

use of automation technology, and the establishment of the national online bibliographic database (NBINet). The report outlines the development and current status of library automation in Taiwan and discusses issues related to cooperative cataloging of Chinese-language materials at the international level. Contact Elisa Topper at (800) 545-2433, ext. 2523, or elisa.topper@ala.org to request a copy.

Consortia sign agreement with Encyclopædia Britannica

Four university consortia have signed agreements with Encyclopædia Britannica, bringing the number of college students with access to Britannica Online to well over one million. Signing agreements with Britannica were seven

members of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), consisting primarily of Big Ten universities; 16 members of OhioLink, a consortium of colleges and universities in Ohio; the University System of Georgia, with 33 member schools; and the Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA), a consortium of the 39 publicly supported colleges and universities in Virginia, as well as a number of private institutions.

Britannica Online contains the entire text of the 44-million-word Encyclopædia Britannica, more than 2,200 graphics and illustrations, and thousands of direct links to other sources of information on the Internet related to topics covered in Britannica Online. Users can ask questions and receive a list of articles ranked according to their relevance to the query.

Communicating via computer in library credit courses

Computer-mediated communication has recently been used to enhance library credit courses at Penn State University's Berks Campus. Computer-mediated communication, or CMC, includes vehicles such as electronic mail, electronic conferences, and computer bulletin boards. CMC has been used successfully in a variety of college courses, and its asynchronicity has been found to increase the efficiency and flexibility of the classroom.

In an independent study library credit course in spring 1995, an electronic conference (a listserv) was used with three students to facilitate communication among students and library faculty. Patrick Crispin's "Roadmap for the Information Superhighway Internet Training Workshop" was sent via the class listserv to the students; communication between faculty and students was increased via e-mail; and students were required to post some assignments to the class listserv. Students reported positive reactions to the use of CMC. Their level of comfort with e-mail and electronic conferencing increased, they enjoyed and learned much from the "Roadmap," and they appreciated the increased availability of faculty via e-mail.

In fall 1995, in another library credit course which is part of a special computer-based learning project called Project Vision, twenty students using IBM laptop computers used several forms of computer-mediated commu-

nication with faculty. A World Wide Web page was created for the course, which included the syllabus and assignment list, and students were taught the use of the Netscape browser to access the Web. Students turn in assignments via e-mail, and they can use e-mail to ask questions of faculty at any time. FirstClass, a computer conferencing software, is used to hold some group discussions, and students can use e-mail and computer "chat" software called PowWow to communicate with each other outside of class. Training in the various technologies was part of this course, which was team-taught with Computer Center personnel and three other faculty. Most students have responded positively to the course and have done well, and ongoing evaluation will determine what elements of this experiment can be broadened to other courses.

Key conditions for success of CMC include student access to computers (preferably from homes or dormitories, as well as a campus Computer Center); availability of training for the students in e-mail and any software they are asked to use; required use of the technology by students as part of class participation; and planning by the instructor for how the technology will be used. In these library courses, computer-mediated communication has enhanced class contact and increased the flexibility of the courses.—*Nancy H. Dewald, Penn State Berks Campus, Reading*