

---

# How can current awareness services (CAS) be used in the world of library acquisitions?

---

*Ina Fourie*

---

## The author

Ina Fourie is a Professor in the Department of Information Science, University of Pretoria, South Africa.

---

## Keywords

Acquisitions, Librarians, Information services, World Wide Web

---

## Abstract

Acquisitions librarians operate in a dynamic environment requiring constant alertness to new developments. Current awareness services (CAS), especially those available for free through the World Wide Web (WWW), can help them to keep up with trends, publisher and vendor-related information, developments in a particular field of acquisitions, events important to professional career development, new titles and conference announcements. A number of WWW types of CAS are discussed and examples are provided. These include table of content services, automatic notification from tables of contents, book alerting services, SDI or alerting services available through aggregate services, e-newsletters, newspaper filtering services, monitoring through intelligent agents, Web site update notification services, Web pages with newsworthy content, discussion groups and electronic mailing lists, and personalised Web pages.

---

## Electronic access

The Emerald Research Register for this journal is available at  
<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/researchregister>

The current issue and full text archive of this journal is available at  
<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/1468-4527.htm>

## Introduction

Acquisitions form an important link in the cycle of publishing, selection, request and provision of materials for use in libraries. Acquisitions librarians are expected to acquire material as quickly and as economically as possible. At the same time they have to offer an effective service:

... keeping abreast of current developments within their own workplace is vital for staff, but they must also keep up-to-date with the outside world of publishers and suppliers – and a good deal is happening (Chapman, 2001).

Timely access to appropriate, quality information is often associated with power, progress and prosperity. This is essential in a dynamic work environment faced with rapid developments such as e-commerce, micro payments, and digital certificates for authentication. Changes in the publishing world and new acquisition procedures also have dramatic implications for acquisitions librarians. Pat Ensor's words (as quoted by Nesbeitt and Gordon, 2002) also apply to acquisitions librarians:

... whereas before I might have thought of it as "I don't have time to keep up", I started to realise I don't have time *not* to keep up!

The need for people to keep up with the latest developments in their areas of interest has long been recognised. Similarly the threat of information overload has been recognised. For a number of years library and information services (LIS) have been providing their users with current awareness services (CAS) to help them keep track of developments. Unlike retrospective search services, which search backwards for information published in a specific period, CAS cover information as it is published and then bring it to users' attention. In 1978 Martha Williams proclaimed the need for libraries to offer CAS, while Luhn made his first reference to the use of computers for CAS as far back as 1958 (Fourie, 2001). More recently, Martin and Metcalfe (2001) have reinforced the importance of librarians' continuing to embrace the model

---

Refereed article received 15 October 2002

Approved for publication 25 March 2003

This article is based on a paper delivered at the LIASA (Library and Information Association of South Africa) Eastern Cape, 1-4 October 2002.



principle of CAS, as a tool of relevance and as a function for remaining visible to their users. Nesbeitt and Gordon (2002) explicitly link the use of CAS to career development for librarians.

At first CAS were based on manual methods such as accession lists and indexing or abstracting bulletins. Over the last decade a number of electronic CAS have been introduced, and more recently a number of very useful services have become available through the World Wide Web (WWW).

Many publications have appeared on the general principles of CAS (e.g. Fourie, 2001; Hamilton, 1995; Jax and Van Houlson, 1988; Price and Burley, 1986; Stenstrom and Tegler, 1989; Whitehall, 1982, 1985). The core methods for providing CAS and the procedures to follow are well documented, for example by Behrens (1989), Fourie (2000, 2001), Hamilton (1995), Kemp (1979), Rowley (1985, 1994, 1998) and Whitehall (1982, 1985). Several editions of the *Handbook of Special Librarianship and Information Work* have also included contributions on CAS or the dissemination of information, for example Whitehall (1982). Several review articles have appeared in the *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, for example by Housman (1973). There are also a number of publications focussing on specific target groups such as academics or librarians in general. There are, however, no specific references to services suitable for acquisitions librarians. In the past doubts have in fact been expressed about the extent to which librarians and information professionals (LIS professionals) use CAS to stay abreast of trends and developments in their own fields (Stenstrom and Tegler, 1989).

This paper will set out to show how acquisitions librarians can use CAS available via the WWW to stay abreast of developments in their field. Many of these CAS are available free of charge or at reasonable prices. WWW CAS are especially important since many publications appear only in online format. Acquisitions librarians can furthermore use CAS to keep library users informed about new publications, Web resources, etc. (Chapman, 2000; Konshak, 2001).

## What are current awareness services?

Over the last few years many new terms have been coined for current awareness services, such as “alerting services” or “alerts”, to describe the former selective dissemination of information (SDI) services, CAS-IAS (current alerting service – individual alerting service) (Brunskill, 1997) and current alerting service – individual article supply (Davies *et al.*, 1998). The latter stress the importance of linking CAS to document supply services, which has added a new dimension to the provision of such services. The new terms do not, however, really indicate a significant change in the purpose of CAS. The only difference is that they are all electronically based. Since SDI services that have been used for many years are also electronically based, I have decided to retain the term “current awareness services” (CAS) for this paper.

In the past a current awareness service was described as:

A system, and often a publication, for notifying current documents to users of libraries and information services, e.g. selective dissemination of information, bulletin, indexing service, current literature (Prytherch, 1995).

It has also been defined as:

... a service which provides the recipient with information on the latest developments within the subject areas in which he or she has a specific interest or need to know (Hamilton, 1995).

In the Internet era we need to reconsider the definition of CAS. Fourie (2001), for example, defined CAS as:

A selection of one or more systems that provide notification of the existence of new entities added to the system's database or of which the system took note (e.g. documents, Web sites, events such as conferences, discussion groups, editions of newsletters). CAS automatically notify users or allow users to check periodically for updates. The entities can be specified according to users' subject interests or according to the type of entity (e.g. books or newsletters).

CAS are based on specific information needs, and are linked to those aspects of which the user (in this case the acquisitions librarian) should stay abreast. Obviously a collection of services can be used, and more than one topic of interest can be covered.

Each aspect of which the librarian needs to stay abreast can be covered by a user or interest profile.

CAS available via the WWW offer a number of advantages over their traditional printed counterparts: they are speedy and appear very frequently (some even appear on an hourly basis), they are very convenient to use from your desktop, and as the WWW is available 24 hours a day (depending on the reliability of your service provider), these services are also highly available (Nesbeitt and Gordon, 2002).

### **Life, role and functions of an acquisitions librarian**

The dynamics facing acquisitions librarians are clear from the scope of this conference, which covers topics such as collection development departments, the development of in-house Web-based acquisitions systems and the need for revitalising acquisitions.

Acquisitions librarians are faced with declining budgets, new forms of content and media, different methods of payment, new methods of making information available, and new ways of acquiring information. The constantly changing publishing and vendor market also adds to the complexity.

Henczel (2001, p. 254) says the following about the role of an acquisitions librarian:

The role of the acquisitions librarian is to locate and acquire the resources required for the library collection and for distribution to information users. These include hard-copy resources, such as books and serials, electronic resources such as books, serials, CD-ROMs, databases, online services and multimedia resources such as videotapes and audiotapes.

To do this effectively, a knowledge of a number of key issues is important, namely:

- budgeting and costing (including knowledge of local and international currency fluctuations, taxes and duties, and how different payment methods can impact on the total price of items ordered);
- the book trade and vendor environment (including taking note of new role players,

how they operate, new developments, etc.);

- key topics relevant to acquisitions, such as the formulation of an acquisitions policy, new methods of payment, developments concerning interlibrary loan and document delivery, technological changes, the outsourcing of acquisitions, collaborative acquisitions, selection procedures and criteria, changes in users' needs, pricing models, archiving and the impact of technology on staff (Chapman, 2000, 2001; Kovacs and Elkordy, 2000; Lambert, 1996; Schmidt, 1990; Slight-Gibney, 1999; Spiller, 2000); and
- new document titles (e.g. e-books, Web-based reference sources, serials and periodical titles, and other electronic sources and products) and tools for selection.

To do their work effectively acquisitions librarians also need to form a working relationship with publishers and vendors, monitor the expenditure of funds, maintain the required records and produce reports on the expenditure of funds.

Nesbeitt and Gordon (2002) see the need for librarians in general to keep current with happenings in their own field as a professional necessity, both in terms of their jobs, which require them to keep up to date with changes in the information world, and in terms of their professional goals:

With our busy schedules, why should we spend time keeping current? Paying attention to new developments in the field can provide fresh ideas to incorporate into our career paths, suggest articles or even books we might wish to write, or simply enhance our awareness of the present state and future of our profession (Nesbeitt and Gordon, 2002).

Apart from the practical value of CAS for acquisitions librarians in helping them to note new titles and to do their job better, they are essential to their career development:

An information professional who is knowledgeable about current events in the field comes across as interested in the profession as a whole, and interested more specifically in keeping up with new developments, including technological change (Nesbeitt and Gordon, 2002, p. 56).

Acquisitions librarians can monitor the professional literature and printed sources such as standard reference works, key journals, book reviews, exhibitions and trade fairs (Lambert, 1996). CAS can, however, give an added dimension – especially CAS available via the WWW.

### What can CAS offer?

CAS have many benefits for acquisitions librarians. Schwartz and Kimball (1999) offer an interesting overview of how the Internet in general can be used for law library serials acquisitions. Table I lists some suggestions, which are linked to the roles and responsibilities of acquisitions librarians.

Last but not least, acquisitions librarians can also use CAS for personal purposes and a bit of fun: how about the daily weather report, special travel offers, your horoscope or the latest daily joke?

CAS do not offer benefits only. There are also negative aspects such as information

overload, the time required to work through the information, the need to organise and manage the information provided by CAS, and cost implications. There are also no CAS that will cover all the information on a topic or subject of interest. If possible (and affordable), a combination of CAS should therefore be used. This can, however, lead to duplication of information, which again may waste your time. Setting up an interest profile, and evaluating and refining such a profile, can be time-consuming (Fourie, 2001). Often a CAS will provide descriptions of documents only (e.g. announcements of new books or new journal articles), and you will still have to get hold of the full-text document. This can take time if interlending is used. If you use a document delivery service or an online book ordering system (e.g. Amazon.com), it might, on the other hand, become very expensive.

### CAS methods available via the WWW

There is a wide variety of CAS methods and also specific products. The more

Table I

Benefits	Examples
Can keep track of new developments in a particular field(s) of interest	In-house Web-based acquisitions systems, collection development policies, e-publications, measuring tools for journal cancellations, in-house acquisition processes, ordering methods, etc.
Can keep track of new Web sites, discussion groups (listservs, Usenet groups), publications (e.g. books), etc.	Especially those of key or marginal relevance to acquisitions
Can keep track of trends in a particular field of interest (e.g. by means of the tables of contents of journals) (in this case the profiles should not be too specific)	E-commerce, security, ethical issues, etc.
Can keep track of new research projects in order to react in a timely manner	Digital libraries projects, JSTOR (Journal STORage), document delivery projects, etc.
Can keep track of Internet-related developments	Search engines, Web browsers, etc.
Can take note of daily news events of interest (e.g. as reported in newspapers)	New laws on value added tax, increase in inflation, etc.
Can take note of developments concerning vendors	Dialog, ISI, Ovid, SilverPlatter, STN, EBSCO, OCLC, Sabinet, etc.
Can take note of market-related developments	Noticing mergers, vendor and publisher acquisitions, etc.
Can take note of important opinion papers	Debate on access vs. ownership, free access to information, etc.
Can keep track of new titles for different document types	New books, CDs, videos, journal and serial titles, etc.
Can keep track with acquisitions tools available via the WWW	Review resources, publishers' Web sites, out of print dealers, etc.
Can support productivity in terms of research and publications	Acquisitions librarians need to be actively involved in action or academic research to refine their procedures on an ongoing basis.
Can keep track of forthcoming events	It is useful to monitor the Web sites of relevant organisations such as Aslib, ALA, IFLA, and CILIP for timely notification of calls for papers, workshops, etc.
Can get stimulation for creative new projects	Revitalising acquisitions in your own library environment, etc.
Can keep track of financial developments of interest	Currency rates, serious currency fluctuations, etc.

conventional or traditional methods include accession lists, newspaper clippings, current awareness bulletins, displays, abstracting bulletins, periodical circulation, photocopies of the tables of contents of periodicals, indexing and abstracting journals, internally produced abstracts and indexes, press clippings, personal notifications and selective dissemination of information (SDI). To this can be added electronic tables of contents, electronic newsletters, electronic news alerts, electronic notification systems, push services, pre-print archives and alerts offered by search engines. The traditional methods and how to implement them are well documented by Behrens (1989), Kemp (1979), Hamilton (1995), and Whitehall (1982). Kemp especially offers detailed notes on setting up CAS. More recently, electronic current awareness methods and especially table of contents services have been discussed by, among others, Cox and Hanson (1992), Davies *et al.* (1998), Hanson and Cox (1993), and Mountfield (1995). To this can be added discussions on using methods available via the Internet such as those by Mafa (2001), Van Brakel and Potgieter (1997) and Yeats (1999). Pedley (2001) also lists a number of useful sources for librarians in general, including *Free Pint*, *The Nutshell*, *LibraryHQ*, *Managing Information*, and *Information World Review*.

In this paper the emphasis is on CAS available via the World Wide Web (WWW or Web). These services have been discussed by Fourie (2000, 2001), Martin and Metcalfe (2001) and Nesbeitt and Gordon (2002). There is a whole range of services that go under different names (e.g. table of contents services, push technology, Webcasting, intelligent agents, e-zines and newswires). Some of the services are available for free or at a modest fee, while others are fairly expensive and definitely aimed at the corporate market. Some services provide automatic notification, for example via e-mail, while others require users to visit their sites on a regular basis. There are numerous CAS available via the Internet. Our focus will be on services suitable for acquisitions librarians. The following categories are covered: table of content services, automatic notification

from tables of contents, book alerting services and e-mail notification from publishers, SDI or alerting services available through aggregate services, alerting services available through search engines and meta-indexes, e-newsletters and e-zines, newspaper filtering services and newspapers, monitoring through intelligent agents, Web site update notification services, Web pages with newsworthy content, Weblogs, discussion groups and electronic mailing lists, and personalised Web pages. The services will be linked to the potential information needs of acquisitions librarians.

### Tables of contents services

Tables of contents services are not new to librarians; they are now, however, also available via the WWW. The WWW services are much more up-to-date than their printed or CD-ROM counterparts, and much more convenient to use. Tables of contents services allow users to scan the tables of contents of new as well as back-dated issues of journals. These are especially useful in keeping track of new publications on a variety of topics concerning acquisitions, trends, opinion papers, etc. Such services are offered mostly by aggregator services such as Ingenta or directly by publishers. Ingenta also offers a document delivery service. The advantage of aggregator services is the diversity of titles from various publishers that they offer. Users can subscribe to these services for free, or for a modest fee. Subscribers select the journal titles they are interested in and as soon as a new issue of a journal is available, they receive an e-mail message with the table of contents.

There are also services of a more limited scope that may be of interest to acquisitions librarians. BUBL (Bulletin Board for Libraries) offers tables of contents and abstracts for major Library and Information Science (LIS) journals, including acquisitions. BUBL does not, however, provide e-mail alerts so that you have to visit the site on a regular basis.

Current Contents (Social and Behavioral Sciences), EBSCO Alert, Emerald E-mail Alert Service, and ScienceDirect also offer excellent opportunities for acquisitions librarians to monitor their field. These

services, are, however, expensive to subscribe to, and will only be used in libraries where they are also suitable for other disciplines such as economics, engineering, telecommunications and management.

### **Automatic notification from tables of contents**

The latest literature can also be identified through the use of automatic notification from tables of contents as provided by publishers such as Elsevier ContentsDirect, Ideal: International Digital Electronic Access Library and SARA. Although there are many other publishers such as Audio Books: Chives Press, Blackwell, Cambridge University Press, De Gruyter, Institute for Scientific Information, Kluwer, Whitaker, Wiley, and Wilson, acquisitions librarians should focus on publishers relevant to their field of interest, namely acquisitions, and its related fields such as publishing or e-commerce.

Some publishers still do not offer automatic e-mail notification. They do, however, post the tables of contents on the journal's Web site, where you are free to check it on a regular basis for new articles of interest. Sometimes (e.g. as is the case with Searcher) some of the articles are available for free in full-text format. It is therefore useful to identify a list of journal titles of potential interest and to ensure that you check them either through a table of contents service, automatic updates from publishers or by regularly visiting the journal's Web site. Journal titles of interest to acquisitions librarians include *Against the Grain*, *Interlending and Document Supply*, *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, *Library Collections*, *Acquisitions and Technical Services*, *Online Information Review*, and *Ariadne* (Appendix 1). There are also many LIS journals of marginal relevance that may be worth scanning.

### **Book alerting services and e-mail notification from publishers and vendors**

New book or other document titles (e.g. videos, CDs) can be identified through automatic notification services according to an interest profile of broad categories. These services are offered by book alerting services such as Amazon.com, Barnes and

Noble, and Ingenta. Some of these services (e.g. Ingenta) and publishers such as ElsevierScience also offer free e-mail alerting services. Such services are extremely important to acquisitions librarians as a means of noting new titles in the disciplines for which they are purchasing documents. It is, however, also essential for them to monitor new LIS publications. ElsevierScience, for example, covers a number of useful LIS publications from Academic Press, JAI and Pergamon. Other useful LIS publishers include The Library Association, Aslib, Information Today and Hawthorn Press. Schwartz and Kimball (1999) give a good overview of publishers and vendors relevant to law librarians. Journal publishers also offer notification services on new journal and serial titles.

Publishers (of books, journals and other document types) can be identified through a number of resources created especially for the use of acquisitions librarians. These include The Bookwire Index (Publishers) and Directory of Publishers and Vendors (available via AcqWeb). More detail about these can be found in Arlen *et al.* (1998). The addresses of just a few publishers are listed in Appendix 2.

### **SDI or alerting services available through aggregate services**

SDI services (also known as alerts or alerting services) involve the automatic notification of users when new records are added to the database. The records are matched against a search strategy reflecting the user's interest profile. In the case of SDI services, the search strategy is often referred to as the search profile (Fourie, 2001; Kemp, 1979). Acquisitions librarians can set up any number of profiles concerning acquisitions, for example on pricing models or selection criteria and processes.

There are a variety of SDI services available through aggregate services such as Emerald, Dialog, SilverPlatter, ScienceDirect, or EbscoHost. These services are very useful for monitoring the literature in the field of acquisitions. Sometimes you can also monitor the latest editions of selected journal titles. These services are, however, expensive to subscribe to and will only be used if also applicable to other disciplines supported by

the library. Databases such as Library and Information Science Literature, Information Science Abstracts, Library Literature and, to a limited extent, ERIC are especially useful for acquisitions librarians.

### **Alerting services available through search engines and meta-indexes**

NorthernLight is one of the very few search engines offering a free e-mail alerting service. It is based on one or more interest profiles, and whenever the search engine picks up new sites relevant to the profile, the user is notified. Steven Bell's Keeping up Page is also a useful meta-index.

These services can be used in addition to SDI services available through aggregate services to cover acquisitions-related topics or vendor-related developments, and are especially useful if the other services cannot be afforded.

### **E-newsletters and e-zines**

E-zines are messages or publications, on a specific topic or selection of topics, which are available on the WWW. Some e-zines are available for free and are compiled and distributed by enthusiasts. You can also subscribe to a number of newsletters and have new items delivered via e-mail (e.g. Search Engine Report and newsletters from The Internet Scout Project). Such newsletters can be very information rich, especially if they focus on the topic of interest, namely acquisitions. They can notify you of new Web sites, articles of interest, or an overview of new developments, products, search engines, etc. (Appendix 3).

Acquisitions librarians might especially be interested in the following e-newsletters and e-zines (most of them are of a more general LIS interest, and do not focus on acquisitions only): First Monday, CurrentCites, The Internet Scout Project, Search Engine Report, Internet Resources Newsletter, Librarians Index to the Internet: LII New This Week Mailing List, Academic Newswire (Library Journal), Chronicle of Higher Education, ITI Newslink (Information Today Inc.), KMWorld NewsLinks (Knowledge Management), Library Juice and NewsAgent for librarians. The Technical

Services Special Interest Section of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) publishes Newsletter on Serials Pricing Issues, and Technical Services Law Librarian. These newsletters can help acquisitions librarians to stay abreast of developments and publications in the field, and of IT-related issues of importance to acquisitions. Newsletters from vendors and aggregator services such as Dialog and BIOSIS are also very useful.

You can subscribe to most of these newsletters for automatic e-mail notification. There are, however, also those you need to visit on a regular basis. The latter often provide an e-mail reminder service to check the Web site whenever the site is updated.

### **News filtering services and newspapers**

Acquisitions librarians need to stay abreast of daily developments, especially new laws affecting copyright or access to information, inflation, currency fluctuations, etc. Newspapers available on the WWW or newspaper filtering services are excellent resources in this regard. National newspapers (e.g. *The Sunday Times*, *Beeld*, *Cape Argus*, *Media24*) and international newspapers (e.g. *New York Times* or *The Times* of London) can be monitored. Main headings and events are available for free from the newspaper Web sites, while some, such as the New York Times, also offer a limited free e-mail notification service according to broad topics.

News filtering services such as CRAYON, MyYahoo!, NewsAlert, and NewsPage can also be very useful for scanning a wider selection of newspapers. Calishain (2002) reviews the use of a selection of newspapers and news filtering services.

### **Monitoring through intelligent agents**

Intelligent agents are programs that learn from what you do while you are on the Internet. They remember the topics you searched for, notice the types of information resources you prefer, etc. Martin and Metcalfe (2001) offer a fairly detailed discussion of the use of intelligent agents in CAS.

There are different types of systems based on intelligent agents, such as recommendation systems (e.g. Amazon.com which recommends books and music titles)

and notifiers. Notifiers notify you of updates to selected Web sites, or they allow you to specify a search strategy for selected search engines. Each time new Web sites complying with the search strategy are picked up, you will be notified. Examples of notification services include EoMonitor, The Informant and Daily Diff. Any Web site of interest to acquisitions librarians can be covered in this way.

Tan *et al.* (2001) discuss a program, WebMon, that they developed to monitor the updating of Web pages. Notifiers can be used to monitor the Web sites of vendors or other role players that do not offer automatic e-newsletters. It is the responsibility of acquisitions librarians to identify such sites. Arlen *et al.* (1998) and Kovacs and Elkordy (2000) offer useful suggestions. There are also sites offering their own update notification services.

### **Web site update notification services or automatic notification**

There are also Web sites that allow you to subscribe to an automatic notification for Web site updates. Whenever changes are made to the site, you automatically receive an e-mail message. These can also be considered current awareness tools. They are useful for taking note of calls for conference papers, workshop announcements, etc.

### **Web pages with newsworthy content**

The following category includes mostly sites that need to be visited on a regular basis, although in a dynamic Web environment they may, of course, add e-mail notification to their sites at any time.

Librarians have created a number of Web pages to keep them informed about new developments relevant to their fields of interest, and to the Internet as a whole. News of general interest can be picked up through news filtering services and by monitoring news Web sites. Acquisitions librarians, however, also need to monitor Web sites of professional interest. The following Web sites cover LIS issues in general and acquisitions-related issues: American Libraries Online, Cites and Insights: Crawford at Large, LibraryHQ.com, Library Planet, and NewBreed Librarian. A number of these pages were designed to act as current

awareness-based library-oriented Web pages and are known as Weblogs (discussed in the following section). The Web site of the Committee on Relations with Information Vendors (CRIV), for example, regularly posts up-to-date information about the resolution of complaints against legal publishers and vendors, while LIBLICENSE offers guidelines on the licensing of digital information to help with the licensing agreements that accompany new electronic resources. Some of these services offer e-mail updates, but to subscribed members only.

AcqWeb (Library and Information Science resources: acquisitions sites) is certainly one of the most important sites to monitor. Informata.com also offers a selection of online databases designed to assist libraries in areas such as collection development and reference. They also offer LIBRIS 2020, an acquisitions management tool.

For those interested in newsworthy events and developments concerning the WWW, the following sites may be of interest: Free Pint and Neat New Stuff I Found this Week (Marylaine Block).

Regular visits to Web sites created by other libraries to support their acquisitions librarians might also prove very useful.

Review sites are certainly worth monitoring. Arlen *et al.* (1998) include a very useful list of sites such as Bookwire, Fiction Digest and Rettig on Reference. They also list newspaper review sites such as Boston Globe Book Reviews and the New York Times Book Review.

In certain cases it might be necessary to monitor the sites of antiquarian and out-of-print dealers, bookstores and bookseller sites, and sites on awards, core lists and bibliographies. Such sites are essential for the identification of new document titles, and would be especially useful if supported by automatic e-mail notification. Arlen *et al.* (1998) offer suggestions on such sites. Kovacs and Elkordy (2000) offer a detailed list of sites important to those building a digital collection.

A final category of sites with content worth monitoring are those of key organisations such as CILIP, American Library Association, American Society of Indexers, Society of Indexers (UK) and United Kingdom Online User Group – there are numerous possibilities.



## Weblogs

Acquisitions librarians can also create their own Weblogs, or use those created for librarians in general. Weblogs appear very similar to personal Web sites. However, they differ in format, purpose and the frequency of updates. They allow the author to make frequent updates, usually on a daily basis, in short postings, which may be brief thoughts, journal entries, or links to other Web sites or articles. The postings normally appear in reverse chronological order, so that it is easy to note the latest postings (Nesbeitt and Gordon, 2002).

Weblogs can be visited at regular intervals. Some, however, offer, automatic e-mail messages.

More information on Weblogs can be obtained from the Weblog FAQ at [www.robotwisdom.com/weblogs](http://www.robotwisdom.com/weblogs). The following librarian-maintained Weblogs may also be of interest to acquisitions librarians: LibLog, Library News Daily, LISNews, NewBreed Librarian and especially The Virtual Acquisition Shelf and News Desk.

Software for creating Weblogs can be obtained for free from Weblog companies such as Blogger and GrokSoup.

## Discussion groups and electronic mailing lists

The value of informal methods of communication and the sharing of related problems with colleagues is well proven. There are many discussion lists of interest to acquisitions librarians, as well as discussion lists of a more general nature that may prove of interest. The latter include New-List and NewJour. Serialist, Acqonet, and Innopac are specifically important to acquisitions librarians, while there are also those lists aimed at specific types of acquisitions (e.g. for law libraries), such as Lawacq, Newlawbooks-L, Hein-subs-L. Kovacs and Elkordy (2000) offer a detailed list of discussion lists and newsgroups concerning collection development. These include Buslib-L, COLLDV-L, Libref-L, and PUBLIB. Condrón and Tittlemore (2001) discuss the importance of discussion groups and mailing lists to cataloguers, for example.

## Personalised Web pages

There is a growing interest in customised services which started in 1998 with the Web directory Yahoo! offering a customised version of its Web site, called My Yahoo! Other search engines and directories offer similar services, for example My Excite. A number of libraries are currently also working on "MyLibrary" projects. Martin and Metcalfe (2001) quote Cohen *et al.* as saying:

... personalisation of services is the key to institutional engagement for the digital library.

Personalised Web sites such as those offered by My Yahoo! can be very useful in keeping track of currency rates, news headlines, and on a much lighter note, thoughts of the day, your diet or horoscope – not to mention special tariffs on flights for conference attendance or specials on holiday plans!

## Informal communications and methods

Although this paper focuses on the value of Web CAS, the importance of informal traditional methods in keeping up with developments should never be underestimated. Pedley (2001) emphasises the importance of such methods:

But we shouldn't under-estimate the importance of playing an active part in the information world – attending evening meetings, seminars, conferences, training courses or exhibitions.

## Setting up the service

Web CAS can be run on an individual or personalised basis, or they can be run for a group of acquisitions librarians (e.g. those belonging to a large academic LIS, or an interest group for acquisitions librarians). Such a service can be run through a Web page with links to sites that need to be monitored on a regular basis. It might also be worthwhile considering personal CAS Web pages. The success of such services will depend on the careful selection of relevant services and the sites to monitor, which again will require a sound knowledge of the interests and needs of acquisitions librarians. John Harrison's Favorite Library Work Tools and AcqWeb offer excellent points of departure for identifying such tools.

Fourie (2001) offers more detail on setting up CAS for the WWW and on traditional setups. It is very important to monitor the value and usefulness of such services on a

regular basis, and to make changes as necessary.

### How to deal with information overload

Librarians are far more aware of the problem and effects of information overload than other users. It can lead to anxiety and depression, and feelings of despair. Although it is extremely important to keep track of developments you need to realise that you have to limit such information to what is really necessary, and to information that will help to make a difference: be that a difference to the quality of the library collection or digital library, your job performance or your general career development. Taking note of things is important, but if you are not using the information for some purpose, you should reconsider your current awareness efforts.

### Conclusion

The growth in CAS available via the WWW, the growing pressures of a dynamic publishing world and increased user expectations have made it essential for acquisitions librarians to reconsider their use of CAS. There are numerous examples of CAS available for free via the WWW. If used appropriately these could contribute to the job performance and career development of acquisitions librarians.

### References

- Arlen, S., Lindell, A., Nanji, R. and Seale, C. (1998), "Web tools for collection managers", *Collection Building*, Vol. 17 No. 2, pp. 65-70.
- Behrens, S.J. (1989), "Current awareness services: in-house methods and commercially available products", *Mousaion*, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 58-75.
- Brunskill, K. (1997), "The issues surrounding the provision of CASIAS service in libraries", *Interlending and Document Supply*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 57-63.
- Calishain, T. (2002), "Monitoring the news online", *Online*, Vol. 26 No. 4, pp. 24-8.
- Chapman, L. (2000), "Acquisitions: the emerging electronic paradigm", in Gorman, G.E. (Ed.), *International Yearbook of Library and Information Management: 2000-2001: Collection Management*, Library Association, London, pp. 175-98.
- Chapman, L. (2001), *Managing Acquisitions in Library and Information Services*, Library Association, London.
- Cohen, S., Ferreira, J., Horne, A., Kibbee, B., Mistlebauer, H. and Smith, A. (2000), "MyLibrary: personalized electronic services in the Cornell University Library", *D-Lib Magazine*, April, available at: [www.dlib.org/dlib/april00/mistlebauer/04mistlebauer.html](http://www.dlib.org/dlib/april00/mistlebauer/04mistlebauer.html)
- Condrón, L. and Tittmore, C.P. (2001), "Listservs and listprocs for cataloguers", *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly*, Vol. 32 No. 3, pp. 25-9.
- Cox, J. and Hanson, T. (1992), "Setting up an electronic current awareness service", *Online*, Vol. 16 No. 4, pp. 36-43.
- Davies, M., Boyle, F. and Osborne, S. (1998), "CAS-IAS services: where are we now?", *The Electronic Library*, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 37-48.
- Fourie, I. (2000), "Empowering users: current awareness on the Internet", *The Electronic Library*, Vol. 17 No. 6, pp. 379-88.
- Fourie, I. (2001), "Current awareness services in an electronic age – the whole picture", in Scammel, A. (Ed.), *Handbook of Information Management*, 8th ed., Aslib, London, pp. 274-306.
- Hamilton, F. (1995), *Current Awareness, Current Techniques*, Gower, Aldershot.
- Hanson, T. and Cox, J.A. (1993), "Comparative review of two-diskette-based current awareness services: current contents on diskette and reference update", *Database*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 73-81.
- Henczel, S. (2001), "Acquiring information resources for the special library", in Scammel, A. (Ed.), *Handbook of Information Management*, 8th ed., Aslib, London, pp. 254-73.
- Housman, E.M. (1973), "Selective dissemination of information", *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, Vol. 8, pp. 221-41.
- Jacobs, N. and Huxley, L. (2002), "From static content to dynamic communities: the evolution of networked educational resources", *Online Information Review*, Vol. 26 No. 1, pp. 19-29.
- Jax, J.J. and Van Houlson, C. (1998), "A current-awareness service for faculty and staff: the Stout experience", *College and Research Libraries*, Vol. 49 No. 6, pp. 515-22.
- Kemp, A. (1979), *Current Awareness Services*, Bingley, London.
- Konshak, P. (2001), "Coding a custom e-mail alert service for new books", *Computers in Libraries*, Vol. 21 No. 2, pp. 24-8.
- Kovacs, D.K. and Elkordy, A. (2000), "Collection development in cyberspace: building an electronic library", *Library Hi Tech*, Vol. 18 No. 4, pp. 335-59.
- Lambert, J. (1996), *Information Resources Selection*, Aslib, London.
- Mafa, N.C. (2001), "Current awareness services for Web-based scholarly information services", MInf-dissertation, Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg.
- Martin, P. and Metcalfe, M. (2001), "Informing knowledge workers", *Reference Services Review*, Vol. 29 No. 4, pp. 267-75.
- Mountfield, H.M. (1995), "Electronic current awareness service: a survival tool for the information age?", *The Electronic Library*, Vol. 13 No. 4, pp. 317-20.

- Nesbeitt, S.L. and Gordon, R.S. (2002), *The Information Professional's Guide to Career Development Online*, Information Today, Medford, NJ.
- O'Leary, M. (2001), "Web scout services open new territory", *Online*, Vol. 25 No. 6, pp. 78-9.
- Pedley, P. (2001), "Keeping up to date", *Managing Information*, Vol. 7 No. 10, pp. 53-5.
- Price, C. and Burley, R.A. (1986), "An evaluation of information sources for current awareness on occupational diseases", *Journal of Information Science*, Vol. 12 No. 5, pp. 247-55.
- Prytherch, R. (comp.) (1995), *Harrod's Librarians Glossary: 9,000 Terms Used in Information Management, Library Science, Publishing, the Book Trades, and Archive Management*, 8th ed., Gower, Aldershot.
- Rowley, J.E. (1985), "Bibliographic current awareness services: a review", *Aslib Proceedings*, Vol. 37 No. 9, pp. 345-53.
- Rowley, J. (1994), "Revolution in current awareness services", *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, Vol. 26 No. 1, pp. 7-14.
- Rowley, J. (1998), "Current awareness in an electronic age", *Online and CD-ROM Review*, Vol. 22 No. 4, pp. 277-9.
- Schmidt, K.A. (1990), *Understanding the Business of Library Acquisitions*, American Library Association, Chicago, IL.
- Schwartz, M.J. and Kimball, S.J. (1999), "The Internet: an essential tool for law library serials acquisitions", in Slight-Gibney, N. (Ed.), *Periodical Acquisitions and the Internet*, Haworth Press, Binghamton, NY, pp. 93-103.
- Slight-Gibney, N. (1999), *Periodical Acquisitions and the Internet*, Haworth Press, Binghamton, NY.
- Spiller, D. (2000), *Providing Materials for Library Users*, Library Association, London.
- Stenstrom, P.E. and Tegler, P. (1988), "Current awareness in librarianship", *Library Trends*, Vol. 36 No. 4, pp. 725-39.
- Tan, B., Foo, S. and Hui, S-C. (2001), "Web information monitoring: an analysis of Web page updates", *Online Information Review*, Vol. 25 No. 1, pp. 6-18.
- Yeats, R. (1999), "Have you heard the library news? Personalised net alerts for librarians", *Aslib Proceedings*, Vol. 51 No. 5, pp. 137-43.
- Van Brakel, P.A. and Potgieter, H.C. (1997), "Creating World-Wide Web bulletin boards to enhance current awareness services", *South African Journal of Library and Information Science*, Vol. 65 No. 2, pp. 124-9.
- Whitehall, T. (1982), "Dissemination of information", in Anthony, L.J. (Ed.), *Handbook of Special Librarianship and Information Work*, 5th ed., Aslib, London.
- Whitehall, T. (1985), "Current awareness in education: an evaluation of Trent Polytechnic's education news", *Aslib Proceedings*, Vol. 37, pp. 355-70.
- Williams, M.E. (1978), "Online retrieval: today and tomorrow", *Online Review*, Vol. 24 No. 4, pp. 353-66.

## Appendix 1. List of journal titles important to acquisitions librarians

*Against the Grain*: [www.against-the-grain.com](http://www.against-the-grain.com)  
*Ariadne*: [www.ariadne.ac.uk](http://www.ariadne.ac.uk)  
*The Bottom Line*: [www.emeraldinsight.com/bl.htm](http://www.emeraldinsight.com/bl.htm)  
*Collection Building*: [www.emeraldinsight.com/cb.htm](http://www.emeraldinsight.com/cb.htm)  
*Interlending and Document Supply*: [www.emeraldinsight.com/ilds.htm](http://www.emeraldinsight.com/ilds.htm)  
*Journal of Academic Librarianship*: [www.elsevier.com](http://www.elsevier.com)  
*Library Collections, Acquisitions and Technical Services*: [www.elsevier.com](http://www.elsevier.com)  
*Online Information Review*: [www.emeraldinsight.com/oir.htm](http://www.emeraldinsight.com/oir.htm)  
*Searcher*: [www.infotoday.com/searcher/default.htm](http://www.infotoday.com/searcher/default.htm)

## Appendix 2. List of URLs

Academic Newswire (*Library Journal*): [www.libraryjournal.com/newswire/newswire.asp](http://www.libraryjournal.com/newswire/newswire.asp)  
Acqweb: <http://acqweb.library.vanderbilt.edu>  
Amazon.com: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)  
American Library Association: [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)  
American Libraries Online: [www.ala.org/alonline](http://www.ala.org/alonline)  
American Society of Indexers: [www.asindexing.org](http://www.asindexing.org)  
Aslib: [www.aslib.com](http://www.aslib.com)  
Audio books: Chivers Press: [www.chivers.co.uk](http://www.chivers.co.uk)  
Barnes and Noble: [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com)  
Beeld: [www.beeld.com](http://www.beeld.com)  
Blackwell: [www.blackwell.com](http://www.blackwell.com)  
Blogger: [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)  
The Bookwire Index (Publisher): [www.bookwire.com/bookwire/publishers/publishers.html](http://www.bookwire.com/bookwire/publishers/publishers.html)  
Bulletin Board for Libraries (BUBL): [www.bubl.ac.uk/journals/lis](http://www.bubl.ac.uk/journals/lis)  
Cambridge University Press: [www.journals.cup.org](http://www.journals.cup.org)  
Cape Argus: [www.iol.co.za/html/frame\\_argus.php](http://www.iol.co.za/html/frame_argus.php)  
Chronicle of Higher Education: <http://chronicle.com>  
CILIP: [www.cilip.org](http://www.cilip.org)  
Cites and Insights: Crawford at Large: [cical.home.att.net](http://cical.home.att.net)  
CRAYON: <http://crayon.net>

Current Cites: <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/CurrentCites>  
 Current Contents: Social and Behavioural Sciences:  
[www.isinet.com/isi/products/cc/editions/ccsbs](http://www.isinet.com/isi/products/cc/editions/ccsbs)  
 Daily Diff: [www.dailydiff.com](http://www.dailydiff.com)  
 De Gruyter: [www.deGruyter.de/journals/journals.html](http://www.deGruyter.de/journals/journals.html)  
 Dialog: [www.dialog.com](http://www.dialog.com)  
 Directory of Publishers and Vendors:  
<http://acqweb.library.vanderbilt.edu/acqweb/pubr.html>  
 EoMonitor: [www.emonitor.com](http://www.emonitor.com)  
 EBSCO Alert: <http://eadmin.epnet.com/ealert/about.htm>  
 Elsevier Contents Direct: [www.elsevier.com](http://www.elsevier.com)  
 Emerald E-mail Alert Service:  
[www.emeraldinsight.com/resourcers/email/index.htm](http://www.emeraldinsight.com/resourcers/email/index.htm)  
 First Monday: [www.firstmonday.dk](http://www.firstmonday.dk)  
 Free Pint: [www.freepint.com](http://www.freepint.com)  
 GrokSoup: [www.groksoup.com](http://www.groksoup.com)  
 Hawthorn Press: [www.hawthornpress.com](http://www.hawthornpress.com)  
 IFLA: [www.ifla.org](http://www.ifla.org). Ideal: International Digital Electronic Access Library:  
[www.ifla.org](http://www.ifla.org)  
 The Informant: <http://informant.dartmouth.edu/>  
 Information Today:  
[www.informationtoday.com](http://www.informationtoday.com)  
 Informata: [www.informata.com/](http://www.informata.com/)  
 Ingenta: [www.ingenta.com](http://www.ingenta.com)  
 Institute for Scientific Information:  
[www.isinet.com](http://www.isinet.com)  
 Internet Resources Newsletter:  
[www.hw.ac.uk/libWWW.irn.irn.html](http://www.hw.ac.uk/libWWW.irn.irn.html)  
 The Internet Scout Project and Net-Happenings:  
<http://scout.cs.wisc.edu/scout/report/index.html>  
 ITI Newslink (Information Today Inc.):  
[www.infotoday.com/newslink/](http://www.infotoday.com/newslink/)  
 KMWorld newsLinks (Knowledge Management): [www.kmworld.com/newslinks](http://www.kmworld.com/newslinks)  
 Kluwer: [www.wkap.nl](http://www.wkap.nl)  
 LIBLICENSE: [www.library.yale.edu/~license/mailling-list.shtml](http://www.library.yale.edu/~license/mailling-list.shtml)  
 LibLog: [www.redwoodcity.org/library/news/liblog/index.html](http://www.redwoodcity.org/library/news/liblog/index.html)  
 Librarian's Index to the Internet: LII New This Week Mailing List:  
<http://lii.org/search/file/maillinglist>  
 The Library Association: [www.la-hq.org.uk](http://www.la-hq.org.uk)  
 LibraryHQ.com: [www.libraryhq.com](http://www.libraryhq.com)  
 Library Juice: [www.libr.org/juice](http://www.libr.org/juice)

Library News Daily: [www.lights.com/scott/](http://www.lights.com/scott/)  
 Library Planet: [www.libraryplanet.com](http://www.libraryplanet.com)  
 LISNews: [www.lisnews.com](http://www.lisnews.com)  
 Media24: [www.media24.co.za](http://www.media24.co.za)  
 My Excite: <http://my.excite.com/>  
 My Yahoo!: <http://my.yahoo.com/>  
 Neat New Stuff I Found This Week (Marylaine Block): [www.netnewstoday.com](http://www.netnewstoday.com)  
 Newsletter on Serials Pricing Issues:  
[www.lib.unc.edu/prices/](http://www.lib.unc.edu/prices/)  
 New York Times: [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)  
 NewBreed Librarian:  
[www.newbreedlibrarian.org](http://www.newbreedlibrarian.org)  
 NewJour: [gort.ucsd.edu/newjour](http://gort.ucsd.edu/newjour)  
 NewsAgent for Libraries: [www.sbu.ac.uk/litc/newsagent](http://www.sbu.ac.uk/litc/newsagent)  
 NewsAlert: [www.newsalert.com](http://www.newsalert.com)  
 Northern Light: [www.nlsearch.com](http://www.nlsearch.com)  
 SARA: [www.tandf.co.uk](http://www.tandf.co.uk)  
 ScienceDirect: [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)  
 Search Engine Report: <http://searchenginewatch.com/>  
 SilverPlatter: [www.silverplatter.com](http://www.silverplatter.com)  
 Steven Bell's Keeping Up Page: <http://staff.philau.edu/bells/keepup>  
 The Sunday Times: [www.suntimes.co.za](http://www.suntimes.co.za)  
 Technical Services Law Librarian:  
[www.aallnet.org/sis/tssis/tsll/index.htm](http://www.aallnet.org/sis/tssis/tsll/index.htm)  
 The Times of London: [www.the-times.co.uk](http://www.the-times.co.uk)  
 United Kingdom Online User Group:  
[www.ukolug.org.uk](http://www.ukolug.org.uk)  
 Weblog FAQ: [www.robotwisdom.com/weblogs](http://www.robotwisdom.com/weblogs)  
 Whitaker LibWeb: [www.whitaker.co.uk/libweb1.htm](http://www.whitaker.co.uk/libweb1.htm)  
 Wiley: [www.interscience.wiley.com](http://www.interscience.wiley.com)  
 Wilson: [www.hwwilson.com](http://www.hwwilson.com)

### **Appendix 3. Guidelines for subscribing to news and discussion groups as well as selected e-newsletters**

#### **ACQNET**

Send a message to  
[listserv@listserv.appstate.edu](mailto:listserv@listserv.appstate.edu) that reads:  
 SUBSCRIBE ACQNET-L Firstname  
 Lastname

#### **HEIN-SUBS-L**

Send a message to  
[listserv@lawlib.wuacc.edu](mailto:listserv@lawlib.wuacc.edu) that reads:  
 SUBSCRIBE HEIN-SUBS-L Firstname  
 Lastname

#### INNOPAC

Send a message to

listserv@maine.maine.edu that reads:

SUBSCRIBE INNOPAC Firstname

Lastname

#### NEWJOUR

Complete the online form [http://](http://gort.ucsd.edu/newjour/subscribe.html)

[gort.ucsd.edu/newjour/subscribe.html](http://gort.ucsd.edu/newjour/subscribe.html)

#### NEWLAWBOOKS-L

Send a message to

listserv@lawlib.wuacc.edu that reads:

#### SUBSCRIBE NEWLAWBOOKS-L

Firstname Lastname

Newsletter on Serials Pricing

Send a message to listproc@unc.edu that

reads:

SUBSCRIBE PRICES Firstname

Lastname

#### SERIALIST

Send a message to listserv@list.uvm.edu

that reads:

SUBSCRIBE SERIALIST Firstname

Lastname