



**Chapter Council Presents
Sharing Roundtables
MLA Annual Meeting
San Antonio, TX
Monday, May 16, 2005**

Table 20C: Organization of Electronic Resources

Facilitator: Julia Kochi

Recorder: Junie Janzen

Additional Participants: Amy Hughes; Barbara Kuchan, Allison Duncan Locicero

(Four members from academic libraries; one from a hospital library.)

Topics discussed and ideas shared:

We introduced ourselves, told what libraries we represent, and why we chose this table topic. One participant said that they re-designing the library webpage and wonder how best to present electronic resources; one thinks her library now has so many different electronic products—books, journals, databases—that it can be confusing for patrons. We all agree that these are problems.

Two libraries are now using TDNet A-Z list; one uses GoldRush (from the Colorado Alliance); one has SFX. No one is currently using Federated Search software, primarily because it doesn't seem specific enough for medial patrons.

We discussed what users seem to want. Some expect library materials to be like Google; some have very high expectations about how accurate and easy to use library catalogs and databases should be; some libraries have a number of different kinds of users, with very different typical needs. What makes sense and seems easy for one person is confusing and difficult for another to use.

We agreed that although librarians often feel that resources are straightforward and not too difficult, when we are teaching or demonstrating for users we often discover that there are more steps and can be more confusing than we realize. The most effective solution probably will require a combination of improved interfaces and better user education—not one or the other.

There was discussion about the pros and cons of putting all electronic resources into the catalog. A primary source to find everything is attractive, but aggregator packages, in particular, change frequently. Keeping up can be excessively time consuming. We talked about various e-journal management packages. In addition to TDNet and GoldRush, we talked about Ebsco A-Z and EJS; the new package from Rittenhouse; and the new Ovid interface.

Most of us have a “Databases” page that includes links to all sorts of electronic products—e-books; journals; A&I services; and other things like exam preparation materials. Some include links to free databases, particularly government supported sites.

We talked about the complexities of consortial purchases, and difficulties knowing the licensing restrictions and requirements of all the different packages. We also discussed various ways electronic journals are being handled in Serhold—no lending from electronic resources; leaving paper records open; closing paper and opening electronic holdings.

We spoke briefly about pathfinders. There doesn't seem much call for subject guides, although one library is providing pathfinders for consumer health topics; and one is still writing guides for processes such as research and citation styles.

Our general conclusion was that there are lots of challenges and not many obvious answers. Electronic Resources are still changing so quickly that what works today may not be the best choice next year.