A Day in the Life of Your Association of Vision Science Librarian

Suzanne Ferimer, University of Houston College of Optometry, Houston, Texas
Nancy Henderson, College of Optometry at Pacific University, Forest Grove, Oregon

WHO WE ARE:

AVSL is an international organization composed of more than 150 professional librarians, or persons acting in that capacity, whose collections include the literature of vision. Among the current members are individuals who work within libraries that serve educational institutions, eye clinics and hospitals, and private companies with an interest in eye or vision-related products and services.

HISTORY:
The idea of forming an organization of vision science librarians began at the 1965 meeting of the American Academy of Optometry in Denver, where representatives from all the Optometry Schools, met to discuss the idea. The informal gathering was repeated the following December, and at the 1968 meeting of the American Academy of Optometry in Beverly Hills, California, the Association of Vision Science Librarians (AVSL) was officially founded. A Statement of Purpose was formalized in 1969: This year we are celebrating 42 years of service to the vision community.

PUBLICATIONS:

Standards for Vision Science Libraries – describes the minimum levels of staffing, services, budget and technology that should be provided by a library specializing in vision science. The Standards also include the scope and coverage of what materials vision science libraries should contain. These Standards may be used by institutions establishing libraries or by accrediting bodies reviewing existing libraries. AVSL librarians have maintained the Standards since 1976.


Union List of Vision-Related Serials – Lists more than 1,100 journals and the volumes/issues to which libraries own/subscribe. Thirty-four member libraries from around the world contribute to this Union List.

WHAT WE DO:

• Facilitate the cooperative activities among member librarians throughout the world
• Share our resources through loans of books, videos and journal articles
• Work to improve access to vision information
• Partners with NLM, NIEI, ASCLD, AAO and others to access information
• Develop and promote standards and guidelines to improve vision libraries and the services they offer
• Use our Listserv™ to exchange ideas, answer reference questions and share duplicate materials
• Promote open access to the vision literature
• Maintain a vital Website that contains our publications and resources

“A misconception is what we librarians are hearing more and more. Here are some of the answers we received after surveying our members on what a day in the life of an AVSL librarian is like:

• Process Inter-Library Loan Requests
• Place materials on reserve for class
• Retrieve materials from Off-Site Storage
• Assist patrons with their problems
• Revise references for PhD candidate
• Do reference searches for busy faculty members
• Track down an incomplete (and sometimes obscure) citation for a faculty member
• Search for the remote controls to the projector, the television, and/or VCR
• Check for the Impact Factor score of a publication someone wants to publish in
• Figure out what a faculty member’s H Factor score is
• Work at the reference or circulation desk
• Troubleshoot on why a database isn’t working
• Teach first year Optometry Students about library resources
• Do committee work for the library, school or college, or professional organization
• Plan for future of the library/institution

Select & order materials that our faculty and students need – books, media, realia (eye and brain models), electronic resources of all types, OR - oversee the selection and organization of library materials in many different (and changing) formats

Search for lost materials and order replacements
• Deal with water leaks, mice/ants, etc.
• Check to see why the library is too hot/cold
• Do shelf readings to make sure materials are in the correct order
• Sand overdue notices

Troubleshooting on why a laptop won’t connect to the network
• Work with preceptors in obtaining research materials
• Talk to faculty, students, and staff about library resources
• Deal with staffing problems: Manage staff & students who work for us
• Work on the budget
• Set up borrowing privileges for externship sites
• Write articles/do research relating to many, varied aspects of vision science librarianship
• Do presentations at meetings and conferences
• Tasks involving quickly changing technology – including,…
• Serve our broader community – volunteer at various community organizations
• Help students and faculty with managing their citations/references – RefWorks, Endnote, Zotero
• Edit open access journals at our institutions
• Create digital collections for teaching & research
• Manage archives of institutions
• Deal with problems associated with the construction of a new building & redesign of existing space
• And most importantly – Liasionary for faculty, staff or student who needs it NOW!
• And much more……

AVSL Librarians—2010 Academy Meeting

Back row: Rudy Bonera, Nancy Henderson, Sharon Tabakchina, Suzanne Ferimer, Kathy MacDonal, DJ Mathews, Roger Beckman first row: l to r: Mike Piorunski, Chris Nims, Pam Sevigny, Cynthia Birch, Gale Oren, Jessica Ravetti, Elaine Wells, Bette-Anton seated, l to r: Wilma Marreo Ortiz, Kathryn Johnston, Jenna Kreiss