

Calling physics, astronomy and mathematics librarians

Jeanette Regan, international relations committee, PAM division,
Special Libraries Association

Current issues of library magazines and journals are filled with terms such as networking, globalisation, and articles on the sharing of information and being prepared for the consequences of constant change.

Communication with colleagues and clients has become imperative to ensure that we provide information in the most expedient way.

Today e-mail has replaced much of our formal written communications, and phone calls have replaced many meetings, but the best form of communication is still through the meeting of like-minded people, in face-to-face situations. The more formal forums of conferences, meetings and seminars all provide these opportunities. Often this will necessitate our travelling to other cities or even other countries, and these conferences enable us to meet others without the pressures of work or our normal home environment — giving us the time to think more broadly of the issues that surround our daily routines.

In April 1998 as co-chair of an open forum at the conference, *Library and information services in astronomy III*, I raised the question of holding 'virtual' conferences rather than a 'normal' conferences. The question was also put over a discussion list. The responses? An overwhelming support for 'real' conferences by those who were able to attend the conference, perhaps every three or four years and some support for 'virtual' conferences in between them. Those unable to attend gave an overwhelming response for the 'virtual' conference and the 'real' conference came in second place.

In 1972 the physics, astronomy and mathematics librarians established PAM division of the Special Libraries Association and those involved with the computer sciences joined this group at a later time. The main form of communication was via the regular

publication of a bulletin. In February 1989 the first messages were sent out on the discussion list, PAMnet which is as vital today as it ever has been. Members of PAM officially advise publishers on all aspects of their publications, including copyright, document delivery, pricing and how different groups of libraries can form worthwhile consortia. These members then report to PAM and PAMnet.

The benefits of belonging to like-minded groups are great, and knowing that you can have the opportunity to meet in person with colleagues is also gratifying. For this reason, the international relations committee of PAM is working with ALIA to establish a group within the Asia-Pacific Region. PAMnet is open to non-PAM division members and details for joining are available at: <http://pantheon.yale.edu/~dstern/pamnet.html>. If you have any other queries, then please contact one of the following committee members:

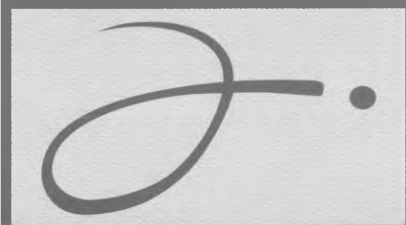
Nancy Anderson, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Mathematic Library, 216 Altgeld Hall, 1409 W Green Street, Urbana, IL 61801-2917, United States of America, e-mail: ndanders@uiuc.edu;

Barbara Chu, Physics Department Library, University of Toronto, 60 St George St, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1A7, e-mail: bchu@physics.utoronto.ca;

Uta Grothkopf, European Southern Observatory Library, Karl-Schwarzschild-Str 2, 85748 Garching, Germany, e-mail: esolib@eso.org;

Katy Nelson, McPherson Library, University of Victoria, PO Box 1800, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada V8W 3H5, e-mail: kajn@uvic.ca; or

Jeanette Regan, Stromlo Library (ANU), Private Bag, Weston Creek PO ACT 2611, Australia, e-mail: jeanette.regan@anu.edu.au ■



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