

METROBRIEFS

Fall/Winter 2006

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Wind-Downs – A Look Back

One of Metronet's hallmark programs is its Wind-Downs. These hour-long sessions, usually scheduled from 4:00 – 5:00 p.m., are held at various libraries in the area and provide library staff with opportunities for networking, for meeting colleagues from other libraries, and for learning about a new trend, library service, or a new library. Metronet's experience in sponsoring Wind-Downs has demonstrated that it is possible to condense some important concepts into a 40 minute presentation and allow time for questions and discussion.

During the past year, Metronet has offered 12 Wind-Downs. The past year's programs have attracted more than 230 library staff, some of whom have attended several of these presentations. The list of presentations (below) illustrates the diversity of topics discussed and attendance. Variations in attendance may be attributed not only to the degree of interest in a topic, but also to the location of the Wind-Down and convenient parking.



Date	Topic	Location	Attendance
7/14/2005	MLIS Program / ALA accreditation	College of St. Catherine	19
7/27/2005	Archie Givens & Marvin Anderson	Elmer Andersen Library	13
9/14/2005	MnLink Update	Merriam Park Branch Library	10
9/28/2005	Library/Workforce Center Collaboration	Roseville Public Library	12
10/6/2005	Hmong Cultural & Resource Center	Hmong Cultural & Resource Ctr	15
10/26/2005	Information Literacy w/ Tom Eland	Kennedy HS - Bloomington	12
11/9/2005	Electronic documents at MN Historical Society	MN History Center	14
1/11/2006	Blogs & Wikis	Merriam Park Branch Library	43
2/1/2006	Mill City Museum tour	Mill City Museum	14
3/29/2006	MINITEX Electronic Document Delivery	Roseville Public Library	25
4/18/2006	Medical Information Online	Allina Hospitals & Clinics	12
5/10/2006	Blogs & Wikis: Part 2	Roseville Public Library	47
12 Wind Downs - total attendance: 236			

In addition to the Wind-Down programs, Metronet focused its annual meeting on the topic of collaboration and advocacy and invited Ms. Eleanor Jo Rodger to make the keynote presentation. Ms. Rodger is the former executive director of the Urban Libraries Council. She gave an extraordinarily insightful and inspired presentation. The annual meeting was held at the Pohlad Auditorium in the new Minneapolis Central Library.

Metronet sponsored an all-day program on Internet Gaming and featured two experts on the subject from the University of Wisconsin. This program was very favorably received and attracted almost 150 librarians from the metropolitan area and beyond.

Finally, Metronet organized – in cooperation with MINITEX – a half-day presentation on OCLC's "Perceptions of Libraries" report. The author of the report, Cathy DeRosa, provided an overview of its findings and then led a spirited discussion of it. This program was also well-attended. (The Perceptions report may be found at <http://www.oclc.org/2005perceptions.htm>)

Continuing education and professional development are becoming more and more central to Metronet's mission of fostering collaboration among the types of libraries. The fact that librarians from various types of libraries attend Metronet programs enables them to realize that so many professional issues do not belong to a single type of library but have a far broader impact. Internet gaming, for example, is one such topic. The audience for this program was populated by school library media specialists, college and university librarians, and public librarians. While the content of Metronet's programs is important, perhaps equally important is providing librarians with the opportunity to meet and interact with colleagues from other types of libraries.

WebJunction Minnesota

It was several years ago that the Gates Foundation established a website to assist smaller libraries by providing online forums for the discussion of issues and concerns common to these libraries, including rural libraries, and by serving as an information source for library news, continuing education opportunities, and conferences. WebJunction was well-received by the audience for which it was intended, and after this initial period, Gates began to seek an agency which might become the permanent home of WebJunction. OCLC was selected as this agency and began to promote the use of the website and to expand its membership. WebJunction has become an online community where library staff can share ideas, solve problems, take online courses, and (according to OCLC) "have fun."



Several state libraries subscribe to WebJunction for all the libraries in those states. Until recently, Minnesota was not one of these subscribers. But thanks to a partnership formed by Metronet, MINITEX, and the Minnesota Department of State Library Services, WebJunction Minnesota is now available statewide (<http://mn.webjunction.org>). According to the website, WebJunction Minnesota is a one-stop shop for sharing best practices, policies and procedures, for discovering learning opportunities, and finding the expertise to promote high-quality library services. The site will contain not only local (Minnesota) information, but will provide access to the resources of the global WebJunction site.

While anyone can access WebJunction Minnesota, library staff are encouraged to register (it's free) because by registering staff will have access to the online courses that are available, will be able to post and reply to messages on file at the WebJunction Community Center, be able to receive private email messages, and will receive WebJunction's monthly newsletter that points to what's new on the site.

Some may ask why is Metronet a sponsor of WebJunction Minnesota when Metronet's service area encompasses only libraries in the seven-county metropolitan area? The answer is that we believe WebJunction Minnesota could be another means of lowering the silo-like walls that often seem to prevent libraries from collaborating more effectively and for sharing not just collections (something Minnesota's libraries do very well), but also staff expertise, best practices, and ideas for innovative services and programs. We encourage all libraries to give WebJunction Minnesota a try and invite all library staff to become registered members.

Metronet's Information Literacy Project (MILP)

The idea for the MILP grew out of Metronet's collaboration with the Minnesota Educational Media Organization (MEMO) in publicizing MEMO's nine recommended standards for information and technology literacy. The standards identified the competencies that all students should have if they are to succeed in the emerging digital economy and become life-long learners. While each of the nine standards is important, Metronet is focusing its efforts on two: the research process and responsible use of information technology. The research process encompasses how one goes about formulating a question, gathering, evaluating and organization information, drawing conclusions, and presenting one's findings. The second standard addresses the question of using information technology responsibly, that is, properly citing sources, plagiarism, understanding copyright, and various Internet safety issues.



Metronet believes that the standards should be incorporated into virtually all classes. In fact, the NCLB legislation states that students should be information literate upon completion of the eighth grade.

To assist a group of schools in building the two standards into their curricula, Metronet made a proposal to four St. Paul high schools (Como, Central, Harding and Highland Park) to incorporate the standards into selected 10th grade classes. Twenty-two teachers, along with the high school library media specialists, accepted the challenge with the result that students enrolled in the participating teachers' classes will receive information literacy instruction during the 2006-07 school year.

Partnering with the four high schools are the St. Paul Public Library system and the Metropolitan State University Library. Public library branch librarians and homework help center staff will assist the participating students become more knowledgeable concerning the research process, and librarians from Metropolitan State's library will assist the participating 10th grade teachers in their use of both printed and online resources. Collaboration among types of libraries – school, public, academic – is at the heart of Metronet's mission. We seek, wherever possible, to blur the lines separating libraries and assist them in becoming more user-centric.

For more information about the MILP, go to <http://www.metrolibraries.net> and click on "professional issues." Then click on Metronet Information Literacy Project under the "Innovation and New Technology" rubric.

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www.metrolibraries.net

If you haven't already visited the newly redesigned Metronet website, you're missing out on a lot of great information! Beginning in early 2006, Metronet staff began working with Factor of 4 in what we thought was a change in how our site *looked*, but in fact became a process to examine how our site could best serve our members – and the library community in general – for years to come. In the end we developed three main sections: Library-Wire, which features current news, events (both Metronet's and others), and the director's blog where Tom can share his thoughts on various topics; Professional issues, which includes articles and resources on best practices, staff development and continuing education, innovation and new technology, and more; and Resources, where you can find information on our databases (Authors & Illustrators, MN Web Directory), collaborative projects, and resources such as our Minnesota Library Jobline. The site also features quick links to resources no librarian should be without, such as ELM, the MnLINK Gateway, and featured sites that can help library staff in their everyday duties. And finally, in the coming months, Metronet will expand the use of our twiki area, where people can collaborate to create discussions and documents on current topics such as the Metronet Information Literacy Project or other issues of interest to the library community.

Visit <http://www.metrolibraries.net>, and feel free to send any comments or suggestions to information@metrolibraries.net. The site is designed to serve you, so your input is important!

Research Project Calculator

Several years ago, reference librarians at the University of Minnesota invented a system to help students learn how to budget their time in order to complete class assignments on time. The "Assignment Calculator" was a 12-step guide to the research process and assisted students by allocating more time for the important steps and less time for those deemed less significant. To use the Assignment Calculator, a student would go to the University Libraries' website, find the calculator button, and then enter the date on which his or her assignment was due. Software developed by library staff would then provide the student with timelines by which the various steps in the research process should be completed.



Subsequently, librarians at St. Cloud State University modified some of the steps in the research process to better meet the needs of their students. More recently two school library media specialists worked with the staff at the University of Minnesota to adapt the Calculator for use by high school students. This modified version, called the "Research Project Calculator," consists of just five steps and is accessible on MINITEX's ELM databases website (www.elm4you.org/research).

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The five steps are:

1. Formulate a research question
At this step the student would identify and then define his/her question or topic and make sure that he/she understood the assignment.
2. Gather information
This is where the student tries to identify the best sources of information on the topic, selects key words, records the information found, and cites the sources of that information.
3. List conclusions
What was learned from the information gathering? How will the student organize the information to make his/her case? In this step, the student will begin to outline the main points for his/her presentation.
4. Communicate
This is the step where the student prepares the presentation – essay, research paper, PowerPoint presentation, video, etc. Once a draft is completed, the student will review and edit it and prepare the final version.
5. Evaluate
At this step the student evaluates both the research process and the product of her/his research and completes the assignment on time.

Each step in the Research Project Calculator has its own deadline based on the number of days available until the assignment's due date. It is this feature that helps the student allocate the appropriate amount of time to each step in the process.

It is anticipated that the 10th grade St. Paul teachers participating in the Metronet Information Literacy Project will encourage their students to use the Calculator in completing their assignments and writing research reports.

Upcoming Fall/Winter 2006 Events

October is National Book Month!!

ALA Midwinter Meeting (Seattle, WA) – January 19-23 – visit www.ala.org

MEMO Midwinter Conference (Alexandria, MN) – January 28-29 – visit www.memoweb.org

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