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# A day in the life of Gillian Anderson, UHI (University of the Highlands and Islands) Librarian



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09.35\* Arrive at the Highland Theological College (HTC) in Dingwall, Ross-shire, which is my hosting academic partner – in other words, where my office is. UHI staff are truly dispersed. Although our institutional base is the UHI executive office in Inverness, most staff are personally hosted by different academic partner colleges, such as Lews Castle College in Stornoway and Lochaber College in Fort William. My previous library systems administrator lived and worked in Shetland. I am pleased to be based in HTC, as it has a good academic feel, being research- and postgraduate-orientated. The fact that it is less than five miles from home is a bonus!

[\* This will provoke a smile for those who know me well – I am most definitely not a morning person!]

09.40 Am still outside the staff door wondering why the entrance code won't work. A lecturer appears from his car and asks me if I've forgotten that the code was changed a week earlier. Realise that I haven't been in my office for nearly a fortnight, so did not know about the change of code. It's quite common for me to go more than a week without visiting my office; meetings and committees all take place in Inverness, fifteen miles south of Dingwall, and visits to academic partner colleges, especially those on the islands, can involve an overnight stay. Being chair of SHEDL (Scottish Higher Education Digital Library) and being on the business committee of SCURL (Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries) involves regular meetings in both Edinburgh and Glasgow.

09.45 Re-acquaint myself with my office, noting still no sign of a miracle of in absentia desk-tidying. Connect laptop up to docking station and go in search of coffee. With being peripatetic, as it were, my laptop goes everywhere with me. I have

become adept at zoning out noise and crowds in airport departure lounges, trains, cafés and so on, to be able to work while travelling. (Jon Purcell of Durham jokes that when he phones me I am often in my usual office – a train!) Attending a SHEDL or SCURL meeting in Edinburgh or Glasgow means a train journey of four hours each way. I have a Blackberry and also mobile laptop internet connectivity. Return at 09.50 with coffee and apologies from the college's facilities manager ringing in my ears about the staff-door code change. Although I checked my e-mails before leaving home, I have a quick check again before starting up my desktop VC (video conferencing facility) for a meeting.

10.00–12.30 Am VC-ing into a steering group meeting of the JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) regional support centre (RSC) north and east, of which I am a member. It can be lonely being the only person VC-ing into a meeting, as you miss out on the networking pre- and post-meeting (not to mention lunch); it's a call that has to be made whether to travel for eight hours for a two and a half hour meeting or whether to VC in. As the RSC steering group is technologically savvy, this time I am VC-ing in. I will attend the next RSC steering group meeting in June in person, when the long summer days make an early-start/late-return journey no hardship.

10.00–12.30 (also) Have a few messenger conversations with colleagues, and answer a few e-mails. One of the plus sides to VC-ing into meetings is multi-tasking during less relevant parts of the agenda ...!

12.30–13.15 Pop along Dingwall High Street to the baker's for a sandwich. In process of doing so I bump into my church minister and another UHI colleague hosted by HTC, who is responsible for student services but whom I never seem to meet in the college. While munching back at my desk I try to work out if it's possible to go from Inverness to Edinburgh via Fort William and get back in time to Inverness to catch a flight to Stornoway in Lewis, involving only two nights away and being in each of the locations at the right times for each of the meetings being arranged. It proves impossible, so in order not to be away from home for three nights in a row, I debate whether to re-arrange the meeting in Stornoway for the week prior to the Fort William/Edinburgh trip or the week after. Decide that the week after is leaving it too late, so opt for the week before, which means I only have to juggle the arrangements for a trip to Orkney and to Stornoway. Luckily, it is possible to fly to and back from Orkney in a day. Ask my admin support

to book the car hire, flights and hotels I've chosen, and confirm the meetings.

13.15–14.00 Continue an e-mail debate with one of our retired professors over access to e-journal subscriptions (he obviously has a lot of time on his hands); report a fault with my desk-phone voice-mail to the helpdesk; take a call from a supplier who will be told to contact the library managers of each of UHI's academic partner colleges when he stops for breath; and try to call three academic partner library managers about some different issues, but none are available, so resort to e-mails instead.

14.00–14.45 Monthly follow-up meeting with the consultant working on our 'E-resource Discoverability' project, which is a very small off-shoot of the larger IT useability project for which UHI has European funding. The meeting is by VC as the consultant is based in Shetland, but this time I am in a VC suite in HTC as both the e-resource manager and the systems administrator have joined me. Leave satisfied that the consultant is on schedule and is keeping the necessary records of work undertaken, and leave the others talking about matters of detail regarding the work.

14.45–15.00 Confirm arrangements by e-mail for a SHEDL working group meeting with Jill Evans, the SCURL service development manager and have a telephone discussion with Tony Kidd of Glasgow University regarding potential outcomes of one of the agenda items. SHEDL has been a most successful venture for SCURL, with all HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) willing and responsive for sharing spend and usage data in order to further the success of this all-Scotland procurement for e-journal content; at working group meetings we usually get 100 per cent attendance, that is, representation from each of the nineteen HEIs in Scotland.

15.00–15.45 Draft a response for the academic standards and quality committee regarding library service strategy. Note to myself that I must instigate a briefing paper for certain groups of senior academics / senior management, as an aid to improving understanding of parameters of quality in respect of library issues. Start to draft such a document. Lay it aside in order to ...

15.45–16.15 Meet (in person this time) with e-resources manager to listen to her concerns over a complex business process relating to the checking and identifying of e-books. Business processes in UHI can be more complex than expected, mostly as a consequence of each academic partner college being a separate legal entity with its own board of

governors, financial systems, reporting structures and so on. Yet these partners provide the teaching for UHI undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, and library support is a 'mixed-economy' model. Sometimes things that should be straightforward are instead quite convoluted.

16.15–16.30 Phone the academic partner library managers that I tried to get hold of earlier. Discuss the agenda for the forthcoming UHI library managers' quarterly meeting with the academic library manager who is in the chair; receive feedback from another who had represented the library service at a course re-validation; and listen to a third's concerns about bookfund cuts.

16.30–16.45 Set up some internal meetings: (i) with the academic registrar to discuss reviewing the point at which library services become involved in the approval process for new courses; (ii) with my colleague, the head of learning technology, to investigate the possibilities of an improved technological solution to record-keeping for CLA (UK Copyright Licensing Agency) licence compliance, as requested of me by learning and teaching committee; (iii) with the systems administrator regarding work priorities; (iv) a catch-up meeting with my line manager, the director of learning.

16.45–17.00 Check over the latest set of monthly management accounts just mailed through by finance, and seek clarification on a couple of PO (Purchase Order) commitments and a sort out a mis-coded payment. Wield the calculator to do a few scribbled budget projections for my own satisfaction.

17.00–18.00 My favourite time of the working day. Grab another coffee and settle down to reply to e-mails and read reports and papers. Today I need to cast an eye over the proposed institutional records management taxonomy prior to the upcoming RM project board meeting next week. I read the Principal's briefing on the effects of the cap on student numbers on course development and provision. UHI is a small HEI with less than 4,000 FTE students, and the cap is quite worrying with regard to the ongoing growth and development of the institution. Whatever happens, though, UHI is still on course for receiving university title in 2011. Head home at 18.00.

18.20 Pour glass of lovely chilled Pinot Grigio.