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**People Profile: JoAnne Sparks**

Editor

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Launching our new library

ATG: I like your Website at MSKCC and your plasma screen set up. It’s so cool. Can you tell us about it?

JS: The new library Website (http://library.mskcc.org) was launched at the end of May 2006 and features Today's science sparks, a daily image from one of our own author’s publications that links to the fulltext article at the publisher’s Website. It is an innovative current awareness and community building feature that is very popular. We are able to feature authors at all stages of their careers, from their first publication to their latest article in Nature, to the latest collaboration with others around the world. It is very satisfying to “advertise” our own authors on our public Website. Any visitor can go to the abstract of the article and then link through to the full-text if they have a subscription or want to pay-per-view if available at the publisher’s site. The plasma screens are part of the CyberLibrary Café and feature these same images as well as video and animations from our own authors’ publications and lectures.

ATG: You have worked in several different libraries/environments — Bristol Meyers (corporate, special library), Drexel (academic), and now MSKCC (health, special). Can you tell us what characterizes each? Why is the library important in each? Can you tell us your favorite?

JS: Yes, I have worked in every kind of library including the local public library when I was in high school! Well, first let me say what I think is consistent across all types of libraries in every setting. All of the libraries I have worked in existed for an end user, some- one who would at some point want to access and use the materials provided. So excellent customer service in any setting seems to me to be an important pillar of library services. A key difference in the corporate setting was that there were NO barriers to access. Users could come into the physical library 24/7 and could request anything they needed at any time. Surprisingly, this completely “open access” did not result in overuse of the library or document delivery services. The maximum cost for this premium service was feasible and within reach, even in a non-corporate setting. It was very interesting to me to realize the number of barriers we had in place in all of the other environments where I had worked, as if an individual or department could want “too much information.” In these days of information overload, it almost seems ridiculous now! So, in my current situation, we have removed all such barriers to access. In fact, we moved from a transactional charging model for document delivery and literature searches to an annual allocation with the library absorbing all transactional fees except for unusual custom requests. To date, we have not had any high volume request that we considered so unusual we could not cover it. So, we have taken the focus off of how much information a user requests and focused it on providing complete access within the requestor’s timeframe.

ATG: You worked with Carol Montgomery at Drexel to cancel most print journal subscriptions, right? Can you tell us how this happened, was it successful, and how many print journal subscriptions had in the final analysis?

JS: The experience at Drexel was very formative for me in determining my own philosophy for content management. We aggressively moved to eliminate print and add electronic access in a library that had also been neglected for awhile. In the first year we went from over 1,800 print journal subscriptions to just under 900 print subscriptions. The next year we reduced it further. The goal was to get to a much smaller print journal collection and a greatly expanded electronic collection. Chemists and physicists were very happy with the result which included access to their key databases, to the latest collaboration with others around the world. It is very satisfying to “advertise” our own authors on our public Website. Any visitor can go to the abstract of the article and then link through to the full-text if they have a subscription or want to pay-per-view if available at the publisher’s site. The plasma screens are part of the CyberLibrary Café and feature these same images as well as video and animations from our own authors’ publications and lectures.

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