Assembly Minister visits Banwen

Jenny Randerson AM, the Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language at the Welsh Assembly, visited the South Wales Miners’ Library branch library at Banwen Community Centre on 9 May.

Banwen Library primarily supports the Department of Adult Continuing Education’s part time degree programme, which is taught at the Centre.

Ms Randerson had heard about the South Wales Miners’ Library and its branch at Banwen and was interested to learn how the library supports adult learners in former coal mining areas.

Sian Williams, the Librarian of the South Wales Miners’ Library introduced Ms Randerson to the library and information services provided for adult learners, including the photocopying and postal loans services and the popular book box service for community based classes. Sian and Mandy Orford (the Library Assistant based at Banwen Library) then led Ms Randerson on a tour of the Centre, introducing her to students on the part time degree programme as well as DACE and DOVE Workshop staff who work at the Centre.

Sian W Williams, s.williams@swan.ac.uk, x8693

More PCs for students

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales has provided earmarked funding to all Welsh HE institutions to purchase additional student PCs. Swansea will be receiving around 470 machines during the summer, and these will be installed in a variety of locations, with 150 machines moving into the Library and Information Centre. Forty of the machines will be high-specification PCs for postgraduate use only. We will be clearing space for all 150 PCs on level 3 (the entrance level) of the Arts Reading Room.

It is a condition of the HEFCW funding that the machines purchased should be additional to those already available to students (rather than being used to replace older PCs), as the aim of the funding is to improve the ratio of PCs to students within Wales. All the LIC PCs will be of high quality, with flat screens and small base units, so that they will take up relatively little space on the desktop, creating a dual-purpose study space which can be used for reading / writing as well as for PC-based work.

Chris West, c.m.west@swan.ac.uk, x5174

Voyager catalogue

The Voyager library catalogue will be out of action on Monday and Tuesday 2 and 3 July 2001, while the system is upgraded. The new Voyager 2000 release will make it easier to carry out basic searches in the catalogue, while at the same time simplifying some of the more advanced features such as limit searches and boolean AND/OR searches. The upgrade also paves the way for the introduction of an integrated Inter Library Loans system and a Welsh language interface to the catalogue.

Borrowing and returning material will still be possible during the upgrade period, although the facility to search the catalogue will be unavailable. We apologise for any inconvenience caused, but the upgrade is essential to bring in significant improvements to the public interface to Voyager. (We apologise also for the delay in implementing the upgrade, which was scheduled to happen earlier this year but was deferred while the suppliers of the Voyager software sorted out problems with the new release.)

Andrew Brown, a.t.brown@swan.ac.uk, x3150

LIS summer book moves

During the summer we will as usual be doing some shifting around of library stock. As a result of the need to accommodate the new Clinical School in the Grove building, we have been asked to make alternative arrangements for the Chemistry Library. Some storage space has been made available on the ground floor of the Vivian Tower, and much of the material will be moved there. It will continue to show up with its new location on the Voyager catalogue, and a requesting / fetching system will be put in place for next session. The rest of the Chemistry Library stock will find a home in the Library and Information Centre, and this will generate further internal reshuffles within this building. Further details on the Chemistry and any other necessary moves will be communicated by email over the vacation.

Paul Reynolds, p.r.reynolds@swan.ac.uk, x5026
Virtual Learning Environments

The use of ICT to support and deliver courses across all disciplines is an area of increasing interest, not only here in Swansea, but on campuses across the UK. It is however only in recent years that the terms “virtual learning” and “managed learning” have come to be used to describe this link between ICT and teaching and learning.

I thought it might be useful briefly to outline what these terms mean, and to do this I have borrowed the definitions offered by the JISC MLE steering group.

“The term Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is used to refer to the “online” interactions of various kinds which take place between learners and tutors”.

“The term Managed Learning Environment (MLE) is defined as the whole range of information systems and processes at a college (including a VLE if it has one) that contribute directly or indirectly to learning and the management of that learning”.

Both are in fact collections of components rather than a single entity - much like a “Personal Computer” is made up of a processor, monitor, keyboard and mouse etc. The diagram illustrates components of a typical VLE.

A number of software packages have evolved, the most well known being Blackboard and WebCT. What these packages both do is to bring together the elements into a single web based environment dedicated to a particular course or module.

Through the course management tools lecturers are easily able to make available all the course notes and materials that a student will need, communicate quickly with individuals, groups or all students, set topics for discussion and assignment work, and create formative on-line tests. These packages also provide customisable levels of feedback so that lecturers can for example see which students have and have not accessed course materials and track their progress through assessments.

For students there is an intuitive format, common across different modules, through which they can gain access to what they need, at times convenient to them. It will become easier for them to interact with fellow students to collaborate in group working without the need to necessarily be in the same place at the same time. They will have access to a range of tools such as calendars, electronic whiteboard and real time discussion to facilitate their learning. They may also have access to the subject specific Internet portal where they can find approved published material.

LIS will shortly be installing a Virtual Learning Environment package so that staff throughout the university will be able to “test drive” it to find out what it can offer. This will be supported during the summer by a number of introductory events and workshops to demonstrate the package. At the present time a small LIS working group are in the process of selecting which package to use and more detailed information will be released as soon as it is available - so watch this space!

Clive Richards, c.r.richards@swan.ac.uk, 3093

Delivering “Sociology on-line” to Local Communities

Connecting Communities Cymru, a joint project between DACE and LIS, has facilitated delivery by DACE (through the Community University of the Valleys) of an accredited module – “Introduction to Sociology” – to a small group of students in Glynneath.

We believe this is the first coursework to be delivered from Swansea using one of the new Video Conferencing studios established as part of the Welsh Video Network, funded by Education & Learning Wales (ELW) ai, with additional funding from the European Union for institutions in the Objective 1 area.

The students are being offered this pilot module, free of charge at Glynneath Training Centre, and the feedback from this pilot will help DACE in developing delivery of courses to centres based in the community, as well as giving LIS valuable experience of using less traditional methods of support through the Internet etc.

The pilot will hopefully become a model to be used to deliver further courses to all the centres in the CCC network.

Although it is only week three of the twelve week course, the three students, who had relatively little ICT experience, have settled in well and appear to be enjoying the course. As well as the more traditional support of course notes, book boxes etc., there is a dedicated website for the course where students can access course materials, discussion groups and e-mail.

The picture shows a live video conference tutorial in session at Glynneath Training Centre while the course tutor, Jacqui Price, is working from UW S in the new engineering studio.

For more information about the Connecting Communities Cymru project visit the website at: http://ccc.swan.ac.uk or ring the manager Rita Kop on 01792 513095. For details of the Welsh Video Network visit http://www.wvn.ac.uk and see our article on page 4.

Clive Richards, c.r.richards@swan.ac.uk, x3093

Old Man River

The South Wales Miners’ Library recently loaned two banners and some posters to the “Let Paul Robeson Sing!” exhibition at the National Museum and Galleries of Wales in Cardiff, which ran from 24 March to 3 June 2001.

The exhibition reflected the full range of Paul Robeson’s importance in the worlds of Theatre, Music, Film and Politics and in particular, explored Robeson’s relationship with the people of Wales.

The banners loaned were the National Union of Mineworkers’ Abercrave Lodge banner and the Mid Rhondda Marchers banner, which dates from 1936. The posters included four dating from the Spanish Civil War and two advertising events in South Wales which were held in the 1980s in memory of Paul Robeson.

The banners and the posters are part of the South Wales Coalfield Collection.

The South Wales Coalfield Collection holds a variety of other materials about Paul Robeson, including books, pamphlets, photographs, and audio-visual material. Please contact Siân W illiams for further information.

Siân W illiams, s.f.williams@ swan.ac.uk, x8693
Say hello to... the Hello Girls!

Many staff are probably unaware of the extent of the work carried out by the University telephone operators, and this is perhaps testament to their expertise and efficiency. Despite providing one of our most important front-line services, the operators are located behind the scenes, in a small office tucked away on the ground floor of Union House. The team consists of five experienced operators under the leadership of supervisor Jennette Lewis. Jennette has worked for many years in the University, and has overseen a number of changes in the way the switchboard operates. Today the office is a hub of high-tech activity, with each operator using sophisticated windows-based Alcatel software to receive and transfer calls.

The operators deal with all calls made to the main University telephone number 205678. They have a vital part to play in influencing the impression of the institution received by callers, who may include senior members of the Higher Education or political communities, potential students, and members of the general public. All callers are of course treated with the same level of professional courtesy and care. Jennette and her team make every effort to learn about what is going on in the University so as to refer callers appropriately. They check email messages as well as monitoring Newyddion and the local press, and they claim to have a crystal ball for use when all else fails... If the operators are not immediately able to deal with a query, they will arrange for someone to call the enquirer back as soon as possible with an answer.

The switchboard is especially important for University Admissions procedures, and the lines are particularly busy in the summer months when potential students are calling via the “clearing” process. At such times it is particularly important to refer the calls to the right person, as mistakes could seriously affect our recruitment levels.

Perhaps even more important is the role played by the operators in managing calls to the emergency services during office hours. When you dial the internal emergency number 333, you are put through to the switchboard where the operators will take full details of the emergency situation and call the appropriate service with accurate information. In such circumstances their work could be literally a matter of life or death.

We would appreciate your help in enabling us to deal with outside calls effectively. Please let the switchboard know if you have advertised any events or issues which might be likely to generate calls to the University. Experience has shown that outside callers are typically vague, with queries such as “please can you tell me about that course advertised in the Evening Post last week”, or “someone told me there was something going on at the Sports Centre...”, and that callers have usually lost the vital clue about exactly who it is they need to contact.

We would also value your assistance in avoiding queries about phones being out of order. It is not uncommon for people wishing to be undisturbed to unplug their phones for a while. Attempts to transfer calls from the operators then result in “out of service” messages which suggest that your phone is out of order. Instead, why not transfer your phone to another extension by dialling *60 then the extension number; or set it to voicemail by dialling *60 3999.

If you have queries about how to make the most of the features available on your Alcatel telephone, please call Geraldine Roberts on x3010, g.roberts@swan.ac.uk, or Peter Deacon on x3495, p.deacon@swan.ac.uk. You should also let Pete or Gerry know if you are moving offices, as they can ensure that you keep the same telephone number, thus helping your callers as well as making life easier for the operators.

Finally, don’t forget that you can look up any staff telephone number on the web telephone directory at http://webtel.swan.ac.uk/ (or follow the link from the UWS home page).

And if you need to contact the Hello Girls... just dial 0, or email Jennette Lewis on j.lewis@swan.ac.uk. Remember that even though you probably don’t know where they work, their activities underpin the entire operation of the University, and we would be lost without them.

Sara Marsh, x5176, s.i.marsh@swan.ac.uk

HE Archives Hub

The HE Archives Hub was launched in March. This new service is available at http://www.archiveshub.ac.uk, and it provides free access to descriptions of archives held in a number of UK universities and colleges. At present these are primarily at collection-level although where possible they are linked to complete catalogue descriptions. The Archives Hub forms one part of an emerging UK National Archive Network and by 2003 should provide access to over 25,000 collection level records. Some of the descriptions will not have previously been available outside their home repository.

The LIS Archives contributed descriptions of a number of collections to the pilot phase of the project and has now been awarded funding for the second phase to include all catalogued collections. 30 universities and colleges will take part in this phase, including the Bodleian Library, Nottingham, Warwick and LSE. The service is funded by JISC as part of the Distributed National Electronic Resource.

Archives in LIS

LIS holds a substantial archival collection which is available for consultation by all University staff and students, and by members of the general public. The collection is particularly strong in records of local industries eg Pecoce Grenfell & Sears, Millbrook Engineering, Mumbles Railing and trade unions, particularly the National Union of Mineworkers (South Wales Area). There are many individual collections covering a wide variety of subjects, eg George Grant Francis, the nineteenth century antiquarian and the Benson family of Fairyhill. Some areas not explored much in terms of research, such as the substantial collection of the records of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation for South Wales.

Many of our catalogues are available on the web. The catalogue of the South Wales Coalfield Collection, which covers material held in the Archives and in the Miners’ Library, is available at http://www.swan.ac.uk/swcc/, while further records can be searched as part of the HE Archives Hub (see above). Work is under way to create additional web-based catalogues through the Mine of Information project, funded by the Research Support Libraries Programme. Detailed printed catalogues are also available in the Library and Information Centre, and Archives staff are happy to answer any queries.

Our Archivist Elisabeth Bennett can offer advice on material in the Archives that would be relevant to a research topic. She can also advise on alternative sources of archive material, and on different electronic catalogues and gateways to archival material. We can normally accommodate visitors to the Archives during office hours, but it is necessary to make a prior appointment with Elisabeth (details below) so that we can get materials ready for you in advance. Group visits can also be arranged if members of staff would like their students to see material relevant to particular courses.

For further details about the Archives service, please see http://www.swan.ac.uk/lis/archives/index.htm. Elisabeth Bennett, e.a.bennett@swan.ac.uk, x5021
This exciting project, to set up over 80 fully equipped videoconferencing studios in all Further and Higher Education institutions in Wales, is now into the studio commissioning phase. The studios are being rolled out by the Welsh Video Network Support Team of 5 staff, located at the University of Wales Swansea and the University of Wales Aberystwyth. UKERNA is managing the project on behalf of the National and Higher Councils of Education and Learning Wales. The project budget of £5.5M includes £2.4M funding from the European Union for institutions in the Objective 1 area of Wales.

Each studio contains videoconferencing equipment for use either via the Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) at up to 384Kbps, or via JANET using the Internet Protocol (IP) at up to 768Kbps. The IP functionality will be upgraded during 2001 to 2Mbps capability. The IP videoconferencing service will be provided as a pilot service until the summer of 2002, when a full JANET IP Videoconferencing Service will be launched. The studio equipment supplied includes two cameras, five monitors, three microphones, a tie-clip microphone, an audio system and cabinets. Other studio equipment includes an interactive electronic whiteboard, data projector, VCR, PC (for data and application sharing) with graphics tablet, and most importantly an intuitive touch screen interface for controlling all of the studio equipment. Each institution is receiving some advanced networking equipment to enable unimpeded videoconferencing over JANET. The North and South Wales Metropolitan Area Networks have also been funded to implement wide area network upgrades to meet the needs of this project. Pinnacle Communication Systems Ltd of Bodelwyddan in North Wales is supplying all of the studio and networking equipment, apart from the data projectors, which are being supplied by Roche Audio Visual Ltd.

The University of Wales Swansea is receiving four funded studios. These are being located in Engineering, EBMS, Health Sciences, and Library & Information Services. A further studio is being located in the UWS School of Health Sciences at Trinity College Carmarthen. Additional self-funded studios are being located at Morrison Hospital and in the new Medical School. The engineering studio is nearing completion, and delivery of the other funded studios will be taking place in mid-June. It is anticipated that the studios will be handed over to the university after thorough testing and configuration in July-September. In the meantime, once they are commissioned, studios may be booked by prior arrangement with Steve Williams, the WVN Team Leader based at UWS S, Tel: (5167, Email: s.williams@swan.ac.uk).

Please note that all studios must be booked only via the web-based JANET Videoconferencing Booking System. This is a condition of the Funding Councils. W hen videoconferencing over JANET, the JANET Acceptable Use Policy applies.

Additional studios and some individual items of equipment may be purchased at the specially negotiated prices by the end of August 2001. The local contact at the University of Wales Swansea is Alan Davies, Media Services Manager (Tel: 5365, Email: a.davies@swan.ac.uk). For further information about the Welsh Video Network please visit the project web site: www.wvn.ac.uk.

Dr Robert Symberlist (Project Manager), r.symberlist@ukerna.ac.uk, 01235 822200.

Naruemon Supachewa (centre) with LIS colleagues (L to R) Sara Marsh, Clare Boucher, Rebecca Davies and Marion Michaud

At the same time, we are delighted to welcome Naruemon Supachewa for the month of June. Naruemon is a student at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, and she is visiting Swansea for a four-week placement organised by the Department of American Studies. Naruemon is particularly interested in the development of distance learning as she is originally from Thailand and found that she had to travel to the United States in order to follow her chosen Master’s courses in Communications and Information Sciences. Her long-term goal is to use the knowledge and skills she has gained in her studies to help design and implement distance education systems to improve the provision of higher education at the international level. Her main field of research is the development of broadcasting technologies to support distance learning.

Naruemon will be working with the DALLAS team to analyse the results of our survey, and helping us to formulate future LIS policy in this area. As part of her placement, she will have the opportunity to visit our furthest branch library at Banwn, and see how we try to meet the needs of distance learners across the South Wales valleys. Naruemon says: “I’m excited to be given the opportunity to observe the work of Library and Information Services. I’m particularly impressed to learn that my placement was taken seriously and the LIS staff have had things planned out for me even before my arrival. I thank you very much for your time.”

Sara Marsh, s.marshal@swan.ac.uk, x5176

Matthew Mari (left) and Philip Davison joined the WVN team in April, with team mascot The Giddy Giraffe (on window sill)

Wales 1801-1919: the final piece in the UK / Ireland NSTC jigsaw

DALLAS meets Tennessee

In Library and Information Services we have developed a range of services to improve our support for part-time and distance learners. This was featured in last summer’s issue of Inform, and the services are known as DALLAS (Distance And Lifelong Learners At Swansea). See http://www.swan.ac.uk/lis/dallas for further details. In order to help us plan the future of DALLAS, we are undertaking a postal survey of part-time and distance learning students, where we ask respondents to indicate their satisfaction levels with a range of different services, and to highlight their particular needs. 500 forms were posted out in early May, and results are now beginning to come in.

Wales 1801-1919 is a new project based at the University of Wales Bangor, which aims to enhance access to printed material relating to Wales published in the period 1801-1919 and held by the participating Higher Education Institutions in Wales. Project staff will convert or upgrade existing catalogue records and incorporate them into an online union catalogue at the National Library of Wales. UWS S is a partner in this project, and we have recruited Steve Barnes (pictured) to carry out our share of the work over the next 14 months.

For further information about the project, contact Mieko Yamaguchi at the University of Wales Bangor, tel 01248 382970, email m.yamaguchi@bangor.ac.uk. Chris West, c.m.west@swan.ac.uk, x5174

Enhancement to Web of Science

Version 4.3 of Web of Science has some enhancements designed to improve ease of use for researchers. For example, a Mark Page button has been introduced to allow you to mark a screen of records at a time and a new Clear Mark List button allows you to clear the marked records without starting a new session. Other developments also provide better examples. WoS can be found at: http://wos.imacs.ac.uk. Passwords are available from the LIC Information Desk and branch libraries. Susan Glen, s.j.glen@swan.ac.uk, x5031