

Thoughts from the State Librarian

by Christie Brandau, State Librarian



I heard a speaker recently who said that she had solved her e-mail overload problem by creating a controlled list of subject headings. Staff and others who wished to contact her were asked to choose the subject from the list when they sent an e-mail, thus making it easier for her to organize her in-box. Would you believe that the speaker was a librarian?

Whether we like it or not, we can do little to stem the tide of e-mails, or of change of any type. But librarians can utilize new technologies to do what we've always done best: provide excellent service to our customers.

I've been playing with the virtual 3-D world called Second Life (www.secondlife.com). Although I've never been very interested in computer games or avatars, Second Life is fascinating! There are over one million folks who participate, and it is being taken very seriously by a number of commercial and educational groups. Consider these recent events on Second Life: the American Cancer Society held a version of the Relay for Life national fund raiser; Toyota created a virtual replica of the Scion; Reuters has opened a news bureau in Second Life; and MTV held a fashion show. And one of the most creative ventures is being undertaken by librarians who have made virtual resources available in an area called "Info Island". Think this sounds like science fiction? Think again--it may be the way we help our patrons find resources and learn information literacy in the near future.

The heart of the new librarianship is to meet patrons where they are, and not where we think they should be. Maybe they will be on Second Life, or MySpace, or on a computer at Starbucks. But I'm pretty sure they *won't* be sitting at their keyboards perusing a controlled list of subject headings in order to send e-mail!

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