

inFIRE Conference 2005

Notes for Monday, 13 June 2005

Welcome to Boston - and a very warm welcome indeed.

The IT gremlin decided to try and disrupt the first sessions but inFIRE participants are made of stronger stuff. inFIRE Chairperson, Susan Walker welcomed all participants to Boston.

Harold S Moore from FM Global (our host) opened the conference. He managed to simulate the image of a BLEVE in black and white and colour. Once the PowerPoint presentation got going, Harry acknowledged the distance some participants had traveled and the involvement FM Global has with inFIRE. FM Global hosted inFIRE in 1993. As Harry is the Manager of Intellectual Property, he discussed the issue of fair use and copyright.

The keynote address by Jeffery Newman (FM Global) who provided an overview of the work undertaken by FM Global. Focusing on the new research campus, he explained why research is important and provided some examples such as large warehouse type fires and the natural hazards laboratory for storms. At FM Global, all the research is for the insurance company but copies of videos and reports are lodged with their library. Information is released to the public by way of data sheets and publications.

Martha Gunnarson (Worcester Polytechnic Institute) took us into E-journal land. With print journals you know where you are, e-journals are more challenging. With e-journals volumes are added or removed, often the subscriber gets more than they thought but it is in secret. Some titles will vanish completely or be transferred to another publisher. Martha provided some practical tips for managing e-journals. Place a dummy or a sign for each e-journal title on the shelf, create web pages with hot links to the on-line catalogue, and enter records for them in on-line union lists. Some changes with e-journals are not communicated very well, it is difficult to update records and there can be problems with ILL requests. E-publishers often don't want libraries to supply documents via ILL.

However help is at hand. There are some software solutions to help manage e-journals. Serials Solutions provides files and can be hosted by a 3rd party. There are problems with duplicate entries (different sources, variations in spelling). E-journal management is very reactive - which doesn't help the patron.

EBSCO Solution (www.ebsco.atoz). This is priced by the number of titles managed. Can amend or add titles, amend holdings, provide usage reports and also set the holding default to the EBSCO list and not your own library. Overall it saves your time updating the records. Link Finder Plus - lack of compatibility with various products, such as EBSCO or Serials Solutions. Tends to go in circles, back to the catalogue and journal list. Check out www.diglib.org in particular the Report of the DLF Initiative. Also LOCKSS - or Lots of Copies to Keep Stuff Safe <http://www.diglib.org/preserve/stanfordfinal.html>

In summary: keep an open mind (switch back to printed version); don't be afraid to admit failure; stay flexible, take risks; try new approaches; grovel. For further information contact Martha on mg@wpi.edu

Lian Ruan (Illinois Fire Service Institute) presented the results of a survey to support Evidence-Based Practice in Special Libraries Serving Fire Services Personnel and Researchers in Public Safety and Homeland Security areas. This survey was intended to expand our knowledge and asks the question - do libraries add value?

Lian provided the background of the participating libraries (6 in all), how the questionnaire was developed and the timeframe of the survey (conducted over 16 months).

Basically firefighters have wider range of duties - it is not just fire fighting and can include emergency care. Details of the survey respondent's characteristics were provided, together with the importance of different information sources and how the libraries responded. There were some issues user confidentiality and how to boost the survey rate.

Overall the survey highlighted that users need to be aware of the library and the services provided. This work will form the basis for Lian achieving her PhD. For further information contact Lian on ruan@fsi.uiuc.edu

Lora Brueck (Worcester Polytechnic Institute) presented a report on FABERC (Fire and Building Educational Research Collection). This is an online digital library dedicated to collecting, categorizing, enhancing and distributing materials that will enlighten a broad audience for fire-related topics. Check out www.faberc.org

This will provide a resource gateway for the fire service community and a repository for collections of fire-related content. You can complete a survey that will assist the development of the content of the digital library. Check out the metadata links and controlled lists for metadata.

Joseph Fleming (Boston Fire Department) provided a review of the literature related to photoelectric and ionization detectors. Joe discussed how he uses the information and included an historical overview of detector studies.

Interestingly in the US, 40% of people die in smoldering fires when the smoke alarms work. Other statistics such as a reduction in fire deaths could be attributed to an increase in burn care and a reduction in smoking. Jay likened ionizing detectors to seat belts whilst photoelectric detectors were lap belts with air bags. Overall by switching from ionizing to photoelectric technology (or by developing a smoldering test that represents synthetic material) smoke detectors can finally realize their full potential and fire deaths can be reduced by hundreds of lives each year.

Jay is seeking any information that supports / contradicts his opinions. He can be contacted on jayF.BDF@ci.boston.ma.us

inFIRE Round Table

Information obtained from inFIRE members prior to the conference has been compiled and it will be published on the listserv. inFIRE attendees gave a brief report on their activities.