Experience in Educating the User at the NLL

A. G. Myatt

National Lending Library, United Kingdom
EXPERIENCE IN EDUCATING THE USER AT THE NLL

by

A. G. MYATT

RATIONALE AND HISTORY

The active planning of the National Lending Library for Science and Technology began in November 1956. The purpose of the new library was to acquire, make available and promote the use of, any literature of value to the practising scientist and technologist. By 1962 the NLL had already formed one of the largest collections of scientific and technical literature in Western Europe and had, in its Reading Room, a comprehensive collection of guides to the literature.

As a fundamentally important way of promoting the use of the literature it was decided that the NLL would run an informal course in September 1962 for postgraduate research students. Letters of invitation were sent to scientific and technological departments of British universities asking for nominees who were graduates just starting their post-graduate research projects. As a result, 8 students came to the NLL for 4 weeks. The students carried out literature searches with assistance from members of NLL staff who also gave brief talks on the structure of scientific literature. All of the participants reported very favourably on the NLL course after having returned to their universities. In many cases the students concerned gave talks to their own departments later, about the NLL and the course.

In September 1963, a second similar course was held. The time, 20 students attended. It was suggested that future courses might be held for research students when they had already been working on their research topic for about 3 months. Consequently a further course was planned for January 1964 and an announcement circulated as before. As a result of this, 160 applications were received. Unfortunately, it was impossible to cater for more than a maximum of 20 people on each course and so 60 applicants were chosen and 3 consecutive courses, each of 2 weeks, were held in January and February 1964. All of the students who had attended stated that the courses had been beneficial. In some cases information had been discovered which necessitated changes in their plans of research. At least one person on each course found that he was duplicating work which had already been done elsewhere.

It was now obvious that these courses were valuable to post-graduate research students and it was equally obvious that the NLL could not take all the students who wished to attend. It was considered that courses of this type could best be organised within the university libraries. A short meeting of science librarians from universities had been held in July 1963, and talks given on the NLL and on scientific literature in general. The librarians who were at this meeting considered that a course to show university library staff (who were, almost without exception, Arts graduates) how to use the scientific literature would be most valuable. As a result, in April 1964, the first course for university library staff was held at the NLL. It was very successful and a second similar
course was held in July 1964. The DSIR Post-Graduate Training Awards Committee suggested that the augmentation of courses in the universities could best be achieved by including the co-operation of academic staff and that the NLL should run courses of an experimental nature for them. Science and technology departments of universities were circulated and attendees were invited to bring a literature problem with them with which NLL staff could assist during practical sessions.

These early courses were to set the pattern for the future. The future role of the NLL was clearly to teach the teachers and provide background assistance to outside courses when required.

The NLL now organises, each year, the courses listed below. Furthermore, in cases where courses are oversubscribed, duplicate courses are offered wherever possible. Each course is limited to a maximum of 20, since more than 20 causes congestion in the Reading Room during practical work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of Course</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Subject of Course</th>
<th>For whom intended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christmas</td>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>Scientific Literature</td>
<td>Research Workers, Academic Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas or Early New Year</td>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>Social Science Literature</td>
<td>Research Workers, Academic Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easter</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>Scientific Literature</td>
<td>University Library Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easter</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>Social Science Literature</td>
<td>University Library Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Either June or October</td>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>Scientific Literature</td>
<td>Public Library Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>4 days</td>
<td>*MEDLARS (Appreciation Course)</td>
<td>Librarians and Information Officers</td>
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</tbody>
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*See special notes under heading "MEDLARS COURSES"

METHODS AND CONTENT

All NLL courses are closely related in both method and content. Experience has shown that there are optimum lengths for particular parts of the course and certain lectures can be usefully included on more than one type of course.

In the cases of courses for research workers and academic staff (Appendix 1 and 2), practical work has always been exclusively concerned with participants own problems. Prior to the course, participants are invited to bring their problems to the NLL and, whilst on the course, to ask for whatever help may be required.
Courses for librarians (Appendix 3) include sessions specifically intended to enable an Arts graduate to cope with the nomenclature of science. Questions for the practical work are devised by graduate members of the NLL staff grouped together into syndicates. The function of these syndicates is to make an up-to-date study of the literature of the physical sciences, biological sciences and chemical sciences, and then provide interesting and instructive questions to be answered by the members of the course. Many of these questions have proved to be very popular and in some cases have severely taxed the ingenuity of even highly experienced librarians. Examples of the questions used in 1969 are given in Appendix 4.

In all courses, care is taken to emphasise the structure of the literature in general rather than the literature of specific subject areas. Lectures on the literature of specific subjects tend to degenerate into nothing more than lists of bibliographic tools, and these often involve considerable duplication. Indeed, it has been noted that there is a large amount of overlap in coverage between the different guides to the literature and that many of the lectures are common to social science and natural science courses. As a result of these observations, an experimental course is planned for April 1970 (Appendix 5) which aims to combine social sciences and natural sciences in a single course for university librarians.

SOCIAL SCIENCE LITERATURE COURSES

The first course on the literature of social science was held at the National Lending Library between 27 November and the 1 December 1967 for 20 graduate research workers in the social sciences. This course was partly experimental and was organised in response to a recommendation made by the Social Science Research Council. Members of the course were asked to complete a questionnaire to evaluate its usefulness. The programme occupied 5 days and lectures were given on social science literature and its guides, with afternoons free for searching.

The majority who came on the course stated that they were introduced to guides to the literature with which they were previously unfamiliar and in which they found useful references. Between them they listed 25 guides which were completely new to them and which they found to be very useful.

It was interesting to note that several "social science" problems could be answered by the use of "natural science" guides to the literature.

MEDLARS COURSES

MEDLARS courses are quite different from other NLL courses and are organised for a different purpose. MEDLARS stands for Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System. Its purpose is to provide lists of references on specific topics in response to requests from scientists and practitioners. Records of about one million papers published in 2,300 journals since 1963, are stored on magnetic tape: a computer is used to select references. The tapes are prepared by the US National Library of Medicine, which also prepares and publishes "Index Medicus" from the same input. About 12,000 papers are listed in each month's "Index Medicus". They are added to the MEDLARS tapes at the same time, but whereas a typical paper is listed under 3 subject headings in "Index Medicus", it is described by about 10 subject headings on the tapes.
For simple problems ("Find a few recent papers on kidney transplantation") "Index Medicus", used locally, is quick and efficient. For complex problems ("Find all papers on the effect of antibiotics on irradiated bacteria"), MEDLARS may be better. This is particularly so, when the subject represents the intersection of several concepts, and when some of the concepts are covered by a multiplicity of subject headings (there are more than 100 headings relating to bacteria, for example).

The main disadvantage of MEDLARS searching is that the question must be specified very precisely, if the computer is not to retrieve a lot of useless information. Specification is done by "search editors" at the NLL. The most crucial step is communication of the problem by the scientist to the search editor. In order to improve communication of questions, the NLL has run appreciation courses for librarians and scientists. Librarians from most of the major medical libraries have attended, and their advice is available to users of their libraries. In some centres, MEDLARS Liaison Officers, who are trained search editors, are being appointed also.

Our curriculum consists of an introduction to the users of MEDLARS in its context among other guides to the literature, and an insight into the MEDLARS searching process, together with practical work, including preparation of search requests (Appendix 6).

EFFECTS OF COURSES

From the initial NLL courses for research students in 1963 to the present time approximately 600 librarians, information officers and academic staff have attended courses (excluding MEDLARS courses) at the NLL. Reactions to the courses have been analysed by the use of questionnaires and suggestions for changes have been incorporated into the evolving timetables.

Perhaps the greatest effect of the NLL courses has been to encourage similar courses to be run elsewhere, for example in the universities. The NLL has provided help to many organisations in the form of AV aids, literature samples, runs of abstracting journals and sometimes lecturers. From time to time, the NLL facilities have been used by other organisations who are holding courses nearby, for example, Bradford University.

In April 1965 and September 1967, meetings were organised at Manchester College of Science and Technology and the NLL respectively, to enable the organisers of courses to exchange information about post-graduate literature courses in science and technology. A number of recommendations were made at each meeting and accounts of these may be found in Journal of Documentation, March 1966 and LA Record, January 1968.

INFORMATION OFFICERS IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Information Officers have been appointed by the Office for Scientific and Technical Information to the libraries of 6 British universities. It is planned to evaluate the role of information officers in exploiting university library resources and in introducing new information services to university users. Each information officer will be responsible for education and training of academic staff and post-graduate students in the use of information resources.
In January 1970, a course was held at the NLL for information officers in university libraries. One day of this course was devoted to a detailed discussion of the educational aspects of an information officer's work. A number of guest speakers gave accounts of courses for which they personally had been responsible and it was at once evident that there were many points of agreement on all aspects of teaching technique. Some speakers thought that some form of basic under-graduate instruction was an essential prelude to more formal postgraduate education. Detailed accounts were given of some courses which were now well established but it was recognised that it may be some years before the importance of literature courses is accepted by all universities and colleges. Some of the most important functions of a Liaison Officer are included in the promotional aspects of the work.

APPENDIX 1

NATIONAL LENDING LIBRARY

Seminar on the Structure and Use of Scientific Literature for Academic Staff

8th - 12 December, 1969

Provisional Programme

Monday, 6th December
Morning
Afternoon
Introduction to Seminar and Film Tour of N.L.L.

Tuesday, 9th December
Morning
Structure of Scientific Literature

Guides to Scientific Literature

Afternoon
Report Literature

Patents, Standards & Specification

Dissertations and Theses

Foreign Literature and Translation

Wednesday, 10th December
Morning
M E D L A R S and Mechanised Information Retrieval

Afternoon
Literature Searching

Literature Searching

Thursday, 11th December
Morning
Personal Record Keeping - Methods and Systems

Afternoon
Literature Searching

Literature Searching

Friday, 12th December
Morning
Training in the Use of Scientific Literature followed by General Discussion of Seminar
APPENDIX 2

NATIONAL LENDING LIBRARY

Seminar on Social Science Literature and its Guides for Academic Staff

5th-9th January 1970

Provisional Programme

Monday, 5th January

Afternoon

Introduction to Seminar and Film Tour of N.L.L.

Tuesday, 6th January

Morning

Social Science Literature and its Guides
(i) Books and Periodicals
(ii) Reports and Dissertations
(iii) Foreign Literature & Translations
(iv) Government Publications

Wednesday, 7th January

Morning

Social Science Literature and its Guides
(v) Statistical Material

Afternoon

Literature Searching

Thursday, 8th January

Morning

Personal Record Keeping

Afternoon

Literature Searching

Friday, 9th January

Morning

General Discussion and Review of Seminar

APPENDIX 3

Seminar on Scientific Literature for University Library Staff

19-28th March, 1969

Provisional Programme

Wednesday, 19th March

Afternoon

Arrive at N.L.L.

Introduction to seminar, film Tour of N.L.L.

Thursday, 20th March

Morning

Structure of Scientific Literature and its Guides

Afternoon

Report Literature and its Guides

Patents, Standards & Specifications
APPENDIX 3 (Cont’d)

Friday, 21st March

Morning

MEDLARS

Nomenclature of Chemistry

Afternoon

Nomenclature of Biology

Technique of Literature Searching

Monday, 24th March

All day

Guided Search

Tuesday, 25th March

All day

Guided Search

Wednesday, 26th March

All day

Problems of running courses on Scientific Literature

Thursday, 27th March

Morning

Review of Seminar

APPENDIX 3 (Cont’d)

Friday, 28th March

Morning

Problems of running courses on Scientific Literature

APPENDIX 3 (Cont’d)

Seminar on Scientific Literature for Public Library Staff

16th-20th June, 1969

Provisional Programme

Monday, 16th June

Morning

Introduction to Seminar, Film

Tour of N.L.L.

Afternoon

The structure of scientific literature and its guides

(a) Periodicals

The structure of scientific literature and its guides (cont.)

(b) Books and Conf. Proceedings

(c) Report Literature

(d) Other Primary Publications

Tuesday, 17th June

Morning

Foreign Literature and Translations

MEDLARS and mechanised information retrieval

Afternoon

The nomenclature of Chemistry

The nomenclature of Biology

Wednesday, 18th June

All day

The technique of literature searching

Thursday, 19th June

Guided search

Friday, 20th June

Guided search

Problems of running courses on scientific literature
APPENDIX 4

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES, 1969

Question 1

A Ph.D. student wishes to conduct an initial literature search in connection with his thesis which has the title "Snake Venom Apparatus of the Elapidae", with particular reference to Bungarus Fasciatus.

He would like to know of any recent bibliography on the production, injection and action of snake venoms and recent research work closely related to his own topic.

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES, 1969

Question 2

An enquirer is interested in the pathology of lungs following underwater explosions, particularly in experimental animals. If little information is available on this topic, he will accept references to lung pathology in explosions in air. He would also like to know what are the best sources for references of this type.

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES, 1969

Question 3

A research worker wishes to:

(a) locate a recent paper on the application of sonar for fish detection (for use in distant water trawlers)

(b) know where he can obtain the most detailed description of such equipment.

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES, 1969

Question 4

A botanist is doing research into the wayfaring-tree genus Viburnum. He is particularly interested in a Chinese species of the wayfaring-tree which, in the literature, is known as Viburnum fragrans Bunge.

Whilst conducting his literature search, the botanist has noted that an entirely different species is also known as Viburnum fragrans Loisel, and thus the specific name must be invalid for one or other of the species.

The botanist knows that the same name was applied to both species up to the end of 1965 and any revision of nomenclature must have occurred since then. He wishes to know:

(a) where these species were first described

(b) whether Viburnum fragrans Bunge is still the valid name for the species in which he is especially interested, and if not

(c) what is the new name for this species
APPENDIX 4 (cont'd.)

CHEMICAL SCIENCES, 1969

Question 1

A research chemist is interested in exogonic acid. He wants to know what its structural formula is and if it has been synthesised. He has a vague idea that it has some connection structurally with a substance called dimethyl oxetan about which he would also like information.

CHEMICAL SCIENCES, 1969

Question 2

An inorganic chemist is interested in the thermochromism of inorganic compounds. He would like details of any compounds exhibiting thermochromism. He thinks that Barium Chromate is such a compound and would like this confirmed.

CHEMICAL SCIENCES, 1969

Question 3

A research worker would like a recent review on liquid crystals and if possible also a bibliography.

He is particularly interested in the temperature-colour response of cholesteric liquid crystals and would like to know if any research has been done on their possible use as a non-destructive inspection tool for the examination of aircraft parts etc., where thermal conductivity, or the lack of it can be employed for inspection purposes.

CHEMICAL SCIENCES, 1969

Question 4

A food chemist is interested in the volatile constituents of meat which are responsible for its flavour.

He wishes to know what work has already been done on the isolation and identification of these flavour volatiles.

PHYSICAL SCIENCES, 1969

Question 1

A scientific journalist wants to write an article for the "New Scientist" on the possibility of using superconducting cables for electric power distribution. He wants to cover the economic and social aspects as well as the purely technological ones, and needs news about future proposals and projects in progress as well as research papers. What materials can you locate to help him?
PHYSICAL SCIENCES, 1969

Question 2

(a) An astronomer wants some up to date information on the structure of the Martian atmosphere and wishes to know whether any recent publications have appeared on the subject of canals on Mars. Is there any evidence to suggest that Mars possesses any active surface processes?

(b) A conference on plasma space science was held in about 1963. Have the proceedings been published and have any subsequent papers been written on the magnetic structure of sunspot groups?

PHYSICAL SCIENCES, 1969

Question 3

A geologist due to visit the U.S.S.R. wishes to examine the Upper Precambrian rocks of the Ural Mountains. He wishes to know what local "series" names have been given to these rocks in the Urals so that he can search the literature for advance information. One series which he knows of and wishes to investigate in detail is the Bakal Series. For background information he would like to know who first described this series and when, and what work has been published on the series since it was first named.

Presumably much of the work will be in Russian - are any translations available?

PHYSICAL SCIENCES, 1969

Question 4

A library is interested in automating its circulation system and for general background reading wishes to obtain a book on library automation. In particular the librarian is thinking of introducing a second generation computerised circulation system which is both book and user oriented. The system should be capable of automatic procedures for keeping statistical records on the usage of individual volumes and on the number of books borrowed by each user, as well as a record of the last borrower after a book has been returned to the shelf. Does any library already operate a system along these lines, and if so, where?

Has any research been carried out into the cost of an on-line circulation system and if so, what was the result?

SOCIAL SCIENCES - 1969

Question 1

A cultural anthropologist is interested in witchcraft in West Africa. He is particularly interested in finding similarities between West African practices and the ritual of voodoo. He would like any references on these topics.
APPENDIX 4 (cont'd.)

SOCIAL SCIENCES - 1969

Question 2

A social psychologist is studying the attitudes of parents towards their mentally subnormal children, and, in particular, towards their education. Can you find any recent literature which might help him?

SOCIAL SCIENCES - 1969

Question 3

What work has been published on the sociological aspects of migrant labour with particular reference to agricultural workers in the United States?

Excluding those who work less than a month, how many migrant agricultural workers are there in the U.S.A., what is the average number of days worked, and what is the average pay? How does this rate of pay compare with workers in the manufacturing industries?

SOCIAL SCIENCES - 1969

Question 4

A construction company is interested in developing new safety devices for incorporation in the building of new roads and motorways. In assessing the economic viability of these it is interested in finding out whether there is any information on the overall costs of motor vehicle accidents and whether any work has been carried out on the economic value of human life.

The Chairman of this company also wishes to contact a number of outside experts on the future developments of road systems. He has heard of a system of group consultation used in the U.S.A. known as the "Delphi" technique. Is there any information on this?

SOCIAL SCIENCES - 1969

Question 5

Have any papers been written on the effect of the Industrial Training Act, 1964?

What are the economics of training, i.e. training for a particular job or function? Papers on the economics of education are not required.

SOCIAL SCIENCES - 1969

Question 6

(a) Under which Act of Parliament is a servant to be summarily punished for taking fodder, contrary to order, to feed his master's horse?

(b) Where can a list of currently available free U.K. Government publications on farm safety be found?
APPENDIX 4 (cont'd.)

SOCIAL SCIENCES - 1969

Question 6 (cont'd)

(c) What is the U.N. Document number of:

"Report on small and medium industries operating in Bechuanaland". Presented by the Government of Bechuanaland, 16th September, 1965."

(d) A U.S. Government publication entitled "Competency based, field centered, system approach to elementary teacher education" is in the process of being printed. What is its price and how can it be ordered?

(e) What sort of U.K. Government publication was "The Roberts Report" published February 1959? What is the full title of this report?

(f) What kind of Statutory Instrument was No. 267, 1964 and what was its title?

APPENDIX 5

Seminar on Scientific and Social Science Literature for University Library Staff

7 - 16 April, 1970

Programme

Tuesday, 7th April

Afternoon Introduction and Film Tour of N.L.L.

Wednesday, 8th April

Morning Structure of, and Guides to the Literature (Lecture)

Afternoon Abstracts and Indexes (Lecture)

Practical Exercises

Afternoon Other Guides and Bibliographies (Lecture)

Practical Exercises

Thursday, 9th April

Morning Reports, Books and Dissertations (Lecture)

Patents, Standards and Specifications (Lecture)

Practical Exercises

Government Publications (Lecture)

Practical Exercises
Friday, 10th April

Morning
Foreign Literature and Translations (Lecture)
Statistics (Lecture)

Afternoon
Discussion of Practical Exercises
Search Techniques (Lecture)
Guided Search I

Monday, 13th April

Morning
Nomenclature of Chemistry (Lecture)
Nomenclature of Biology (Lecture)
Guided Search II

Afternoon
Guided Search III
Guided Search IV

Tuesday, 14th April

Morning
NLL Services (Lecture)
Guided Search V and VI

Afternoon
Guided Search VII
Guided Search VIII

Wednesday, 15th April

Morning
Computer Information Retrieval (Lecture)
Personal Record Keeping (Lecture)

Afternoon
Guided Search IX
Guided Search X

Thursday, 16th April

Morning
Problems of Running Courses in Universities (Discussion)
Final Discussion and Formal End of Seminar.

Assistance with Individual Problems
APPENDIX 6

U.K. MEDLARS SERVICE

Appreciation Courses - Timetable

FIRST DAY

Afternoon  Lecture: Introduction
Lecture: MEDLARS in Context

SECOND DAY

Morning  Practical work in N.I.L. Reading Room
Afternoon  Discussion of Practical Work (in Conference Room)
Lecture: Writing MEDLARS Searches Part I
Lecture: Writing MEDLARS Searches Part II

THIRD DAY

Morning  Discussion on Search Writing
Practical Work: Writing MEDLARS Searches on Set Topics
Afternoon  Continuation of Practical Work
Optional - Continuation of Practical Work
or Tour of Library
or Browsing Time

FOURTH DAY

Morning  Practical Search Writing: Participants' Own Problems
Afternoon  Final Discussion
Optional - Practical Search Writing Tuition if required
or Browsing Time
DISCUSSION

R.A. WALL: Before the discussion gets under way may I say that the academic staff at Loughborough are very satisfied with the courses they have attended at the NLL.

M.W. HILL: Would Mr. Myatt please expand on the methods used in the construction of course questions.

A.G. MYATT: The graduate scientists on the staff of the NLL are divided into syndicates according to their special subjects. Members of these syndicates work singly or in pairs to compile questions. In the case of the social sciences, because the NLL has no social science graduates, a general syndicate is composed of members from all the other syndicates.

C.G. WOOD: The lecturer has said that 'reactions to courses have been analysed by the use of questionnaires'. This suggests that there is feedback and evaluation. Can Mr. Myatt say how deep is this evaluation and to whom the questionnaires are directed?

A.G. MYATT: The questionnaires have been answered by participants and the answers have provided the basis for adjustments and improvements in the administrative details and content of courses. So far there has not been an attempt at obtaining quantitative feedback from those responsible for sending the participants.

R.F. EATWELL: It may be that those who attended the courses at the NLL are already aware of the value of the courses. Has Mr. Myatt any views on how unconvinced academic staff can be attracted to the NLL?

A.G. MYATT: Further suggestions as to how to achieve this aim would be welcomed at the NLL. Invitations are already sent to both the heads of departments and the library, so that the library can use its influence to get the right people on the courses.

J. LUBANS: Would Mr. Myatt expand on the duplication of research work which was revealed during courses for research students as being of the order of 5%?

A.G. MYATT: The rate of duplication could be higher than 5%. It was found quite often that there was repetition of work. In many cases, of course, this would have been financed by Government grants. This emphasises the need of knowing how to use the literature.

R.A. WALL: Going back to Mr. Eatwell's point we have found at Loughborough that it is easier to persuade people to go up to the NLL than to collect them for a series of seminars held in their own University.

R.F. EATWELL: There may well be a case for regional organisation in this field.

L. VAN DER WOLK: Does Mr. Myatt envisage the NLL as continuing to use members of their staff as search editors for MEDLARS?
A.G. MYATT: At the present time MEDLARS does not allow for direct user-machine communication although this may be possible in the future when MEDLARS II becomes established. Until then, a human intermediary will be required between the customer and the machine. Such search editors eliminate waste of machine time and check searches to make sure that there are no errors to cause failure of batches. Medical staff are surprisingly often unfamiliar with MESH (Medical Subject Headings) and if customers wrote their own searches we would have extensive wastage at the machine stage. Perhaps Miss King who has been a MEDLARS Liaison Officer at Newcastle would like to add to this?

M. KING: At Newcastle it was quite common to find that MESH was either not known at all or not used as a matter of routine in conjunction with hand searching of Index Medicus. Index Medicus was not well known to some junior hospital doctors.

D.J. HILLMAN: Would Mr. Myatt tell us whether participants in NLL courses experience difficulty in formulating MEDLARS search requests - if so, is it MESH that causes the difficulty?

A.G. MYATT: Occasionally some course members are quite unfamiliar with MESH and this certainly can cause problems. The majority find that at the end of a course they can write simple searches with no difficulty. If, at the end of a course, they understand the system, when and when not to use it, we are well satisfied.

B.G. BAGGETT: The time allowed for searching on the academic staff courses and on the library staff courses suggests that professional library staff are slower at searching than academic staff and research workers. Would Mr. Myatt agree with this impression?

A.G. MYATT: Librarians holding Arts degrees are naturally a little slower than science graduates in dealing with a highly technical subject and the majority of librarians are indeed Arts graduates. The main reason for the different time schedules is that questions are set for librarians and are meant to be answered completely. In the case of academic staff on the other hand, the questions are their own. They normally have a good knowledge of the basic subject and will continue searching on this topic when they return to their own libraries.

L.D. WILL: I can vouch for the usefulness of the NLL leaflets and handouts, but wonder whether there are new editions of these available from time to time? Would the NLL consider sending samples to University Libraries on a regular basis?

A.G. MYATT: This literature is revised and amended with each course in mind, and relates specifically to the NLL stock. We have not got the clerical resources to produce large numbers of copies and many would not be relevant to all libraries. However, we can send a comprehensive set to anyone who writes in to ask for one; this could, for example, be requested annually each March.

J.S. DAVEY: Could Mr. Myatt tell us if there are any problems in accommodating students in the stacks when the staff are busy dealing with the day's intake of requests?

A.G. MYATT: This problem has been eliminated by restricting the numbers on each course and by the provision of staff in the reading room. Much of the searching is done through abstracts available in the reading room and no more than perhaps 4 students at any one time would be examining runs of journals in the stacks. Individual issues or volumes can be requested and are quickly brought to the reading room.
J.E. DAVIES: In this connection the organisers of instruction in individual libraries have always got the problem of arranging courses so that regular readers are disturbed as little as possible.

R.A. WALL: I note that the NLL prefers to teach information retrieval principles at general level and to provide guided practical work for special instruction only. Would it be possible to precede the practical work by special search case studies and perhaps produce a series of films of individual cases in different subject areas (together with general film introductions)?

A.G. MYATT: The case study principle has been used to some extent in lectures at general level on 'Abstracts and Indexes'. It might prove difficult to provide special case studies for a mixed audience from different disciplines. The idea of having a series of individual special search case studies on film would, however, seem to be a good one.

R.A. WALL: Several years ago at the first NLL seminar on instruction methods, and at another NLL meeting in January this year, I suggested that a centrally-produced series of audio-visual aids would be useful. Tape-slide presentations could become available in the same way and would be much cheaper and more flexible than film. Can Mr. Myatt give us any idea as to whether the NLL would take the initiative here?

A.G. MYATT: It would be a good idea to have a general discussion on this, and the matter will be raised with the Director of the NLL, Dr. Urquhart. We would like to send out packages on MEDLARS so that the NLL MEDLARS staff can reduce the considerable amount of time spent travelling and lecturing. If, however, we were to launch out into the preparation of audio-visual aids it would necessitate calling in outside expertise.

J.S. DAVEY: As a by-product of the courses have the staff at the NLL become conscious of resistance to material in microform, or is there an increasing awareness of reading and printing apparatus?

A.G. MYATT: There is certainly some resistance to the use of microforms. The NLL tries to help people by collecting literature on readers etc. and by demonstrating the equipment in use at Boston Spa. The position could be improved if very cheap apparatus were available which could be installed in all the offices of organisations where microfilm and microfiche are used.