RML Phone Tree Changes

In order to better serve you, the RML phone tree has changed. To reach RML staff, you still dial 1-800-338-7657 and select option 1.

But, at the next tree selection option 1 will now send you to RML Administration and staff in Utah while selecting option 2 will reach the liaison tree.

If you know which option you wish to select, you do not have to listen to the complete message.

1-800-338-7657

Option 1
Your Regional Medical Library

Option 2
National Training Center and Clearinghouse

Option 1
Administration and Utah Staff

Option 2
State and Project Liaisons
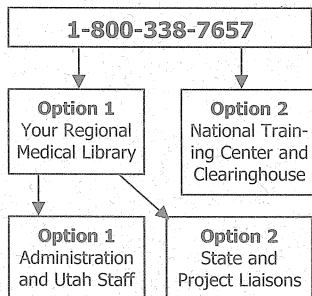
1. Siobhan Champ-Blackwell, Community Outreach
2. Betsy Kelly, Assessment and Evaluation
3. Stephanie Weldon, Colorado/Consumer Health
4. Barbara Jones, Missouri/Network Membership
5. Marty Magee, Nebraska/Education
6. Molly Youngkin, Utah/Public Health
   Sharon Dennis, Technology Coordinator
7. Janet Ashwell, Kansas
8. Mary Henning, Wyoming
9. Whitney Davison-Turley, Technology

Consumer Health Information Workshop June 10-11, 2004, Columbia, MO

If you find yourself lost in the maze of consumer health information resources, then "Unlocking the Mysteries of Consumer Health" is the workshop for you!

On June 10-11 and for only $40, you can join "Chief Inspector" MaryEllen Sievert (University of Missouri School of Library and Information Sciences) and her team from around the country as they help you to:

- Investigate the criteria for good and bad health information resources
- Probe the unknown for reliable drug information
- Hear expert testimony about consumer behavior

NN/LM
National Network of Libraries of Medicine
MidContinental Region

In This Issue

- Weigh the evidence about information on resources for diverse populations
- Follow the clues to local health information
- Uncover health information resources for mental health, public health and allied health
- Get clues on interrogating people for health information queries.

Continuing education credits from the Medical Library Association are pending. Public librarians will find this workshop especially useful. Contact Jennifer Bloss for more information at (573) 884-0282 or *BlossJe@missouri.edu.*

To register, make checks payable to the University of Missouri, and mail them to:

University of Missouri–Columbia
Attn: Jennifer Bloss
School of Information Science & Learning Technologies
303 Townsend Hall
Columbia, MO 65211

Space is limited, so send your registration in today!

—*RML Staff*

The DVD . . . To Be or Not To Be at the NLM

Recently the NN/LM conducted a survey of member libraries with regard to DVD and VHS media formats in their facilities and their format preference for borrowing from the National Library of Medicine. The purpose was to understand if the NLM needed to move from the VHS format to purchasing in the DVD format, and if so, the timing of that change.

The MidContinental Region indicated a preference for VHS, primarily due to lack of funds to purchase DVD players or the ability to purchase media in both formats.

After a review of this information nationwide the NLM has indicated it will "monitor the availability of VHS tapes from publishers and progress toward a standard for DVD's."

The survey will be repeated in about two years or sooner, if developments warrant. Thanks to those who participated in this most recent survey!

—*M. Magee*

Regional Buying Consortium

In response to the requests voiced in the regional focus groups, the MidContinental RML has started to investigate the formation of a regional buying consortium for licensing of electronic resources. The overall purposes of this investigation are to find ways to increase the cost effectiveness of delivery of health science information and to develop new region-wide methods of collaboration in the delivery of information.

A working group has been formed with a member from each state in the region, each representing a different area of regional interest (urban, rural, hospital, academic, large, small, etc.). Dave Brunell, Director of the Bibliographic Center for Research (*http://www.bcr.org*) has agreed to act as the advisor for the group. The task of the group will be to determine which resources are appropriate and desired by region members, and then to work to find ways to make a package available to members.

Are you interested in this plan? The RML is very interested in hearing from each of you. We need some information from you to help us coordinate our efforts:

- What is the size of your organization?
- What type of organization do you represent?
- When does your budget year run (calendar year, July – June, etc.)?
- When would your institution be available for a financial commitment to a buying consortium?

If you are interested in the possibilities offered in regional buying, please contact Barb Jones.

—*B. Jones*

NTCC Distance Education Breakthrough

Maureen Czujak, Assistant Director
National Training Center and Clearinghouse
mczujak@nyam.org

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For the very first time, the National Training Center and Clearinghouse (NTCC) conducted a distance learning experiment, broadcasting its PubMed class on February 17, 2004, from the University of Utah at Salt Lake City, UT to Loma Linda University in Loma Linda, CA. To accommodate the different time zones the class start times were rearranged, with the Loma Linda class beginning at 8:00 a.m. and Salt Lake City class at 9:00 a.m. Mary VanAntwerp and Jean Roehrs were the broadcast instructors; Janet Zipser from the National Library of Medicine (NLM) was the observer in Loma Linda; and Maureen Czujak the NTCC observer in Salt Lake City.

Overall, the broadcast was deemed a success. The Loma Linda site used NetMeeting technology, which worked very well with the Polycom technology installed at Salt Lake City. A major problem was encountered around noon when the audio from Salt Lake City began to break up and the attendees in Loma Linda received only every fifth word spoken. The problem took approximately 20 minutes to correct and was resolved by disconnecting and establishing a new connection from the Salt Lake City site. After that the rest of the class proceeded smoothly and uneventfully. Unrelated to the broadcast technology, participants at the Loma Linda site encountered a bizarre PubMed problem: several of the Loma Linda workstations were unable to display several search features, preventing some of the attendees from completing the hands-on exercises towards the end of the class. Other than that glitch the projection equipment at both sites was excellent, and for future classes the equipment, along with room setup and design, will be taken into consideration.

The contact individuals at both sites, Sharon Dennis and Claire Hamasu at Salt Lake City and Carlene Drake at Loma Linda, along with Janet Zipser at NLM, worked very hard during the preliminary stages to plan the broadcast and test and observe functions during the months leading up to the actual class broadcast. When preparing future classes, the time spent on preparation must be factored in and is definitely not something to be taken lightly.

It was interesting to note that only four questions were asked by participants at both sites—a highly unusual occurrence and quite remarkable; normally participants have numerous questions throughout the class session. Were individuals fearful of the technology? Did they not like to use a microphone? Individuals had a choice of either using the microphone or a web-based software product known as "ActiveClass."* For future classes a way must be found to navigate around this apparent apprehension and timidity.

The National Training Center and Clearinghouse and NLM plan to conduct more of these classes on an experimental basis, and are looking for sites that have the technology to broadcast a "live" class, as well as sites that have the capabilities to receive live broadcasts and are willing to hold a class at their institution. If your institution would be interested in hosting a broadcast PubMed class, please contact either Maureen Czujak (*mczujak@nyam.org*) or Janet Zipser (*jzipser@mail.nlm.nih.gov*). The NTCC is looking specifically for sites to broadcast the class to and for sites that it does not usually teach classes at. Loma Linda is not usually on the NTCC training schedule; by participating in the live broadcast, the participants at that site were most appreciative that they did not have to drive to Los Angeles, Davis, or San Francisco for NLM training.

*ActiveClass employs wireless computing via PDA's and laptop computers in order to encourage classroom participation from students who might otherwise not participate. It permits students to "silently" ask questions, answer questions, and provide other types of feedback. The results are aggregated and then broadcast to all the students and the teacher, thereby facilitating and spurring verbal discussion.

eBooks Available!

Did you know that you have access to 48 technology and management books online? And there is no cost for you to access these books? Take a look at: *http://nnlm.gov/mcr/education/netlibrary.php.*

The MidContinental Region subscribes to the technology and management collection in NetLibrary. This provides you with easy access to eBooks, digital versions of print books. They are available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week from any location.

Accessing the Collection

When you enter the site, you may be prompted for a User ID and Password. If so, you would need to register, but there is no fee for utilization of this service. Once you have accessed the site, view a list of all the eBooks in the collection by clicking on "List All Resources in Your Library's eContent Collection".

If you are searching for an eBook, you can do so from the Basic or Advanced Search pages. And once you retrieve a list of Search Results, you may choose to immediately view an eBook or you may choose to see additional information about a title.

When viewing an eBook, besides being able to navigate through the content page by page, you have the ability to navigate using the Table of Contents or to search the full text of the eBook. Some of the available titles include: *301 Ways to Have Fun At Work, The Benchmarking Book, and Beyond Change Management : Advanced Strategies for Today's Transformational Leaders.*

In addition, there are more than 3000 titles that are available publicly, many which are literature classics.

Keeping You Informed

One of our goals at the MidContinental Region is to keep you informed on current topics and provide you the necessary tools to navigate the often confusing waters of technology and management improvement. By providing this resource, we hope we have taken a step in that direction.

—*M. Magee*

Do You BLOG?

As I sat down to write this article on the new NN/LM MCR blog "Bringing Health Information to the Community," I tried to think of how to structure the information I wanted to share. After several starts, I realized that there are complex issues that need to be covered and the easiest way to organize this was to think about it in terms of questions I would answer: What is a blog? Why would a medical librarian have a blog? How can NN/LM members use the MCR blog? Should you start your own blog?

What is a blog?

A blog is, at its most basic level, a web log (web + log = blog) centered on a particular person or topic. Most blogs are essentially online diaries where an individual recounts the activities of his or her life. Like a diary, blogs are arranged chronologically by date. However, blogs can also be a place to post opinions or information updates on a particular topic, and are becoming more and more useful in the business and professional world.

Blogs Defined

Blog *(noun)*: a weblog; (**blogs, blogging, blogged**).

Blogging *(verb)*: add new material to or regularly update a weblog.

Blogger *(noun)*: one who blogs.

Why blog?

Let me tell you that at first, the idea of keeping a blog did not thrill me. Most of the blogs I had read were personal ruminations on things that were important to the author, but that often seemed trivial to me. Then I started to see that librarians used this technology as a valuable resource tool, and I started paying more attention.

In our region, several medical librarians keep their institution's staff up to date with highly important and relevant posts to their blogs. I realized, as with all technology, it's how you use the blog that makes it a good tool. So, a medical librarian keeps a blog in order to communicate quickly and efficiently with patrons, and to demonstrate the library's value as an information resource.

MCR Community Health Blog

The first NN/LM MCR blog focuses on health information that is community based. How is that of use to health sciences librarians?

Many students and faculty at academic institutions, as well as health care providers at hospitals, are involved in community projects outside the walls of their professional workplace. They are in clinics, K-12 schools, churches, and other community organizations, providing outreach to patients beyond the traditional office visit or classroom.

As their information resource, they turn to you to find materials that will expand their ability to provide good care to the community, and you in turn can turn to the blog—a wealth of information, always available from the Inner City/Minority Health/Community Outreach page of the MCR web site (*http://www.nnlm.gov/mcr/inner_city*).

For example, Network Member Angie Arner, Coordinator of Consumer Health Library Services, a service of the John Moritz Library at Nebraska Methodist College, puts together two weekly e-news bulletins. One covers Consumer Health and the other Diversity News and Resources, including issues of health disparities. She e-mails these bulletins each week to College personnel, Methodist Health System staff, and community health care professionals.

Each week, Angie's name is seen in an email that provides current, relevant information, and she reminds her patrons of her value to them. Angie uses the blog as one of her resources in putting together these bulletins, along with the RML news, postings from other electronic discussion lists, and local, regional and national news. So, here is the answer to question three, or at least one answer. I have found such creativity among the medical librarians in this region, that I am sure you have already thought of other ways to use this blog.

I hope you find that the MCR blog is a useful tool for you. I know in the short time I've been keeping the blog, I've changed from a hesitant user/author to a blog promoter!

Should YOU Blog?

The final question is whether or not you should develop your own blog. Think about the kinds of information you want to share with your patrons. Are there resources you want to highlight on a daily or weekly basis? Do you find yourself saying "I wish my patrons knew….." over and over again? If so, you might consider using a blog as a tool to communicate with your patrons. Once it is set up, the time it takes to post is minimal, and the rewards are well worth the five to ten minutes you might spend on your posts.

Blogging Software

If you would like to set up your own blog, you can choose from a variety of online blogging hosting services, or ask your system administrator to install free software for you.

One of the easiest ways to begin experimenting with a blog is to use Blogger, a free service at *http://www.blogger.com*. The Blogger service does not require any technical expertise; you can get started in a few minutes. You can use a pre-existing template provided by Blogger or you can provide your own template. Publishing is easy, just fill out a web form and click the "Publish" button. If you have FTP access to your own web site, you can also publish your blog directly on your web site.

While Blogger is a good place to start experimenting, you may find that you need additional features; for that reason, we chose a popular blogging software program called MovableType for the MCR blog (see *http://www.movabletype.org*).

MovableType can be downloaded for free, non-commercial use (the organization asks that you donate money if you like the software). The initial installation and set-up of MovableType requires some technical expertise, so you should ask your system administrator to set up the software for you. Once the software has been installed, you can configure and manage your blog using a web-based interface. The default templates in MovableType create a very elegant looking blog, but you can also customize the templates to your individual preference.

For a recent comparison of blog hosting services and software, see: *http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,4149,1403731,00.asp*.

—*S. Blackwell and S. Dennis*

Measuring Your Impact: Using Evaluation to Demonstrate Value

The Colorado Council of Medical Libraries sponsored a new workshop, *Measuring Your Impact: Using Evaluation to Demonstrate Value*, in Denver on April 2, 2004. Betsy Kelly, the MCR Assessment and Evaluation Liaison, along with Maryanne Blake, Education and Communication Coordinator from the Pacific Northwest Regional Medical Library, and Cathy Burroughs, Assistant Director of the Outreach Evaluation Resource Center, developed the workshop in response to growing concerns about hospital library closures.

Hospital libraries are facing numerous challenges. These include the rising cost of library resources, cuts to library budgets and staffing, and increased workloads. At the same time, the "everything is free on the Internet" syndrome is rampant. Librarians are looking for ways to demonstrate their value to their institutions not only to save their jobs but to ensure that health care professionals and patients and their families have ready, reliable access to health information.

Demonstrating Value

Librarians may know instinctively, may have statistics to show that library resources—both staff and print/electronic—are used by their communities, but hospital administrators need more proof than the number of books and journals shelved, the number of searches conducted and the number of interlibrary loans processed.

Demonstrating value can show the impact of the library on the organization's mission and goals, show accountability and serve as an advocacy and marketing tool. Being proactive rather than reactive is imperative.

Address the Mission

The workshop emphasized the importance of librarians understanding and addressing the organizational mission when developing evaluation plans. The Librarian's Survival Kit on the MLA web site stresses: "No matter what the reason, address the priorities of the organization as a whole, instead of attending only to the needs of the library. Do not use your jargon; use their jargon…Show that you meet the needs and further the goals of the organization" (*http://mlanet.org/resources/survive/survive3.html*).

An outstanding tool from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation states, "When programs operate in real communities where influences and forces are beyond your control, evaluation is generally more about documenting a program's contribution than proving something" (W.K. Kellogg Logic Model Guide, page 17).

Class Content

The workshop included discussions about assessing the library and its communities, choosing what to evaluate, developing a logic model that describes the activities and resources needed to provide library services, designing an evaluation plan, collecting and making sense of the data and communicating results.

Assess then Plan

Participants learned that the assessment phase will help the evaluator understand needs, desires and problems, validate assumptions about services, and provide data for later evaluation. When choosing what to evaluate, consider who wants or needs to know what, what users feel is important, and what stakeholders want to have evaluated.

Using the "plan backward, implement forward" concept, once you know where you want to go you can plan how to get there. Logic models help articulate what you do or will do to get where you want to go. The evaluation plan describes the tools that will be used and the resources needed to carry out the evaluation. It also defines "success"—how you know that you have achieved your goals.

Evaluate and Report

Knowing what you want to measure will dictate whether surveys, observations, skill tests, self reporting through interviews or focus groups, or other measures are most appropriate. Knowing who will use the results of your evaluation will help you narrow your data collection approach. Some of the currently popular analysis tools discussed include cost/benefit analysis, return on investment, balanced scorecard approach and benchmarking.

Finally, the participants considered report results. Issues such as audience, the purpose or use of the report, format, and dissemination strategies will affect who receives an executive summary, charts and graphs, or the full report. It is important to have interested parties outside the library review drafts to ensure there is a clear link between conclusions, recommendations, results and the original evaluation question.

While the traditional written report is always useful, librarians are encouraged to be creative. Photo essays, posters, Q&As on library websites, presentations to hospital professional and administrative staff, and publications in respected journals are all effective ways to get your message across—the professionally managed hospital library is an invaluable and irreplaceable resource for administrators, practitioners, patients and families and the greater community.

Here to Help

Documenting your value to your organization is a topic of importance to hospital libraries, and so it is also important to your RML. Materials from the class are available online at *http://nnlm.gov/evaluation/hospital_eval/index.html*, and additional information on assessment and evaluation can be found in *Measuring the Difference: Guide to Planning and Evaluating Health Information Outreach*, available online at *http://nnlm.gov/evaluation/guide/*. Although *Measuring the Difference* deals primarily with outreach, the evaluation information and tools included are invaluable.

Groups in the region interested in hosting the complete class should contact Betsy Kelly.

—B. Kelly

Linux for Librarians

Bob Pisciotta
Associate Director and Head of Technical Services
Dykes Library, University of Kansas Medical Center
bpisciot@kumc.edu

While library budgets are generally in the dumps, libraries have no shortage of old and slow computers. I'm talking about machines in the five-year-old range: 233 MHz Pentium 2s and up with 32 MEG of RAM and up. What are you doing with these machines? Limping along with Windows 95 (or even 3.1)? Storing them in the back with your excess Princeton files? Well, it's possible to breathe new life into these PCs with an operating system formerly reserved only for techie geeks: Linux.

Yes, Linux. The newest distributions are easier for mere mortals to use, and Linux is now a reasonable option for a desktop operating system. Let's take a closer look.

What's Your Flavor?

There are many, many distributions (distros to the cognoscenti) available for desktop use. The four I recommend are: Suse Linux, Mandrake Linux, Linspire (formerly known as Lindows), and Xandros Linux. All four are available for purchase generally in standard and premium versions. Costs will run from about $30 to around $90. Suse and Mandrake also have versions that can be downloaded without charge—but the free versions do not offer any manufacturer support. But hey, you're a librarian and you can figure this out, so feel free to be brave.

What You'll Get

Linux is Linux. All versions will offer nearly identical versions of the core Linux kernel. What distinguishes the packages are the systems they provide to install and manage the software. The distros also offer different packages of desktops and software. Here's what to look for.

Installation

All Linux versions will offer a simplified installer. Today's Linux installers mostly succeed at detecting the pieces of your PC: memory, CPU chip, video card, monitor, hard drive, network cards, and modem. Most Linux installations will proceed without a hitch. Linux installers have gotten better at detecting PCMCIA slots (on notebook machines) and USB connections, but the installers sometimes choke on the newest types of USB peripherals. This, of course, is not a problem with your old and slow machine which may not even have USB slots.

Get Your Linux Here!

Suse Linux
http://www.suse.com/us/

Mandrake Linux
http://www.mandrakelinux.com/en-us/

Linspire
http://www.linspire.com/

Xandros Linux
http://www.xandros.com/

Desktops

There are two graphical desktops in the Linux world: KDE and Gnome. Both work great and the choice is strictly personal. You can actually run both on your system and give them a try.

Applications

Most distros will offer many applications for you to install on your system. Here's a summary of what's available of interest to a librarian:

Browsers: Mozilla (a Netscape clone), Galeon, and Konquerer are usually provided by most distros. A wonderful browser called Opera is also available for Linux. There's a version of Acrobat reader for Linux installations. The pay distros (but not necessarily the free ones) will also provide installations of Flash and Java. These are simply essential for a seamless web experience.

Productivity: There's only one choice, but it's a good one: OpenOffice. The current version is 1.1.1. OpenOffice provides software that's fully compatible with Microsoft Word, Excel and Power Point (all of your existing MS Office files should work in OpenOffice). Image processing is available using software called "The Gimp." There are also database products in the Linux world (but in truth, I've stuck with MS Access).

Other stuff: MP3 players: yup. CD burners: ditto. Chat: GAIM or KOPETE. Email: you'll likely be reaching email through a web client, but there are applications that take the place of Outlook Express. There's a Linux client that will access Exchange servers, but this is an advanced concept. Groupwise on Linux will be available soon.

Installing Other Stuff

There's a panoply of Linux software out there, and it's almost all free! Linux distros handle installations differently, but most use RPMs (for Redhat Package Manager). RPMs are the preferred means of installing new apps since this will allow satisfactory integration of the software with your operating system.

Wait! I Can't Live Without Windows!

Okay, you're using some applications that exist only in the Windows universe (like your library system's circulation or acquisitions client). Fear not, you have some options.

You can dual boot the machine. Most Linux distros now easily detect existing Windows installations, and install Linux alongside. Usually, they'll provide you with a bootloader that will allow you to choose either Windows or Linux when you start. Of course, your copy of Windows will run as slowly as ever, but that's life. If you plan on this approach, you MUST make a backup of all important files on your machine. I learned this lesson the hard way. As a matter of fact, a file backup is never a bad idea when installing Linux, no matter how you do it.

If you don't want to dual boot, you can use a Windows emulator. The preferred emulator is called WINE. It allows you to run Windows applications without actually running Windows. I've tried it and didn't think it worked well.

For a small investment, you can run Win4Lin. This application allows you to run a copy of Windows 95/98 within Linux. As a result, Windows actually works better, since it is borrowing drivers from Linux. Your Windows apps will run great in this environment. Win4Lin will cost you about $100.

PC Revival Within Reach

The beauty of Linux is that it works wonderfully on older PCs. You'll be amazed at the pep your old machine displays when running Linux. The basic installations provide almost everything needed by a typical PC user in an easy-to-use package. Plus, system installation and maintenance are much improved.

It's indisputable: Linux is not just for geeks anymore.

NLM Techical Bulletin
2004 March-April Issue No. 337

http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/techbull/ma04/ma04_issue_cover.html

Technical Notes: - el

New Book Added to NCBI Bookshelf

Additional Digitized Back Issues Available in PubMed Central®

New Clinical Alert Issued

ChemID*plus* Update

Review of PDA Applications in Toxicology and Environmental Health

New TOXNET Resource: International Toxicity Estimates For Rick (ITER) Database

Link to Clinical Queries Added to MeSH® Database - e2

New feature added to Links pull-down menu.

PubMed Central™: New Journals Participating and New Content Added - e3

New Journals Are Participating and Content From Already-participating Journals Has Been Added.

Entrez Programming Redesign Improves PubMed® - e4

PubMed improves the way search queries are interpreted.

NLM Classification 2004 Edition Now Available - e5

Additions and changes to the schedules and index.

New Look for NLM® Web Site Coming Soon - e6

NLM main Web site redesign to be released May 10, 2004.

2004 MLA Meeting Reminder and Invitation - e7

NLM will offer exhibits, demonstrations, classes, tours, and other programming during the May 21-26 meeting.

PubMed® History Feature To Include Extra Options - e8

Users will be able to delete individual search statements from the History, as well as combine History statements in a search more easily.

Unified Medical Language System® (UMLS®) Changes - e9

The UMLS Web site has been restructured to enhance access to existing information and to add new information to improve the understanding of and access to the UMLS resources.

NLM @ MLA!

NLM Online Users' Meeting "Sunrise Seminar" • Monday, May 24, 7:00–8:15 AM
International Ballroom East
NLM staff will highlight recent accomplishments and indicate new developments in a variety of online systems, including MEDLINE®/PubMed®, MedlinePlus®, and DOCLINE®.

NLM Update • Tuesday, May 25, 1:00–2:00 PM • International Ballroom Center
Speakers: Kent Smith, Deputy Director; Marj Cahn, Head, National Information Center on Health Services Research and Health Care Technology (NICHSR); Betsy Humphreys, Associate Director for Library Operations
The NLM Update will be made available for viewing via the NIH Videocasting Web site a few days after the MLA Annual Meeting concludes.

MedlinePlus Go Local Informational Meeting • Monday, May 24, 5:00–6:30 PM • Georgetown West

PubMed LinkOut User Meeting • Monday, May 24, 5:00–6:30 PM • Military Room

Electronic Fund Transfer System (EFTS) Users Meeting • Wednesday, May 26, 7:30–9:00 AM • Military Room

Hospital Internet Access Task Force Open Forum • Monday, May 24, 2:30–3:30 PM • Location: Georgetown East

In addition, NLM and NN/LM staff will be teaching CE courses, participating in the MLA Sharing Roundtables and section-sponsored programming, and making presentations in the exhibit theater every half hour. Tours of NLM are also available. For a complete list of programs, visit *http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/techbull/ma04/ma04_mla.html*.

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