some time ago.

NICS was re-established at a meeting on 13 September in response to a range of recent technological developments and administrative restructuring taking place in various sectors.

Then, as now, members include representatives from high school, special, university, local government and TAFE libraries in

the Richmond-Tweed area of northern NSW.

Working groups have been established which will initially address the impact of internet, funding issues and resource acquisition and resource sharing objectives, and the new flexible format of NICS allows for the quick forming and reforming of such groups to address needs as they arise.

Each working group will have a facilitator, and members will share this role on a rotating basis.

Vivienne Sigley from Lismore campus of TAFE library is undertaking the role of NICS coordinator for the initial period of re-establishment.

*Vivienne Sigley,
Lismore campus of TAFE*

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