

---

# A week in the life ... widget, anyone?



Lisa Jeskins  
Promotions and Outreach  
Officer,  
Library and Archival Services,  
Mimas  
Tel: 0161 275 6789

E-mail. [lisa.jeskins@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:lisa.jeskins@manchester.ac.uk)

---

*Lisa Jeskins is the Promotions and Outreach Officer for the Archives Hub and Copac services. Lisa's current role includes providing workshops, seminars, presentations and user support. She is also interested in information literacy and developing online training modules.*

## MONDAY

Get in to the office and do the usual Monday-morning catch-up thing to start the week. Check e-mails, check to-do list from last week, start new to-do list. Put tasks not done onto new list. Start answering the enquiries that came into the Archives Hub and Copac helpdesks over the weekend. There seems to be a 4:1 ratio of Copac queries to Hub ones, but the Hub queries can be a lot more in-depth so it all balances out in the end. Copac enquiries are often from people requesting help with searching or asking how to go about getting full-text. Hub e-mails include anything from asking for the contact details of a particular archive, to how you go about getting copyright permission from certain publishers, to how they can find out more information about their Gran who lived in India at the turn of the century and started a troupe of Girl Guides.

Off to the Roscoe building for a meeting with Lisa Charnock from Intute: we have to do some final preparation for a workshop that we're doing for one of the parallel sessions at UKeIG 2009 (UK eInformation Groups' conference). We rather impressively, if slightly foolishly, called the session 'Holy Grails, long tails, widgets and beyond: facing the challenges of the information environment and meeting the expectations of the born digital user'. This was accepted and now we have to make sure that the session lives up to the title! Oops. We really want the delegates to

get together and debate the issue of Web 2.0 and to share their practical experiences of how it has been working in their information services. We've been told that the session is to be repeated three times and that there should be 20 delegates in each group (fingers crossed). We decide that, after a little context-setting, we will split delegates up into groups of four and give each group a theme to discuss. We will then provide three questions on each theme to get people started. It was a good meeting, and preparation sorted.

Time to grab some lunch and back to the office for more work on our Archives Hub re-brand. I am project managing the re-brand of the website and there is a lot to do and a lot of decisions to make. It is exciting work, though, as we are using a Manchester-based firm called True North and they really 'get' us. They understand the fact that we work in an academic environment and so don't sell anything. They also create wonderful stuff! The afternoon's task is to have a look at the information architecture that we have created for our new site and compare it with the old one and see if anything falls out. Turns out that were a few things left over, and I then have to start thinking of what is essential and how to incorporate that into the new site. Quite a tough job, which possibly would have been best done first thing ... Anyway, done now and I can take it back to the Hub team to see what they think. End the day finding out how to get to Bootle in the morning for a course.

## TUESDAY

Tuesday, and driving into Manchester to pick up my colleague Colin. Colin's job for the morning is to navigate our way to Sefton Adult Community Learning Centre. We're attending a JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) Regional Support Centre – North West course: 'Audacity/CamStudio 4 Beginners: producing interactive materials'. We arrive after a few hiccoughs + the A59 is a big road and we went down it the wrong way! Not Colin's fault: the sign said A59 and the directions I had weren't the best. I really should ditch my Luddite tendencies and get a SatNav. We have a well-earned coffee and meet the trainer and the rest of the group. John Dalziel is running the session and we start the course with John giving us presents. Surely the best way to begin a course! So whilst we're playing with our new headphones and memory stick, John explains that he has downloaded everything that we need on to the flash drive and that we'll need the head-

phones with built-in microphone for the sessions on Audacity later on.

John promises us a busy day packed with demonstrations of the software and full of opportunities to have a go ourselves. We start by having a look at ZoomIT, a handy piece of free software from Microsoft that you can use to zoom into areas on web pages. John uses it to great effect during the whole day and it seems to me that, with practice, ZoomIT would be great for demonstrating software or web-based applications. It was particularly useful for showing us which button or icon to click on.

John then demonstrates Audacity. During the hands-on session I can't quite believe I'm doing it. Me – recording myself talking and editing it! And I'm not techie at all. My colleague Jane Stevenson and I want to create an online tutorial on how to use our new Archives Hub EAD editor and I can see now how we can use Audacity to record the voiceover. The afternoon is devoted to CamStudio and again I'm impressed at how John makes quite complicated pieces of software seem straightforward and usable. Good day and I feel like I've learned a lot.

(For more information on the software mentioned, see the following RSC NW links: Audacity: <http://www.rsc-northwest.ac.uk/acl/eMagArchive/RSCeMag0809/Audacity/index.html> CamStudio: <http://www.rsc-northwest.ac.uk/acl/eMagArchive/RSCeMag0809/CamStudio/index.html>.)

### WEDNESDAY

Get in and catch up after yesterday's trip out. Go through some queries and get some printing and other jobs done until it's time to meet Lisa and go across to UKeiG at the Manchester conference centre to get ready for our parallel sessions.

We've printed out our themes and prompt-questions on different coloured card, so that each group can have one to look at during their discussion. The first group is due to arrive at 11am. Lisa and I have just heard that we're competing with sessions from Karen Blakeman and Charles Oppenheim ... so no pressure there then. Start to feel quite nervous but the group file in (all 20!) and we begin with our introductory spiel about who we are and what we do. We ask who has heard of Mimas and half the group raise their hands or nod their heads. The nerves start to disappear, as I can see that the group

appears prepared to engage right from the start, and even when we have to ask for a volunteer to be a 'rapporteur' from the group to feed back to the conference at the round-up session at the end of the day. We set the scene with examples from Mimas and similar organisations who are starting to work with Web 2.0 and then ask the group to split into four break-out groups of five. We give each group one of the following topics and questions to discuss:

- User experience: Do we know what users want? Do we know what spaces they are in? Are we there?
- Practitioner experience: What Web 2.0/immersive environments have you tried? What works for you and why? Are there any issues?
- Boundaries and control: What are users 'allowed' to do in these environments? Is 'allow' a word that should be used in this context? Does 'controlling' behaviour alienate users?
- Web 2.0, immersive environments and the future: What are you doing as a practitioner to prepare yourself for the future? Is it possible to prepare yourself? Are you the right person for the job? Or are you the right person to facilitate the process?

We also ask the groups to nominate a spokesperson and give them 15 minutes to discuss the topics and then 10 minutes to feed back their findings to the rest of the group.

We're really pleased with how the sessions go. Each session is fun and engaging. Everyone has lots to say. In fact it's such a large topic and it's so interesting to hear how people are using Web 2.0 that I'm sure we could go on all day. There are a couple of major recurring themes from all of the sessions. Everyone seems to be finding that users want it all and they want it now. It also seems that, while many librarians and information professionals are exploring Web 2.0, an equal amount are concerned about the pace of change of the technology and feel quite overwhelmed about learning how to use all of the new tools on top of their 'day' job. Lisa and I try to convey the idea that incorporating Web 2.0 technologies is simply a way of giving your users more choice in how they communicate with you and that you don't have to devote your entire day to it.

Some quick Web 2.0 tips that come out of the sessions are:

- Give it a go (after all, it's not a life-support system).
- Be flexible (embrace your mistakes).
- Use your enthusiastic early adopters (they love it; use them).
- Don't analyse it to death or you'll never start (death by committee).
- Think of quick wins (you can set up a Twitter account in 5 minutes).

We also found out that for those librarians working in the government sector and defence-industry libraries, Web 2.0 is a stumbling block. Their IT infrastructure tends to block the use of social networking and other Web 2.0 sites for security purposes. We wonder how to get round this. Is it a case of changing attitudes to Web 2.0 within their organisations or adapting the technology? No one can come up with anything definitive. One group from the MoD do report, though, that they were just starting to use wikis internally for collaborative working.

Some of the delegates had some innovative ways of getting their information service out there! One of our favourites was the 'Thing of the Day' blog from the University of Portsmouth (<http://reden.wordpress.com/>).

Lisa and I thoroughly enjoyed the sessions and are pleased that all the attendees seemed to get something out of them. All three of our rapporteurs did a brilliant job of summarising the sessions. We wander back to the office pretty chuffed with ourselves and utterly exhausted!!

#### THURSDAY

Back in the office and a bit brain-dead after the exertion of presenting yesterday. Spend morning catching up again! This does appear to be my life now – not that I'm complaining. (Much.) Go through queries and e-mails and add stuff to my 'to-read' pile. This appears to be becoming more of a mountain now. The afternoon's job is to start the re-design of the Copac documentation for the new interface. The tricky bit is that we are still in the Beta version and once we go live it might look a bit different. And me being me, I want to include screenshots. Lots of discussion around the office about optimum paper size vs. amount of information, images, white space, 'What do our users want?' and all that jazz. We finally decide on a basic document that can get users searching and that also explains how to start using the new login version. We decide it should be A5. We hope that the smaller size will be appealing to

users and make them want to pick it up. There's a possibility that we're deluding ourselves and that if we really want people to pick them up then we should attach chocolate to them. We think as well that we'll try and create an online guide as well. Soon. Oh, and the guide? It has screenshots.

End the day looking at maps of London so I can get to my Librarians' Information Literacy Annual Conference (LILAC) meeting tomorrow. Also pick up some of the 'to-read' mountain to read on the train. Try not to drastically over-estimate how much I will actually read. I seem to think I can read *War and Peace* on a two-hour train journey.

#### FRIDAY

Up and out, catching the Euston train from Stockport. Overpriced milky coffee – check; dodgy, guilt-inducing fashion/celeb gossip magazine – check. (Could I not have bought a newspaper?) Bottle of water – check. Suspiciously large amount of work stuff to read – check! Train leaves on time and I settle down to read my LILAC 'stuff'.

I went to LILAC for the first time this year (2009) and was really impressed. Held at Cardiff University, the conference was friendly and fun. Mimas and Intute shared an exhibition stand. We felt that we were really successful as we spoke to nearly half of the delegates about Mimas services. I was able to attend a few sessions as well. Working for online services that are predominately aimed at postgraduates and researchers, I was particularly interested in the 'supporting researchers' strand and the speakers that I saw inspired me. The LILAC committee who organise the conference were extremely helpful and everything seemed to go very smoothly. As a new member of the committee, I'll find out for myself over the next few months whether this was the case or whether they just cope with stress REALLY well.

Today's meeting is the first get-together to discuss organising LILAC 2010. I spend the journey reading through the evaluation from 2009. Delegates seem to have been as impressed as I was. At the meeting we discuss where we will be holding the next conference and share out roles and responsibilities. Debbi Boden from the University of Worcester (once described to me as the 'info-lit guru') is chair of the committee and is also chairing the meeting. It's great to meet everyone and I realise that I'm going to enjoy this! I will be one of the committee members responsible for sponsorship. This makes sense because my Mimas role involves exhibiting at conferences all over the

UK, so this experience should stand me in good stead for knowing and understanding what our sponsors want from us. The meeting is great and extremely lively – members of the LILAC committee don't seem to be the shy and retiring types. We also have a definite date and venue by the end of the meeting and an action plan of what to do before we next meet up. So for those of you who are interested in attending (and I highly recommend it: it's fun; you'll learn a lot; and, if you'll excuse the expression, you'll get to network your behind off). LILAC 2010 is going to be held in Limerick in the Republic of Ireland on 29–31 March 2010. Hope to see you there.