What can the Royal Pharmaceutical Society’s library do for you?

In this article, Martha Krumbach, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society’s information access and resource manager, outlines the various services that the Society’s library is able to offer its members, and invites members to suggest new services that they would like to see

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Answering members’ enquiries is an important part of my job. From tracking down articles without knowing the author or the title through showing members how to use databases and conducting literature searches, the library has been and is members’ first port of call if they are looking for information resources.

Imagine you are using the online resources of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society’s library for the first time. You e-mail the library and receive a response showing you how to access the material. Not quite confident about searching the databases, you call the librarian, who takes the time to explain these to you and discusses how you might best find the information you are looking for. Still wanting to know more, you sign up to the free webinar that the library is running this spring (see Panel).

Or imagine you are a community pharmacist, doing a postgraduate degree. You want to write about the economics of running a pharmacy, but you are not even sure where to start. You call the library and have a chat with the librarian, which helps you clarify what questions you need to ask. You get a few suggestions of books and articles on the topic. You borrow them from your university or NHS library and start writing the paper.

Or maybe you are an experienced hospital pharmacist. You are looking into aspects of using electronic tracking systems in hospitals. You contact the library and request a literature search. A few days later you receive a list with hundreds of recent, relevant citations.

All of these are real ways by which the library has helped members achieve their aims recently.

The current situation

In recent months, many members have contacted the library or have written to The Pharmaceutical Journal with questions and comments about the library’s future. I am pleased that members have shown such interest in the library and I would like to explain where we are now.

The lending and document delivery services both stopped at the end of 2009. (More details about why this decision was taken are available online at pharmacyplb.com/library.aspx.) The library now concentrates on maintaining the electronic collection and our existing services as well as creating new ones. We continue to serve all our customers equally, no matter where in Britain they live. We are also aiming to provide as much value as we possibly can, saving money internally to reinvest in resources for members.

One of the ways we provide members with value for money is by providing the professional body with the information resources it needs to do the best job it can for members. Staff can access many different resources, including books, pharmacopoeias, electronic journals and databases, through the library. The library works particularly closely with the Society’s Information and Advisory Service to make sure its staff have the current and relevant information resources and skills they need to answer members’ questions. However, we support all other parts of the organisation as well.

Comments please

The library staff are looking forward to developing member services further and, as part of this process, would value members’ comments, ideas and suggestions (see Panel) about other services they would like to see available from the library.

■ e-Resources The library subscribes to electronic resources members can access at any time from anywhere in the world through myRPSGB (https://my.rpsgb.org). If members have problems getting into the site, they can contact library staff and we will help them get started.

In the e-library members can access four databases with over 1,700 full text journals, as well as our 16 e-books, including MedLine and International Pharmaceutical Abstracts.

■ Information support From straightforward tracking down of citations to complex literature searches, the Society’s library is members’ first port of call, if they are trying to find information on books, articles, guidelines etc. If we do not know the answer to a member’s enquiry, we will know who does and will pass the member on to them.

Even if a member is unsure what the exact question is he or she is trying to find an answer to, we will talk it through, help members clarify what they are looking for and then support them in finding the resources they need.

■ Information skills sessions To help members get the most out of our electronic resources, the library is running a series of webinars. These began on 18 March 2010 and will continue throughout the spring. Details of the next webinar can be found on p323.

Sessions will cover a wide range of topics from databases, search strategies to useful internet tools.

Full details and registration are available at https://rpsgb.webex.com.

■ Current awareness Finding out what is going on in their particular field at any given time is vital for members’ work and continuing professional development. The library is therefore developing a current awareness service for members, tailored to their interests.

Contacting the library

■ The Royal Pharmaceutical Society’s library is open from 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm on Mondays to Fridays (tel 020 7572 2300, e-mail library@rpsgb.org)