



Academic librarians' research role > Information explosion > M-libraries > Monitoring solutions > The Wildlife Trusts online

welcome



We're already planning our 2013 Group Conference, buoyed up by the success of the 2012 event which so many of you attended.

The spotlight will be on cloud computing and we will be releasing a call for papers very soon and hope you'll get involved whether speaking or attending.

Warm regards,

Catherine Dhanjal, Managing Editor

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Many of you are planning your 2013 subscriptions. We're pleased to keep our rates at 2012 levels (£70 per annum) and await your instructions. Please note our new address for editorial/subscriptions is: 103 Bath Road, Willsbridge, Bristol, BS30 6ED, UK. The email address and phone number are unchanged.

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Supporting the experimental & innovative m-library community



Jo Alcock, researcher at Evidence Base at Birmingham City University, delves into the explosion in growth of mobile technologies and reports on libraries' use of such technologies to deliver resources and services

By the end of 2011, there were almost 6 billion mobile-cellular subscriptions, corresponding to a global penetration of 86 percent¹. The growth of mobile technologies in society has led to both increased opportunities and increased expectations for libraries to use mobile technologies to deliver resources and services. Most of the work in this area (which we refer to in this article as m-libraries) has been experimental in nature. There have been some innovative projects and pockets of good practice, though much of this is unreported.

mobile is here to stay and will continue to gain in popularity

Mobile infrastructure for libraries

In order to address this issue and improve sharing of best practice, JISC funded a programme of work on Mobile Infrastructure for Libraries² which ran from November 2011 until September 2012. The programme included five institutional innovation projects and one community support project.

The institutional projects were:

- LearnMore (City University London) — developing a mobile app version of the popular lawbore™ service for law students
- MACON (Open University) — mobilising academic content online, a project working to improve access to

resources via a mobile interface for EBSCO Discovery Service

- M-biblio (University of Bristol) — developing a mobile app for adding and storing bibliographic references
- MoPED (City University London) — investigating use of public electronic displays for engaging with users' mobile devices
- PhoneBooth (London School of Economics and Political Science) — enabling access to the Charles Booth map archives via mobile devices

M-library community support project

The community support project, managed by Evidence Base at Birmingham City University in collaboration with Owen Stephens Consulting, aimed to support both the projects within the programme and the wider m-libraries community. It achieved this by focusing on two main areas of work: evidence gathering and community building.

1. Evidence gathering

Throughout the project, the team collected resources using a number of different social bookmarking tools. We also encouraged others to add to the list using the mlibs tag, and collected these via a combined RSS feed of Delicious, Pinboard and Diigo³. The items from this RSS feed were displayed in the sidebar of the blog and we also shared relevant resources via blog posts and tweets (using the #mlibs tag).

The resources included blog posts, presentations, conference papers, articles and reports from all areas of mobile technologies in libraries (our core focus was academic libraries in UK but we also included resources

of interest outside this).

In addition, we ran a fact-finding survey at the beginning of the project and repeated it at the end of the project. The information from the surveys helped us to identify trends in use of mobile technologies in libraries and consider barriers to implementation. The project presented an overview of this research⁴ at the 4th International M-libraries Conference in September 2012.

2. Community building

In order to encourage sharing of best practice in the long-term, the project helped to build connections and stimulate discussion in the following ways:

- Information sharing event



- ▶ - Project blog
 - Social media (i.e. Twitter)
 - Community website
- Feedback from the community via the event and social media communications highlighted the value of face-to-face events for supporting sharing within the community. Members of the m-library community also stressed the importance of being able to access information to inform practice, which led to development to the pathways to best practice guides.

Pathways to Best Practice

The Pathways to Best Practice guides were produced by the project team, based on the collation of information throughout the project. The guides are all available at www.m-libraries.info/pathways-to-best-practice-guides/ and each is outlined below to share some of the ideas you may want to investigate.

1. Introducing users to the library

Mobile devices can be used in a number of different ways to support an introduction to the library, either within induction sessions or for self-guided introductions. Ways of using mobile technologies to support this include using mobile devices within induction sessions (e.g. treasure/scavenger hunts), to deliver tours, offering introductory guides via mobile devices, or using QR codes or augmented reality on physical handouts to enhance the experience with electronic content. For an interesting approach to inductions, see North Carolina State University's scavenger hunt⁵ using iPod touches and Evernote.

2. Helping onsite users — roving support

Helping users at their point of need via roving support has been greatly enhanced by developments in mobile technologies, enabling library staff to use devices such as web-enabled smartphones and tablets in and around the library (or further afield). University of Warwick uses mobile devices to support roving in its enquiry support team⁶.

3. Helping users within the library — guides and signage

To help users within the library, QR codes or Augmented

Reality can be used to link to more detailed information about a service, mobile-friendly videos of how to use equipment or to link directly to electronic resources (e.g. in shelves with print resources which have electronic versions or supplements). Bournemouth University has developed bookmarks with QR codes to direct people to subject-specific electronic resources⁷.

4. Providing access to resources via mobile devices

As we become more accustomed to using our mobile to access the web and read text, we expect resources to be available via our mobile devices, including library

resources and content. The aforementioned MACON project at Open University has published a toolkit⁸ covering many different areas of consideration (including authentication, content formats, delivery options, user requirements and usability testing).

5. Developing a mobile strategy for the library

Due to the rapidly changing nature of mobile technologies, developing a mobile strategy is challenging. University of Glasgow has developed a robust yet flexible strategy incorporating a number of different elements of mobile technologies in response



The screenshot shows the 'm-libraries' website. At the top, there is a search bar and the text 'Supporting the m-library community'. Below this is a navigation menu with links for 'Home', 'About the project', 'Case studies', and 'Pathways To Best Practice guides'. The main content area features a section titled 'M-LIBRARIES-GROUP discussion list' with a 'Subscribe to Blog' button and a 'Subscribe in a reader' button. A text message is displayed on a smartphone screen, reading: 'From Lamson Library) Two Ton - One Fight, One Night... FAC PUB DISPLAY (MAIN) QV1132.G3 M66 2006AVAILABLE SPECIAL COLLECTIONS QV1132.G3 M66 2006C2ASK REF DESK http://library.bournemouth.edu/tesa/01222234'. The website footer includes 'RECENT POSTS' and a link to the 'M-LIBRARIES-GROUP discussion list'.



to analytic statistics showing an increase in use of mobiles⁹.

6. Managing borrower accounts

Many mobile apps for libraries have account management as their main function, so that users can view items they have on loan, renew them, and reserve other items. SMS can also be used to help manage borrowing accounts,

mainly used to provide alerts from the library. Birmingham City University uses SMS alerts to alert users to reservations which can be collected or for overdue items¹⁰.

7. Bibliographic management

Though it may be unlikely that people will want to format complex bibliographies on their mobile devices for including in assignments, they may well want to add resources this way or access a list of resources to remind them of items to read. The m-biblio app¹¹ is a key development in this area from libraries, with most other apps being commercial. Libraries which have a Refworks subscription can use the Refworks mobile website¹².

8. Lending mobile devices

In order to provide more people with access to mobile technologies, some libraries loan out mobile devices. This may be for use within the library only (or sometimes on the campus in the case of a University) or for loan to take home. Radcliffe Science Library at University of Oxford loans out iPads¹³ and eReaders¹⁴, and University of Chester ran a trial project loaning eReaders to students for use during their course¹⁵.

9. Supporting learning, teaching and research

Examples of ways to use mobile devices within learning, teaching and research include using SMS voting during teaching to get feedback or to gather responses to questions and test knowledge, presenting or demonstrating content from mobile devices, using tablets as an input for teaching and learning (linked to projectors), and using Augmented Reality to introduce learners to new material (e.g. special collections). The JISC-funded SCARLET project uses Augmented Reality to support learning and teaching using special collections¹⁶ and librarians at the University of Brighton use Poll Everywhere in their information skills sessions¹⁷.

10. Collection management

Mobile technologies can be used to support library staff in their activities, for example supporting collection management activities such as weeding (delivering information and enabling withdrawing of material from mobile devices) or using mobile devices to select or order new materials. An innovative example of library staff use is the Augmented Reality shelving app which is being developed at University of Miami, Ohio¹⁸.

What next?

Who knows what's next for mobile technologies, but if recent statistics are anything to go by, mobile is here to stay and will continue to grow in popularity¹⁹. Many of us are using multiple devices to achieve tasks, and we're making the most of the convenience of mobile technologies; 34 percent of us use the device that's closest to us when looking for information²⁰.

As mobile technologies continue to become more

integrated into society, libraries need to tap into opportunities to use these technologies to provide access to support and resources for users. ■

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If you'd like to learn more about the project, please visit our project blog at www.m-libraries.info/ and join the conversation at our new mailing list, M-LIBRARIES-GROUP@JISCMAIL.AC.UK*

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coming soon...

February: focus on cloud computing

May: focus on ebooks and ejournals

August: focus on data security, data management, SaaS

November: focus on elearning

More information on our 2013 Group conference coming soon!

Plus our regular items:

Features

News

Reviews

Technology roundup

2013 pricing

We're keeping our 2013 prices at the 2012 rate: £70 p.a.

Remember we're online only from 2012 but institutional users can now request access via IP address/es as well or instead of user name/password, just contact catherine.dhanjal@theansweruk.com to set this up.

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