

SCONUL Focus is the journal of SCONUL, the Society of College, National and University Libraries.

SCONUL Focus aims to bring together articles, reports and news stories from practitioners in order to generate debate and promote good practice in the national libraries and the university and college sector. As well as the paper copy, the current issue of *SCONUL Focus* is also available electronically via the SCONUL website (<http://www.sconul.ac.uk>). Contributions are welcomed from colleagues in all fields and at all levels: we merely request that the items contributed are concise, informative, practical and (above all!) worth reading.

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Goalkeeping and the art of online instruction

A few months ago I sent an email to my subject librarians advocating that they read a particular article as part of their CPD. Nothing strange in that: I'm always recommending readings and often circulating early drafts of articles for *Focus* to my team for information/inspiration. What was a bit strange was that this article was about goalkeeping.

Anyone who knows me knows I know less than nothing about sport. So what am I doing sending out URLs for newspaper reports on goalkeepers?

The story in question told how Manchester United beat Tottenham because of the dexterity of the Man U. goalie (I'm using technical terms now) in the penalty shoot-out following a draw ¹.

The young man in question – Ben Foster – knew how to respond to particular opponents by watching online videos of their penalty taking. 'Their number 7 usually shoots this way so I'll dive to my left'. And so on.

He wasn't inclined to listen to the advice of the old geezer on the bench ...he looked online.

Are there parallels with our own game? Do our students want to consult the old geezer behind the Enquiry Desk ...or will they more naturally turn to online videos?

This is what lies behind a recent (and growing) trend for libraries to provide instruction online in video format. At Warwick we are developing a suite of tools with staff guiding users through a variety of databases ². Carol Kay, my colleague on the SCONUL Focus Editorial Board, recently alerted me to the lively collection of videos they are producing at Liverpool, which rather betray the film tastes of her colleagues ³.

But we are not alone. Many of us are pioneering similar developments. David Meehan and Jack Hyland explore the options for taking information resource guides online and their own initiatives at Dublin City University in their excellent article 'Video killed the 'PDF' star' in this issue.

Of course, I wouldn't wish to advocate this as the only approach – and still see the benefit of face-to-face interactions for some users/some issues – but this seems to be where we are headed. On the supply side there is more and more out there. Want to get the edge on Xbox? What to know how to tie a bow tie? Want to deliver a baby when you haven't got a midwife handy ⁴? Check out YouTube or equivalent services. Want to sit through a 90 minute lecture on leadership (like I did recently)? Check out iTunesU or the MIT World Web site ⁵.

On the demand side, the presence of videos online means that our users can access support when it is useful for them. When that comes to library instruction that could mean weeks after a formal induction or when they are actually searching a database at two in the morning.

Viewers can also go back to online instruction again, and again, and again...which for some of our users is a Godsend.

And librarians? Librarians can easily check out what fellow professionals are doing and be inspired – a bit like reading *SCONUL Focus*, I suppose.

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SCONUL Focus Editorial Board

NOTES

1. Jeremy Watson. Ben Foster attributes Carling Cup penalty save to iPod preparation, Daily Telegraph, 2 March 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/football/leagues/premierleague/manutd/4904506/Ben-Foster-attributes-Carling-Cup-penalty-save-to-iPod-preparation.html>
2. See <http://www.youtube.com/user/uowLibrary>
3. My favourite is 'Goggle vision: using electronic resources', <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5slpJMRWKA8>, which helps students move beyond Google ...in a silent movie style
4. Steven Morris. Father delivers baby son after watching YouTube childbirth clips, The Guardian, 30 April 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2009/apr/30/father-delivers-baby-youtube-clips>
5. Rebecca Attwood. Get it out in the open, Times Higher Education, 24 September 2009, p. 34-39, <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=408300>

[All Web sites accessed October 2009]