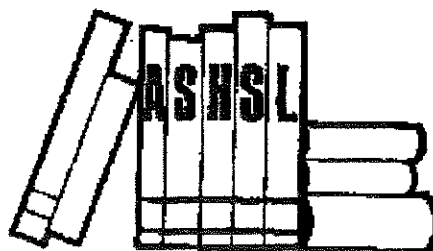


# INTERIM



the newsletter of

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**Editorial... Editorial... Editorial... Editorial...**

Firstly apologies for the late arrival of this issue. I had to abandon the Spring/Summer issue. I've been involved with the move of Queen Margaret College's new site Library at Leith which has been keeping me busy.

As usual, thanks to all who contributed the articles in this issue. I am always grateful for any submissions, please send me anything that you think might be interesting to other ASHSL members.

Finally, I am still looking for someone to take over as editor of Interim. Please give me a ring if you would like to find out more.

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**CONFERENCE REPORTS... CONFERENCE REPORTS...**

**Self Service? Helping our users to help themselves**

Report of the Library Association Medical, Health and Welfare Libraries Group Conference, UMIST, Manchester, 9th - 11th September 1994

The conference provided the usual opportunity to meet colleagues, discuss mutual interests, view new publications and services and participate in sessions organised around the general theme of user education. This topic was timely in view of recent and forthcoming changes in nursing and medical education and in the expectation of future rationalisation of library service. I shall attempt to give a flavour of the conference by describing some of the session which I attended.

Before the official opening of the Conference, IFM Healthcare sponsored a talk by Frank Norman on 'Training for the Internet'. Frank has co-produced a Network Training Pack, and in describing its use he demonstrated the difficulties of accessing networked information, as well as the unlimited possibilities. The training package gives some assistance in finding one's way through the array of information on the network. It is clear that the Internet is not so much a system as a facilitating device, and the user must have a fairly clear idea of what he is seeking. Even more than the other sessions this was an example of training required for the librarian as much as for the user.

The Keynote Address was given by Gill Burrington, President of the Library Association. She passed on an encouraging message from Tom Sackville, of the Department of Health, stressing the Government's support of health libraries. She wished the delegates well, urging them to go back to their own workplaces enthused to try something new.

She said that, in spite of general despondency about the future of health libraries, there were glimmers of light, particularly in the ongoing discussion on Cumberledge 2. It was encouraging to note that the Department of Health is now in the process of appointing a Library Advisor. She was also encouraged that Welfare library provision appears to be faring

relatively well. Public libraries are making imaginative attempts to cater for users with special needs, and many libraries are training access for the disabled as a priority, rather than just conforming to minimum standards.

She was uneasy that the Government's belief in competition within a market may challenge the premise of the free flow of information, forcing libraries into going for the cheapest option, with the resultant deterioration in services. As librarians, we must make our concerns felt, at all opportunities. Our platform must be positive, rather than self-seeking. The case for provision of health and medical information must be put soberly, on the grounds that it makes sound economic sense, as well as contributing to social justice. Libraries have a unique place in information provision. While information is certainly abundant, the librarian can impartially guide users to balanced solutions to their enquiries. We must vigorously push forward the debate, with the conviction that what we do is worthwhile, and that we are the best people to do it.

This stirring appeal was balanced by a very enjoyable film presentation by Maryann Gomes of the North West Film Archive on 'Moving memories of life and health in the North West'. She drew on material in the Archive to demonstrate healthcare provision around Manchester before the Welfare State. The implications for health of working and housing conditions were clear, as well as the haphazard methods of funding health care.

Saturday morning's speakers emphasised Plain Speaking and Plain English. Professor Ian Rogerson recently of Manchester Metropolitan University, asked 'How user friendly is your library?' while David Bray of the Plain English Campaign, asked 'Do I make myself clear?' Both speakers urged us to consider the purpose of our institutions, and the need for clear communication between ourselves and our customers.

Saturday afternoon saw an excellent presentation on Library skills and new learning styles'. Dr Paul O'Neill spoke on 'Problem-based learning' in the context of undergraduate medical education becoming more self directed. Phil Keeley discussed 'Open Learning' from the viewpoint of the implication for tutors and librarians, and Bernadette Coles spoke of 'Distance Learning', pointing out that so many distance learners lack existing library skills, and so require even greater support than typical students. All three emphasised the necessity of libraries being sufficient planned and resourced to support these new learning styles. It was feared that otherwise such learners would be disadvantaged, particularly those with limited time for study, who have work and family commitments and who are obliged to rely on their workplace library.

The main programme was supplemented by workshops, for example, on CD training; user guides for IT; product reviews; and a first time speakers session. The Exhibition was, as usual, well appreciated, this year including a particularly extensive medical books display.

The conference ended with a discussion of 'Staying relevant: how libraries can respond to future trends in the NHS and Community Care', by Bob Gann, Director of the Help for Health Trust. He warned us of our healthcare libraries becoming irrelevant, marooned in a bygone era, now consigned to oblivion by the medical

market place, and the purchaser provider split. All the changes, eg the Patient's Charter, postgraduate medical education, contracting out and compulsory competitive tendering, depend crucially on 'information' in its broadest sense. Librarians must be aware of their role, or their services may be considered redundant. This issue, the knowledge base of health care, is probably the most vital challenge we face and we headed home soberly considering the implications.

The 1995 MHLWG Conference is likely to be part of the Library Association's Under One Umbrella 3, held at UMIST from Friday 23rd to Sunday 25th June. The group will be one of the 25 Library Association groups contributing, and it is hoped that the programme will also be of a value to staff with an interest in health and medical issues, while not necessarily working in health libraries.

Janice Grant  
South Ayrshire Hospitals National Health Service Trust



**MANAGING THE KNOWLEDGE BASE OF HEALTH CARE: THE SCOTTISH DIMENSION:** organised by the Association of Scottish Health Sciences Librarians (ASHSL), and supported by the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) and the NHS in Scotland (NHSIS) Management Executive.

Scottish Health Service Centre, Edinburgh, 15 June 1994

#### "THE CUMBERLEGE PROCESS"

Two seminars on health information took place in London in July 1992 and October 1993. Both were chaired by Baroness Cumberlege, Under Secretary of State for Health in the House of Lords. Attendance at these seminars was limited, so three regional follow-ups were arranged - Cardiff, Newcastle and Edinburgh.

The Edinburgh seminar aimed:

- to identify priorities for action in Scotland, and
- to provide a channel of communication with senior management in the NHSIS Management Executive.

The NHSIS Management Executive is part of the Scottish Office Home and Health Department. It is roughly the Scottish equivalent of the Department of Health's NHS Executive (NHSE) in England.

#### ATTENDANCE

Almost all of the 70 delegates arrived, in defiance of the first day of the railway signal-workers' strike.

64% of delegates came from the world of libraries and information services. The other 36% consisted of two main groups: information technology (IT) managers and

other administrative staff such as statisticians (23% of total); and nursing, lecturing or research staff (14%).

## CHAIR

The seminar was splendidly chaired by Gavin Drummond of Angus District Libraries. Gavin is a prominent figure in the public library world, as well as being a stalwart of SLIC and its predecessor, the Library and Information Services Council (Scotland).

He noted that SLIC had always been part-funded by the Scottish Office's *Education* Department, and had therefore seldom spoken to its other main parts. If SLIC started to communicate with the *Home and Health* Department (which contains the NHSIS Management Executive), this would be a useful product of the seminar.

His opening remarks also stressed the need to work against *compartmental thinking* - within the profession, and also between different professions.

## SPEAKERS

### The Cumberlege seminars in England

*Michael Carmel, Director of Library Services, South Thames Region*

Michael Carmel's overview of the two original seminars was both comprehensive and cogent. As a result of these meetings, *dialogue* had improved in several ways: between the library profession and the NHSE; within the NHSE, between the research and the IT functions; and within the library profession, the debates on quality and technology had been advanced.

Michael had found Cumberlege 2 especially inspiring, but he thought that the future in England was uncertain: the appointment of two full-time library advisers in the NHSE, for example, could not in itself solve the serious problems of regional and national integration in planning.

### The information user: information into practice: the Cochrane process.

*Carl Counsell, Clinical Neurologist, University of Edinburgh*

Carl Counsell's presentation offered a commentary on the provisional, fallible nature of medical knowledge. In this way it served as a corrective to those librarians - if there ever were any - who conceive of a quality service as merely the supply of the largest set of references in the shortest possible time. The painstaking work of the international Cochrane collaboration has revealed the inadequacies of many standard sources of reference, as well as the dubious status of many of the views which have been accepted as "correct" by the medical profession.

His talk drew attention to the kind of critical thinking which is required of librarians in their role as information intermediaries.

It also succeeded in sending the discussion right back to "patient care" with this message: *good information can cure, bad information can hurt.*

### The information manager: managing information provision within a health board

*Alan Mordue, Consultant in Public Health Medicine, Borders Health Board*

Alan Mordue's work in the Borders is dedicated to providing a truly integrated information function, in which librarians, IT experts and statisticians all play a productive role. To me, this represented an ideal to which all Purchasing Intelligence Units should aspire.

His talk covered the information function's "Structural Corollaries" (getting the right people in the right jobs, integrating these jobs, training and paying the people well), and the "Management Corollaries" (ensuring a clear focus on the organisation's purpose, and the purpose of the information function's component parts; striving for optimum use of all information).

### The information provider: problems and opportunities in Scottish health care libraries.

*Sheila Cannell, Chair, ASHSL, and Medical Librarian, University of Edinburgh*

As ASHSL chair, Sheila Cannell was heavily involved in organising this seminar. She also gave a talk summarising the activities, achievements and possibilities of health care libraries in Scotland. Her main points were as follows:

there is a need for equal access to the knowledge base. Some staff - for example general practitioners, paramedics, qualified nurses - are disadvantaged in this respect.

libraries have a great tradition of quality service and informal cooperation. However, there is uneven provision across Scotland. No precise figures are available, but the health care sector in Scotland has been estimated to spend around £5 million a year on library services.

developments in technology, networks, and customer expectations have brought their own problems. For example, the NHSIS Management Executive had not yet declared its policy on NHS access to JANET and the INTERNET. Many delegates were impatient for such access to be properly organised and planned.

problems facing libraries include those of small size; lack of overall leadership or coordinated planning; lack of plausible accreditation mechanisms; often chaotic budgetary arrangements; and the danger of a purchaser-provider culture leading to even greater fragmentation.

### Information for the new NHS in Scotland

*Charles Knox, Director of Information Services, NHSIS Management Executive*

Charles Knox's vigorous presentation could almost be summed up by the one word integration.

The NHSIS must become a truly "informed" organisation (informed, delegated, integrated, liberated), with information flowing right through

from top to bottom and back and from side to side.

Information had to be incorporated into the NHSiS's business strategy - which, as he pointed out, was ultimately the business of curing people, or helping them not to fall ill.

The information function in the NHSiS should bring together the work of IT specialists, economists, statisticians, and librarians.

An important project in Scotland, the MIS (or Management Information System), had already brought managers and information specialists together in productive cooperation.

I was struck by the level of agreement between Charles Knox's strategic overview and Alan Mordue's inspiring description of a local centre of good practice.

#### Agreed outcomes of the seminar

- (1) knowledge-based information should be included in information strategies at Scottish and local levels
- (2) ASHSL would communicate with the NHSiS Management Executive through its Director of Corporate Affairs
- (3) ASHSL, the NHSiS Management Executive, and SLIC had opened channels for communication
- (4) the NHS Joint Working Group on Information Services would be kept informed of the issues raised
- (5) a review of health care libraries in Scotland was planned
- (6) librarians would seek to communicate and cooperate with other relevant professionals in their organisation

I felt that this meeting had a genuine air of excitement, enthusiasm and optimism. It was a novel experience to sit in a hall with such a mixture of professionals - nurses, managers, statisticians, librarians and others. All of the professions represented must have gained some new ideas about how to "manage the future", in Michael Carmel's memorable phrase.

Many delegates seemed to have the impression that good things were *beginning to happen*: the library profession's value was being taken more seriously; managers were becoming aware of the need for integration within the information function and across the country; important issues such as NHS access to computer networks were being discussed by the people who mattered.

A promising sequel to the seminar was the appearance of NHS Circular MEL(1994)64 - "Preparation and development of local information management and technology (IM&T) strategies". This document specifically mentions library facilities as one of the key areas in existing information systems which Scottish NHS Trusts and Health Boards should survey in their new information strategies.

ALAN H JAMIESON, Manager, Information Services,  
Common Services Agency for the NHS in Scotland

(reprinted with permission from IFM Healthcare Newsletter, vol.5 no.4, Winter 1994)



Information... Information... Information...

#### SilverPlatter Library Holdings Demonstration Program

Have you used the new error-free version of this program yet? I admit to dragging my heels a bit because I put a sizeable amount of effort into implementing the previous version last summer only to find it was so full of bugs that I had to abandon the attempt.

I am glad that I tried again because this time it has worked and I am sure my readers will find the holding messages useful. A considerable amount of preparation is required since you need to pre-define a range of messages which relate to your own stock. I have defined 52 different messages. This library had all the MEDLINE discs back to 1966 but because one is limited to 100 messages I had to make the decision that the messages only relate to 1980 onwards. For example, the message attached to *Clinical Otolaryngology* says "This journal is available in this library" even though we have only taken it since 1978, the message attached to *Ear and Hearing* says "This journal is available in this library from 1984" and the message attached to *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology* says "This journal is available in this library until 1986" even though the full holdings are only 1974 to 1986. I think this compromise will work. Please contact me if you want to talk about getting started.

I have also prepared a sheet that show readers how to apply LIMITS to SilverPlatter MEDLINE corresponding to the sadly missed menu of limits that was available on Compact Cambridge. Please contact me if you would like a copy of this sheet.

Hazel Williamson  
Medical Library  
Glasgow Royal Infirmary University NHS Trust  
Alexandra Parade  
GLASGOW  
G31 2ER  
Tel 041 304 4760 (direct)



Conference Report... Conference Report...

All our tomorrows ... computers and networking.

The Spring 1994 meeting was held on a beautiful sunny day in April at the Ayr Hospital where around 45 ASHSL

members gathered for a day which was intensive, high-tech and brain-bamboozling (for some of us!) but which left us enthusiastic and keen to find out more.

The morning session was devoted to databases and the first speaker was **Tom Carver** from **Silver Platter**. He had been asked to speak on *CD-ROM producers - today and tomorrow*, but he began by changing the title to *Silver Platter Information today and tomorrow!*

SilverPlatter see themselves as information providers and are using as a motto "the right information - the right software". The talk was then split into these two areas:

The right information .... Tom described some of the new databases available from SilverPlatter which include:

*Physician's Medline*:- subsets of Medline so that individuals can subscribe to a specialised section - eg ophthalmology/dentistry/gynaecology etc.

*Embase*:- Biomedical / pharmacological information from 1980 to present.

*Embase alert*:- biomedical research information.

*Hospital Collection*:- includes Medline 1966 to present / HealthPlan / CINAHL / Bioethicsline Plus / CancerLit.

The right software ... He highlighted the importance of having multiple platforms (DOS/Windows/Macintosh); of having powerful retrieval tools; and of having universal access. He ended by providing an overview of SilverPlatter software developments.

**Felicity Grainger** from **Glasgow University Library** then spoke on *Bibliographic management packages*.

Bibliographic management packages can be used by clinicians and scientists for managing references downloaded from bibliographic databases, for preparing reference lists for publication and for retrospectively indexing an existing reprint collection. They can be used by librarians and information professionals for maintaining databases of publications, for subject specific reference databases and for in house publications (annual reports etc).

Felicity explained the principles on which these packages work and went on to discuss criteria which can be used when selecting a package. Issues to consider include ease of use, report generating facilities, supplier support, and computability with wordprocessing software.

Felicity supplied a list of software packages including Pro-Cite, Reference Manager, Papyrus and EndNote Plus, along with contact addresses and references to further reading.

The third speaker of the day was **Kerr Donaldson** from the **Health Education Board for Scotland** whose topic was *HEBS databases on CD-ROM*.

Kerr began by giving some background information. HEBS has a number of databases - Health Search Scotland / Patient Education Scotland / SHAIR (Scottish HIV and AIDS Initiative Register) / Library journals catalogue / Library video catalogue. They felt that there was a need for improved access to the databases for key users such as health professionals, social & community workers, voluntary organisations and information workers. Although HEBS has

introduced an 0345 number in an attempt to equalise access for telephone users and provides the Health Search database on floppy disk to some other sites, it was decided to put their databases onto CD-ROM. There has been a three month trial of this at various sites where use is being monitored.

Kerr discussed the benefits of putting the HEBS databases on CD-ROM. These include its high capacity, easy distribution, the potential for CDI and the most practical way to integrate media. There are some drawbacks - the hardware needed (although they are aiming to provide all HB health promotion departments with the hardware), unit cost and the fact that it is read-only. He ran through the reasons why Filemaker Pro software was chosen which include its flexibility and its indexing / retrieval facilities.

Kerr finished his presentation with a demonstration of Health Search Scotland on CD-ROM.

ASHSL members had been invited to make contributions to the day but only one brave soul offered! **Cathel Kerr** described the work he does indexing the Embase database. There are about 12 teleworkers throughout Scotland (scattered between Aberdeen and Skye) involved in indexing a substantial part of Embase. Cathel indexes around 10,000 items per year and interestingly, he is the only one of the 12 who is a librarian and is employed because of his science background.

A most enjoyable lunch followed and during the lunch time there were demonstration sessions from most of the speakers - these were very popular judging from the groups of people huddled around the computers. I confess that I was too busy talking and didn't actually get to any of the demonstrations!

The afternoon session was devoted to the Internet and was opened by **Jan Howden** from **Glasgow College of Nursing and Midwifery**. The title of her presentation was *Routes to the Internet from the NHS*.

Jan began by introducing the Internet which has as many definitions and names as there are people to define and name it! Known also as the electronic highway and cyberspace, it is now available in 70 countries and covers 45,000 networks. The Internet has 3 basic functions:

- E-mail : can be part of mailing lists / discussion groups
- remote login: ability to dial up other databases
- electronic file transfer: ability to download data

Jan went on to talk about JANET, the private network for academic and research libraries, which can be accessed through the Internet. She highlighted some of the existing library applications available on JANET which include SALBIN (Scottish Academic Libraries Bibliographic Information Network), BIDS (Embase / Social Science database) and BUBL (Bulletin Board for Libraries.)

Last year a report was commissioned on widening access to JANET which would enable NHS sites to be linked to the network through local universities and

institutions. This type of connection would be expensive involving costs in the region of £3000 paid to the local university and £2000 to the JANET governing body plus, for example £5000 for access to BIDS.

Both Sheila Cannell from Edinburgh University and Felicity Grainger from Glasgow University are receptive to enquiries about JANET connections with the NHS but it is also possible to get access through commercial organisations.

The second afternoon speaker was **Kerr Donaldson** from **HEBS** who was having a busy day! He was the first of two speakers looking at *Sources on the Internet*.

HEBS has a dial-up link to Internet (through Demon systems). This is the cheapest form of access to the Internet and costs £12 as a start-up subscription and then £10 per month. This gives access to everything except the fee-paying databases. However, this form of link is slower than a full JANET connection.

Kerr went on to discuss some of the facilities available through their connection to the Internet. These include :

- access to discussion groups and mailing lists
- access to university library OPACS
- a facility for documents to be downloaded and printed out
- access to BUBL
- use of subject trees - highlights resources in a subject area. (HEBS uses this to identify conferences etc to put in their Patient Education Bulletin)

He finished by saying that the effort is involved at the initial stages of setting up the connections and in finding out which resources you will want to use regularly.

**Alison Faichney** from **Glasgow University** was the next speaker to talk on *Sources on the Internet*.

Alison's summary of the Internet was "Lots of hype, lots of hope and some useful information"!

Again, Alison covered the range of facilities available through Internet - E-Mail / discussion lists / open bulletin boards / electronic journals / electronic texts / images. She introduced us to a variety of terms and abbreviations - gophers, world wide webs, veronica, WAIS - which are tools to help map a route through the Internet.

The next section of Alison's presentation covered the uses of the Internet in the life sciences. Via JANET access is possible to BUBL - for jobs/conferences etc, to NISS, a gateway service, to HENSA, a software archive, to Mailbase, a UK discussion list and to Bibliographic databases, including BIDS and OCLC. These bibliographic databases are very popular and probably the biggest benefit of JANET.

She discussed the current accessibility of BIDS which is located at Bath and has network connections via JANET. It is available 24 hours, 7 days a week but there are strict registration requirements - it is only for employees / students of a registered user. However, now that JANET and the NHS can begin to cooperate,

access should be getting easier. This cooperation is becoming vital because medical students are now being trained to expect access to BIDS and when they start working they will expect to continue having access.

The final speaker of the day was **Sheila Cannell** from **Edinburgh University Library** whose talk was entitled *The Virtual Library: where it's all leading to*.

Sheila's concept of the virtual library follows from her very practical situation - she has been asked to think about the library for the new Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh. Although there is no finance for and no point in duplicating the Erskine Medical Library, there will be funds available for a technological infrastructure. There are other organisations planning this type of library - Healthcare International in Clydebank is planning a virtual library based on one in Boston and the Milton Keynes campus of de Montford University library claims to be a virtual library.

#### What is a virtual library?

A virtual library is one where all information is held electronically and users do not have to come to a physical building. The computer-literate user can sit down at their desk, access information and by-pass librarians. However, there is a great deal of work to be done before the virtual library can be a sensible option and there are many concerns about the Internet, not least of which is that the information on it is random and self selected.

Sheila then outlined her vision of a virtual library which would have a small library space with librarians as advisors (so we're still needed!). There would need to be a good system interface (easy to use), it would have to be available on a network and be part of the hospital information system (so that literature could be linked to costs, patient protocols etc). Information would come from a variety of sources with links to the full text and the source of full text transparent and there would have to be the ability to relate this to other information.

But there are obstacles to getting to this in a few years time:

- speed of change makes it difficult to plan
- technological issues, including ergonomics (who wants to sit at the screen longer than half an hour?) and the graphics / communications / interfaces all need improvements
- networking issues - linking of networks (NHS is paranoid about patient data being on same network as Medline etc although this is not a problem in the USA), network navigation (Internet is like a library of books with no catalogue and needs more guidance)
- publishing industry - there are problems with suitability of digitisation, with older material, with archiving and with copyright - probably the biggest single issue that affects the virtual library
- users' behaviour and the importance of print / serendipity / browsing / peer review
- role for librarians needs to be clarified and developed. Collectively there is a need to develop network

navigation tools, to lobby to solve the problems of copyright etc and to provide an archival service. Individually librarians need to keep up to date / find out about local networks / provide access / provide instruction / integrate networked services.

Kerr Donaldson is willing to help any ASHSL members interested in getting dial-up access to Internet and Jan Howden can provide information on JANET.

I felt that this meeting was a very intensive but successful one - the technology all worked and it was encouraging that the day was largely led by ASHSL members. Thanks should go to Janice Grant and the Ayr Hospital for being the hosts for the day. I came away feeling very ignorant but inspired to find out more and since April I have come across references to the Internet in almost every newspaper and journal I pick up!

Alison Clapham  
Management Development Group



#### **Nursing Representative... Nursing Representative...**

The ASHSL committee requires a Nursing representative. If you are interested in filling this post please contact Anne Brice or any other member of the Committee at the address below.

Anne Brice  
Library Service Manager  
Borders Health Science Library  
Education Centre  
Borders General Hospital  
MELROSE  
TD6 9BD  
Tel: 0896 754333 x4023  
Fax: 0896 823476



#### **Report Offer... Report Offer... Report Offer...**

**BARKER, Ann B Prospects for the periphery: care of the terminally ill in a remote area.**

This is a report of a wide-ranging two year study conducted in Sutherland for the Highland Health Board. It is a comprehensive analysis of terminal care services in a sparsely populated area.

The Highland Health Services Library has a number of spare copies of this publication to give away. If any library is interested please contact:

Mrs M Gilmour  
Highland Health Sciences Library  
Raigmore Hospital  
INVERNESS  
IV2 3 UJ  
Tel: 0463 705269



#### **ASHSL Conferences... ASHSL Conferences....**

The Interim Committee is always interested in people suggesting topics for conferences. If you have any good ideas please contact Anne Brice at:

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Education Centre  
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#### **Union List... Union List... Union List... Union List...**

The new Union List scheme is now underway. We would ask the few remaining libraries who have not bought at least one new pack to do so as soon as possible. We would be interested if anyone is encountering any problems with the scheme - contact Hazel or me at the address below.

The libraries at the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh and the National Centre for Training and Education in Prosthetics and Orthotics are now accepting ASHSL forms as full payment for each request.

Members can be re-reimbursed for unsuccessful ASHSL inter-library loan requests. The top copy of an unsuccessful form can be included in your collection of used forms when you send for reimbursement.

A new option of reimbursement has been included on the form. Instead of sending an eight pound administration fee and 50 used forms, you can send 58 used forms.

A copy of the order form is included with this mailing.

Vicki Cormie

Hazel Williamson  
The Library  
Glasgow Royal Infirmary  
6-16 Alexandra Parade  
GLASGOW  
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### Conference Report... Conference Report...

#### Computers and evidence-based health services BCS Medical / Scotland / ASHSL Joint Meeting 9th December 1994

During the Cumberledge meeting held in Edinburgh in June 1994, it was suggested that there should be closer liaison and co-operation between information professionals working within the NHS in Scotland, in order to improve awareness and to lead to sharing of skills and expertise. Following that meeting the Scottish branch of the British Computer Society Medical group proposed that a joint event be held with ASHSL, primarily to raise awareness of recent developments and applications in using technology to improve access to the knowledge base of healthcare. A meeting was therefore arranged, and held at the Southern General Hospital in Glasgow on the 9th December, with the theme "Computers and Evidence-Based Health Services". A full and varied programme was organised with contributions from members of both organisations, ranging from papers on Internet resources, software used in purchasing health care, and the use of literature by researchers in healthcare computing, to communications and communicable disease, and an extremely stimulating demonstration of the uses of online databases in clinical diagnosis.

The day's proceedings were concluded by a presentation by Bill Birse from Maryfield Computer Services on the current situation with regard to the NHS Network. This provided a fairly positive conclusion to the day's events, as it became apparent that the full potential of networking in general, and the NHS Network in particular is finally being recognised. (ASHSL will be approaching those responsible for looking at network applications in order to inform them of the potential for library and information services - see item on library networking elsewhere in this issue).

Hopefully this is the first of many joint meetings with our other information colleagues!

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### Conference Report... Conference Report...

#### Career and Life Planning: ASHSL Autumn 1994 Meeting: Fife College of Health Studies 11th November 1994

After the AGM we launched into the world of self appraisal, professional development and career planning in a seminar / facilitated workshop led by Jane Farmer and Grainne Ward from Robert Gordon University. This was a very interesting and useful session on a topic close to many of our hearts on the current period of insecurity in the NHS.

Following a general introduction by Jane Farmer in which she emphasised the role of the individual in creating his / her own career opportunities through being proactive rather than reactive, we broke into three workshop discussion groups to share thoughts, feelings and experience related to current career concerns and other issues important to us in terms of career / life planning. The groups rejoined for general discussion and several common themes were identified. Issues raised included the image of the profession, job security, transferable skills, isolation / professional, availability of suitable jobs / personal and geographical limitations and general quality of life both inside and outside the workplace. The groups discussion also highlighted the many different directions that career / life planning can lead, eg upwards, sideways - towards a new career, remaining stationary, or out altogether.

After lunch we returned to our groups to reflect upon our own experience and skills - both generic and those specific to our current posts. We then detailed areas for future improvement. Back in the lecture theatre Grainne Ward outlined some common sense sources of help and support for assistance with career development focus after which we returned to our groups to begin formulating our own development plans drawing on the points identified in the earlier exercise. This was followed up by some peer review from within the group about the specific details of our plans. The closing discussion indicated a successful and thought-provoking day!

Jane Sutton-Curr  
Fife College of Health Studies



### Spring ASHSL conference....

will be held on 21st April at the Royal Infirmary in Glasgow. Further detail will be sent out soon.