

InFIRE Conference Report
Friday, May 31 2002, Imperial Hotel

Christian Dahm chaired Friday's sessions

Nailing Ectoplasm to the Wall: Serials Control and E-journals

Martha Gunnarson

Serials Librarian, Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI)

Battling a nasty cold, Martha presented an interesting discussion of how she maintains WPI's Library collection of e-journals. After a graphic description of ectoplasm she discussed ways to find what e-journals were available. This included the variations in their costs and consortium agreements that are available, including those with local public libraries. Some e-journals are free and a list of these is included on the Conference CD-ROM.

As with all serials controls, there are problems that pop up with e-journals such as the access disappearing. As we see a rise in the number of e-journals, the rules for use are becoming easier but not always the cost. It's important to frequently review the rules and regulations to keep up on changes of site licenses. The needs of ILL presents more issues dealing with lending print or electronic copies. Then there are the regular problems with computer use: server down, network down, links aren't hot, passwords quit working, can't read from that software program.

If a library wants to get into e-journals they must make sure the patrons are aware of the e-journals and instruct them how to access and use them. All the catalog records for e-journals must be updated to include the new format. There is also the question of perpetual access to the information. How long will the e-journal have back issues, although there are services that say they will preserve them. Most libraries will want to keep use statistics for e-journals to decide whether to cancel print copies or to determine whether to continue subscribing on-line. Martha's consensus was they are here; we have to deal with them.

Experience of a librarian involved in the development of ELID

Jeanine Driessens

ANPI-NVBB

Jeanine gave an overview of ANPI (Belgian national association for protection against fire and intrusion). ANPI was created in the 1950s after a store fire that had over 200 fatalities. Belgian's government authorized the association to establish suggested standards for fire safety in the country.

A software company, CEGEKA set up a system to record fire intervention information in a standard format and connect that information to a map module. The system is called ELID (electronic fire information file). ANPI's involvement was to publicize the system and provide assistance to the fire brigades and industries using the software.

ANPI's assessment of ELID used the criteria: is it user-friendly, what are the benefits and advantages, can it be upgraded easily, price. The assessment was conducted in French and Dutch. As a result of the assessment, CEGEKA is developing a new concept.

The new system will use the information already collected but will be presented in a different format with more pop-up menus and more choices including escape, hazardous materials and training. Many other improvements will be incorporated including a calculator and more links.

Economics have temporarily suspending future development of the database and a new sponsor is being pursued.

Jeanine was surprised to be included in the project but found it very rewarded. She was told that a librarian would bring valuable experience in database use and organization to the project and would have a different knowledge that some of the fire professions might not think of.

Representing UK Federation of Tour Operators

Colin McGregor

General Manager for Health and Safety

As a result of some fatalities and injuries incurred by tourists using package tour options, the EU issued a directive of health and safety regulations by tour operators. Colin described his work with fire inspections of tour destinations. The tour owners are liable for any injuries or fatalities that occur during their tours. Therefore they have very strict regulations on health and safety requirements to protect tourists. The Federation is responsible for 90% of the tour packages in the UK. All the properties involved must be inspected with a report issued as to deficiencies. Those deficiencies must be resolved before the facility can be included in the tour. The tour industry personnel work closely with other government safety and health agencies to meet standards. Plans are being laid to expand this inspection system to European tour operations and have international minimum standards. Since this system was implemented, injuries have dropped considerably.

Fires in Historic Buildings: The Extent of the Problem

Stewart Kidd, Heritage Loss Prevention Consultant

Stewart's presentation was on the trials and tribulations of collecting information about fires in heritage foundations. At this time outside of UK and Sweden, there are no uniform European fire statistics. And the statistics that are collected aren't specific to historic buildings as data is based on the use of the building. Opinion is that there is an element of national pride about reporting the loss of a historical site.

Since 1463, there has been major fire damage in York Minster, Hampton Court, and most recently, Windsor Castle. The National Trust for England & Wales owns 7500 listed

historic sites with statistics showing an average of 44 fires per year and some feel this number is under reported.

Various European government groups are working to address the need for real data and statistics. They also would like to collect data from all countries. This data will lead to research that will help with the care, management, and prevention of fires along with a standard such as NFPA's 914/920.

A definition of historic buildings and heritage are needed with a classification of value and the definitions should be used throughout Europe. An interesting example he gave was that in the US, the definition of an historical building is one that is more than 50 years old.

The Information Needs of a Fire Investigator

Roger Berrett

Forensic Science Consultant in Fire and Explosion Investigation

Roger's presentation focused on one area, origin and cause, for a fire investigator. He described the qualifications needed to investigate fires, including knowledge in a number of fields such as fire fighting, natural sciences, engineering, forensic medicine, police procedures and law and psychology. He also noted that it would be impossible to find someone with all these qualifications, but it was necessary to have as many as possible.

The firefighters do not have to investigate the origin and cause of fires but are expected to report suspicious fires to the police and to complete a "Fire Data Report" for the Home Office. Only the biggest fire brigades have fire investigation teams, as they are expensive to support. Usually a suspicious fire is the responsibility of the police and they will contract a fire investigator.

In most cases, the investigator follows informational leads and needs information such as location, timing, witness reports, and knowledge of preserving evidence and a laboratory. Areas of strategy include: using caution, information, observation, excavation, reconstruction, evaluation, communication, and conclusion.

He discussed some of the better-known fires and investigations including Kings Cross fire and Windsor Castle fire.

Conclusion

Susan F. Walker invited everyone who attended the conference to come to Oklahoma City for inFIRE 2003.