

# The National Library of Medicine: What Is New and Relevant to Editors?

*Chair:*

**Lois Ann Colaiaanni**

National Library of Medicine  
Bethesda, Maryland

*Speakers:*

**Barbara Rapp**

National Library of Medicine  
Bethesda, Maryland

**Eve-Marie Lacroix**

National Library of Medicine  
Bethesda, Maryland

*Reporter:*

**Marissa Barlow**

Allen Press Inc  
Lawrence, Kansas

What's new at the National Library of Medicine (NLM) that's of interest to editors and CBE members? For starters, Vice President Gore announced that MEDLINE is now a free service. Free MEDLINE ensures that researchers, scientists, publishers, and ordinary citizens can have access to the formidable databases at NLM. In addition, a system has been developed for publishers to submit journal contents via FTP (file transfer protocol), making the citations available almost simultaneously with journal distribution. The interlibrary loan division conducted an impressive analysis of requests and use that demonstrated what a powerful resource NLM has become.

Lois Ann Colaiaanni introduced the attendees to the structure of NLM, including descriptions of PubMed, Internet Grateful Med, and Loansome Doc. She explained that PubMed citations are free but can be connected to publisher sites for paid, full-text versions of documents or to Loansome Doc, a document-delivery system. Participants were encouraged to get on line and search by key words, author names, article

titles, languages, sources, and unique identifier (UI) numbers, which are necessary for interlibrary loan requests. In true Web fashion, a "Related Articles" button provides access to similar articles and another button to documents by the same author. Internet Grateful Med provides access to even more databases (such as the AIDS database).

Why search? Colaiaanni had a list of helpful possibilities: Check references, see what is published on a particular subject, identify

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**NLM's uniform resource  
locator (URL) is  
[www.nlm.nih.gov/](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/)**

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articles by a particular author, find related articles, and determine which indexing terms are applicable to articles in your own journal. Other available resources include the History of Medicine Division's images (available for purchase), a list of journals found in Index Medicus, fact sheets, and the electronic version of the NLM Technical Bulletin. NLM's uniform resource locator (URL) is [www.nlm.nih.gov/](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/). Colaiaanni invited participants to visit the site and address questions to [custserv@nlm.nih.gov](mailto:custserv@nlm.nih.gov).

Barbara Rapp concentrated on PubMed's Partnership with Publishers. Publishers send SGML-formatted files of bibliographic information for their journal articles via FTP. URLs can be included that link from PubMed to the publisher's Web site and vice versa, as well as to other National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) services, such as GenBank. The full process for SGML tagging and communication with NCBI is provided at [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/publisher.html](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/publisher.html). Questions can be forwarded to [publisher@ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](mailto:publisher@ncbi.nlm.nih.gov). Rapp also called attention to the specific resources available to publishers, including

PubMed Citation Matcher, PubMed Journal Browser, a list of journals that provide full-text services, and a full list of PubMed journals.

Eve-Marie Lacroix discussed interlibrary loans (ILLs) and document delivery. The ILL system provides library-to-library loans of original materials or copies of articles. Such requests are made on behalf of researchers, scholars, students, and health practitioners. Most libraries place these requests through NLM's DOCLINE, a request and routing system. There are almost 3000 DOCLINE libraries in the United States and Canada. Lacroix shared the results of a study that determined journal-title and journal-specific article use. The data, 2.69 million records, were drawn from ILL transactions through DOCLINE and the NLM serials system. Lacroix reported that 84% of DOCLINE requests were filled. Of the 19000 journal titles requested, 15953 were available. At some time, 8074 journals were indexed in MEDLINE; 3896 are currently on the rolls. Lacroix also noted that 97% of all journal articles were requested 5 or fewer times.

Lacroix pointed out that requests directly from NLM are usually a last resort for the National Network of Libraries of Medicine. Such requests generally have about a 75% chance of being filled. NLM itself processes about 10% of ILL requests. It received 334000 requests for journal articles in 1997 and was able to fill 251000 of them.

This session provided information that is critically important to publishers of medical journals and that is vital to the competitive journal-producing market. NLM has created a state-of-the-art, and obviously efficient, system and has made the benefits easily and freely accessible to all interested parties. ■