1. Blog?

Library Services are considering replacing this Bulletin with a Blog which would be attached to the Open Access Information Resources webpage (http://library.open.ac.uk/libpartnerships/). The advantages of this would be that news can be disseminated as it happens, rather than waiting for the next bulletin and there is scope for reader comments and discussion. Email notification could be sent out when the blog is updated, or an rss feed set up. We would welcome your thoughts and comments on this idea – please contact Fran Griffin at the email address at the end of the Bulletin.

2. Arab Open University sign 4th contract

We are very pleased to announce that the Arab Open University (AOU) have agreed to renew their contract with Open University Library Services in the UK. The OU provides eLibrary services including selection and evaluation of resources, including help and training pages and design advice for the eLibrary, Helpdesk services, support for the AOU’s Chief Librarian Officer and advice and guidance about library strategy and development. The new contract will begin in March 2010 and run for a year.

AOU have also requested OU Library Services’ help in providing information literacy training over two days in Jordan and Kuwait at the end of February. This will be delivered to academics from all branches who will then cascade the training within their branch.

3. Affiliated Research Centre PhD supervisors and co-ordinators questionnaire

OU Library Services recently administered a questionnaire about access to licensed resources to the Supervisors and Co-ordinators of OU PhD students within Affiliated Research Centres (ARCs). The purpose of the questionnaire was to understand the use of our resources by the Supervisors in order to provide a more tailored service. The Supervisors and Co-ordinators are supporting OU PhD students, but do not have formal employment contracts with the OU.

We are extremely grateful to the 71 respondents – 21% of those questioned – for their input. A recommendations report has been produced and is being considered by the relevant committees within the Research School.
4. The work of the Open University Library Helpdesk Service

The Library Helpdesk offers a virtual reference helpdesk facility and is open 7 days a week, excluding Bank Holidays. Currently Monday to Thursday hours are 9am to 8pm, but we are looking at how we might extend this. We have the ability and technology to provide cover from off site, and have done so during bad weather and the Christmas closure.

Enquiries can be made by email, web form, web chat or telephone. Out of hours, the phone has voice mail, and the web chat reverts to email. Customers are given a choice of contact method from the launch page: http://library.open.ac.uk/about/index.cfm?id=6939

Although principally we are set up to serve OU staff and students, the Helpdesk is also available to those using the Locally Employed Tutors and Retired Staff services, as well as part of the Arab OU contract. We use an in-house enquiry management system, which is connected to other services in the OU. This is helpful in giving a joined up picture of a student, and also enables us to refer enquiries or receive referred enquiries. It also allows us to categorise our answers for statistical and training purposes.

Our most popular category of question for several years has been ‘accessing a particular item’. Usually this involves tracing a partial reference for electronic access to an article. We do receive a very wide range of questions though, from course material not arriving, to complex subject reference enquiries. The average time per answer is 15 minutes.

Fiona Bowtell,
Learning and Teaching Librarian, OU Library Services

5. Edinburgh University Press announces new developing countries initiative

Edinburgh University Press (EUP) has launched a new developing countries initiative to grant automatic free online access to its scholarly journal content for developing nations. EUP journals are now available to countries classified as ‘low income’ in the World Bank Country Classification 2007. EUP Journals Online detects the country users are connecting from and grants free online access automatically via http://www.eupjournals.com/.

This Initiative expands the existing EUP African Countries Initiative in which African Studies journals are offered free of charge in electronic format to libraries and non-profit research and educational institutions in Africa. Further information for both initiatives can be found at http://www.eupjournals.com/page/infoZone/librarians/developingcountries


For more information contact Sarah Edwards, Sarah.Edwards@eup.ed.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this newsletter. If you have any news or suggestions for future issues please let Fran Griffin (f.griffin@open.ac.uk) know.

The copy deadline for the next issue will be Friday 26th March, 2010