The Impact of Technology on the Ross University Library

By

Cheryl Cumberbatch, MLS
Library Director
Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine
Stanley Mark Dennis Veterinary Medical Library

P.O. Box 334
Basseterre
St. Kitts
West Indies
Tel.: 869-465-4161
Fax: 869-465-9734

Email: ccumberbatch@rossvet.edu.kn

Abstract: Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine (RUSVM) is located in the Eastern Caribbean on the island of St. Kitts. Our mission is the delivery of excellent veterinary education and this was expanded to include research in 2005. The RUSVM Department of Information Services (DIS) - (Library & Learning Resource Center (LRC)) and the Department of Information Technology, work closely in facilitating access of information to its clients. This service is vital to the expansion. The DIS is unique due to its geographical location, focusing on providing timely information; assisting faculty and students in optimal use of the technology available, and has all information accessible online.

Objective: The purpose of this paper is to describe RUSVM client centered information service delivery.

Methodology: This paper will discuss the resources that are available at RUSVM, as well as methods of delivery of the information.

Results: The discussion will highlight the unique aspects of the RUSVM collection and services, as well as outline the similarities and differences between other more traditional veterinary libraries located at larger universities.

Conclusions: Growth and expansion at RUSVM, has led to new challenges and opportunities, which stem from the impact of technology in the fields of library science and veterinary medicine. With the increased utilization of technology there is a progressive shift in emphasis from collection ownership to information access.

NB: Since this abstract was submitted the DIS has been renamed as the Learning Resource Center with three areas: (a) The Library (b) Computer Lab/Testing Center and (c) 24 Hour Reading Room.

INTRODUCTION

The Learning Resource Center has grown over the years and now occupies approximately 11,000 sq ft. The intent behind allocating this much space is to create a welcoming atmosphere and an environment conducive to learning and study. The library has twelve (from six) sit-down work stations which allow access to its Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC), as well as internet browsing, database searching and student applications. The latest expansion plans will add some 36 more computers to the library floor by 2010. Additionally, there are three group-study rooms available for students to use in the 24-hour reading room. The library can accommodate 130 persons while the 24-hour reading room accommodates 101 persons.

The Computer Lab/Testing Center (CL/TC) presently houses 96 computers. The latest expansion plans for the CL/TC will add a minimum of 24 more computers with an anticipated expansion to 150 to better serve our growing student numbers. The CL/TC provides access to university applications, email, and the Internet; 24 have DVD players, eight are also capable of burning CDs. Students can also scan documents. Printing capability is delivered from three high volume laser jet printers. Each student is allocated a total of 700 pages per semester. Students can also purchase copies from two photocopying machines located in the library by using a vending card. Copies are US 13 cents for letter size or US 15 cents for legal size. There are eight group-study rooms in the CL/TC.

Students can access 2 types of information from the computers in the CL/TC. They have access to general material, printing of course material and, a more secure area for proprietary information. The secure domain provides access to copyrighted material and can only be accessed from the computer on the CL/TC and the library floors. This secure domain does not allow students to print, email or save any of the material.

The dual use of the CL/TC produces some scheduling challenges. During mid-semester and final examinations period the facility is generally booked and not available for student use. There are three types of exams that are commonly held in the CL/TC: PowerPoint aided, where professors use this medium to display pictures and videos; PDF format which is mostly used for Diagnostic Imaging. The last is via online testing software. The online testing software delivers examinations through a secure program. The students are directed to a secure login from where it is impossible to access the Internet and other external devices such as jump drives, etc. The results are automatically tabulated after the student completes his or her exam. The program is also capable of allowing professors to show students their scores immediately after they take the exam.

The library is managed by one professional librarian, one senior library technician, whose main responsibility is to deal with all IT related issues in the library and CL/TC and six paraprofessionals all at different stages of acquiring professional certificates in the field. The facility is open for approximately 100 hours per week during the semester and approximately 110 hours the week before and during final examination. Some of the services include: check in –check out of books, literature searches, document delivery, and reference, proctoring, photocopying, and printing. We focus on providing any service necessary to make our students' life comfortable such as: staple machines, paper clips, paper punch, scotch tape and so on.

The progression of technology has impacted the way we train our staff and how we maintain daily operations and deliver more sophisticated services. As a result of this progression in technology our staffing needs have changed. We created two new technical support positions. Having these dedicated technical resources is a tremendous benefit to our operations.

METHODOLOGY
The Library Director and staff at Ross are knowledge workers. That is, they maintain and manipulate PC web-based software, and web-based databases. They currently manage hundreds of online journals and subscriptions through vendors and are in constant contact with database providers and vendors to ensure access to the library's information resources, both on and off campus.

Our print journals with electronic equivalent are heavily used by our patrons for research. Thus one may ask why we continue to have print copies of journals when there is an electronic equivalent. This we found necessary in instances of power outages when access to the internet is interrupted, patrons still have accessible information. The card catalog once the gateway to the collection has been replaced by our Integrated Library System (ILS). The ILS provides access to our resources both inside and outside the campus.

Typewriters have disappeared and have been replaced by computers. Even our telephones have changed from analog to digital. Searching is no longer done by using printed abstracts and indexes. Online databases have made this task so much easier. Patrons can now conduct their own searches from their desktops. Current awareness is no longer a tedious job; using the online catalog one can print a report for the period and email this to the user.

License agreements have also been negotiated with major suppliers such as Elsevier, CABI, Wiley-Blackwell, JSTOR and Ingenta, to provide access to their electronic journal titles and e-books. The Library also gives distributed access to its services, so it is no longer necessary for patrons to come to the library if they do not want to. The library therefore, through the advancement in technology, is not limited to or defined by its four walls. Information can be delivered to the patron's desktops in three ways: journal alert, search alert and saved searches. Requests for articles from the research department have grown from 14 articles in 2002 to 379 in 2008. (See figure 1).

The veterinary library LISTSRVE of the Medical Library Association is usually used to fill requests for articles from time to time. However, if they are not able to fill a request we use commercial vendors such as INGENTA, Science Direct, British Document Supply and any other that we can source the article from. Whenever the articles are very expensive it is better to purchase them than to subscribe to the journals.

The information superhighway has impacted the collection and dissemination of information. Patrons now have ready access to a wide range of information e-resources available to them from their desktops. Over the past four years there has been an increase in the e-resources made available to patrons. The library provides access to a number of subscription databases containing full text articles and information on a variety of veterinary topics. Many of them can

be accessed through our ILS portal on and off campus; others are available for only on campus use.

Before the advent of computers, libraries used tools such as typewriter, card catalog, catalog cards, microfiche readers, and dater stamps. Today, these have been replaced with computers, printers, scanners, digital cameras. The selected resources and services traditionally were printed books and journals, films, tapes, bibliographies, reference, instruction, interlibrary loans. Today they are electronic books and journals, online directories, compact disc, internet, online databases. These resources and services continue to be in high demand. Patrons still have access to printed abstracts and indexes, many of which are now available online. Students have access to a number of online databases from several vendors. (See figure 2).

RESULTS
The collection at RUSVM is unique because of its Caribbean location. Library Orientation for students is not conducted in the usual way, since incoming students already possess a first degree and would have already been exposed to the use of the library at their respective undergraduate colleges. Therefore, what we try to emphasize is the unique aspects of the collection, such as those mentioned elsewhere in the paper. The library provides students with the *Library and Learning Resource Handbook* which gives them an understanding of the rules and regulations governing the use of the collection and computers. This handbook is included in their welcome package.

Our LRC is unique since only veterinary medicine is taught here. The School offers an accelerated program of 27 months (there are three semesters of 15 weeks each per year.) of basic biomedical training followed by one year of clinical applications, at one of several affiliated universities in the United States.

The collection is primarily made up of veterinary books, journals and databases. There are few medical books, journals and databases since we can access the medical resources of our sister university in Dominica. We have created a "*Professional Development Collection*" for student use. Materials in this collection comprise books on subjects such as alcoholism, bulimia and, resume writing. Then there is our "*Leisure Reading Collection*" which we call our "bring and take collection", named so because students can interchange their unwanted novels, magazines, and any popular culture with any book from this collection.

LRC provides most if not all of the services offered by veterinary colleges in the United States. It is different because we have cross training between the library and IT staff. We have a dedicated IT staff for the library, that assist our patrons on the LRC floors with such tasks as scanning documents, adding printer(s) to their profiles, and so on. We believe it to be very significant that our IT Department has technology plans and computer replacement schedules for the LRC.

CONCLUSIONS
There has been a dramatic change in the fields of Library Science and Veterinary Medicine in general during the past 10 years. Specifically here at Ross University, we have had to incorporate those changes in an extremely aggressive and challenging environment. Due to large

student numbers and because we operate year round there is very little time to plan or make significant changes.

When I arrived at RUSVM in the spring of 2001, there was no manual or guidebook outlining for me how to do my job. Twenty five years of experience and training in library science was my manual.   My determination was my driving force. There were many obstacles along the way, but on hindsight I count them as blessings. Knowledge about the library was forthcoming via my predecessors, some of whom are still on staff. To run the library effectively and successfully, I knew that I had the golden opportunity, by calling upon my years of training and experience as well as utilizing the wealth of literature available in the field. The only obstacle I foresaw at the time was to rise to the occasion and, apply and incorporate these new technologies that were invading our profession. From the on set I realized that it was not going to be business as usual.

RUSVM is constantly faced with the challenges of keeping up with emerging technologies. As the director of Library/LRC services I have to create opportunities for staff training in the use of these technologies so that they can continue, to effectively assist our patrons. The staff themselves invariably question, why all these new changes. I try to be discerning and not to choose every technology that comes to the market, but rather to select those innovations that would be beneficial to our patrons. Yet, I can attest that technology has really affected our service delivery.

Challenges surface for example when negotiating licenses for our information databases products. There are so many license restrictions as well as copyright rules and regulations particularly online. How information resources are bundled can even cause challenges. I remain cognizant of the fact that technology changes.
While the fever is in the air with everything going digital, has anyone stopped to think that someone somewhere has to be storing this information so that we can have access to it. What if they decide that they do not want to do this anymore, what or who will be responsible for its content?

Technology has brought many changes to the way we manage our day and provide information to users. Our role in this new age is to promote access to appropriate and accurate information credible to serve the needs of users. This has been the mission in particular of academic libraries for generations. However, the new age has made this mission much more challenging and complex and exciting. It has also demanded that the Library Director and staff bring or develop new technical skills to promote information access. These and many other skills are necessary and commonplace. If the staff do not have the technical and human skills, our effectiveness would have been impacted.

Technology represents hope for a considerable segment of the society. Rapid development and acceptance of technologies have led the research department to believe that it is just a matter of time before new technologies will be developed to cure all of its research ills. The impact of technology on all levels of library operations cannot be under – or overestimated. The internet and computerization of information resources and services have revolutionized the way we do business. A dedicated library technician who spends the greater part of his day just

troubleshooting the technology on the floors of the LRC is now required. Apart from our technician, other members of our information services team are concerned about the level of their expertise as our patrons demand more, better and faster services. Patrons today assume a level of expertise of all staff. IT department staff do their best to instruct and train all campus personnel, not only library staff, and especially those on the evening duty shifts, so that they can troubleshoot any problems until IT department comes in. Technology has changed our value system into one where we believe that faster is better and that it is imperative to keep abreast with technology or become obsolete.

At RUSVM a good education is dependent upon the library, and we have a good library because of the LRC staff. The LRC works diligently to improve the learning experience of all who come into the Library to access information resources. The staff are well trained in assisting students, faculty and other staff with using the technologies available, as skilled information professionals. The library is no longer an exclusive place to acquire information and develop information skills. Technology has extended the library walls. There is no debate that the convenience and speed of online resources are preferred to using print counterparts. The virtual library does exist as a valuable resource but it is unlikely it will ever completely replace the traditional library. There are many print materials yet to be digitized and some of them may never be digitized, which are ideal for adding to the virtual library collection. However, there are still several issues to be resolved before virtual libraries can become comprehensive collections. Readability, accuracy, expense, and copyright are all significant barriers for virtual libraries. However, the LRC is now at a place where it is fulfilling the mission of the university.
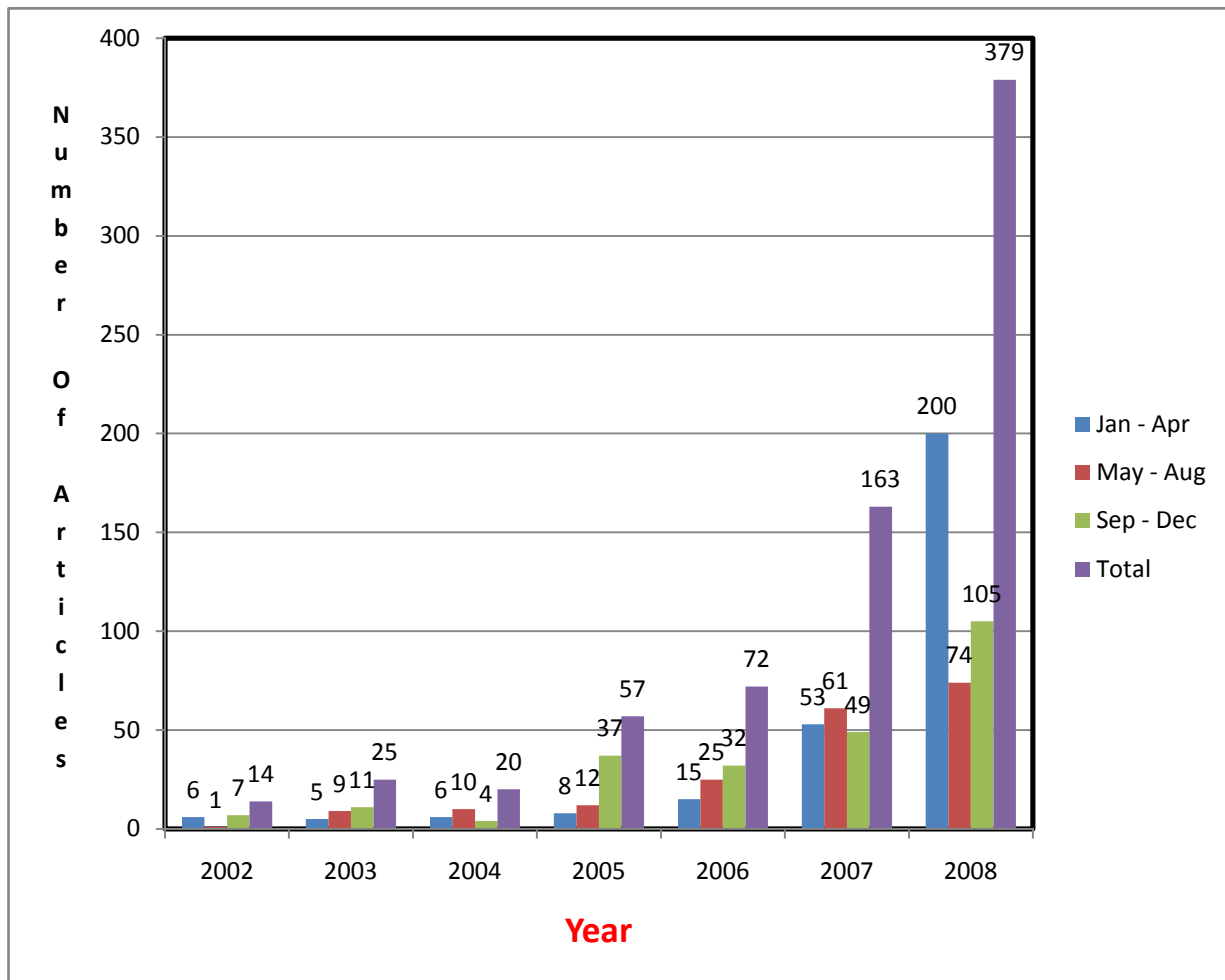
APPENDIX:

Fig. 1: Request for articles from faculty

VENDOR	NAME OF DATABASES
CABI	• Animal Science Database • Animal Health & Production Compendium • CAB e-Book – Animal and veterinary Sciences
EBSCO	• A-Z • Academic Search complete • AGRICOLA • Biological & Agricultural Index • Biological Abstracts • CAB Abstracts • EJS - enhanced version • ERIC • Link source • LISTA • MEDLINE - with full **text**
ELSEVIER	• Science Direct • SCOPUS
EOS : ILS	• Circulation • Cataloging • Federated Search • Knowledge Builder • OPAC • Search • Serials
INFOTRIEVE	• Ariel
INGENTA	• Ingenta connect Complete
JSTOR	• Biological Science Collection
SPELLEX	• Medical & Pharmaceutical spell checker
THOMPSONS	• Journal Citation Report-Web—via Internet (hosted on the ISI Web of Knowledge platform)
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH	• CLIVE
WILEY/BLACKWELL	• Science, Technology and Medicine Collection

Fig. 2: RUSVM subscribe to online databases by vendors

REFERENCES:

RUSVM Documents:

Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine (RUSVM) St. Kitts, West Indies: AVMA-COE

Self –Study Report 2006

Stanley Mark Dennis Veterinary Library & Learning Resource Center guide for students, 2007

Stanley Mark Dennis Veterinary Medical Library Web Site:

http://www.rossvet.edu.kn/Departments/Lib/lib.htm

Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine website:

http://www.rossvet.edu.kn

Ross University Web site:

http://www.rossu.edu

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank all the persons who have encouraged me along the way, especially my staff, the IT Director as well as the Associated Dean for Research. Most of all I would like to thank the RUSVM for affording me this opportunity to present my findings.