

# FOCUS on Cornell University Library

## Life sciences libraries aren't just for books anymore – they're wired

BY JANET MCCUE, JEAN POLAND AND CAROLYN REID

Among the workplace amenities that life scientists value is a good library, according to a survey published recently by *The Scientist*. Cornell, which has one of the best library systems in the world, recently enhanced its resources for the life sciences by hiring a bioinformatics and life sciences specialist and offering such new services as VIVO, a Web-based community for the life sciences (see sidebar).

The *Scientist* survey lists a “well-stocked and well-maintained library” as an important feature. In addition, Cornell’s libraries deliver thousands of electronic journals, databases and resources directly to the desktop.

“Immediate access to the available scientific literature greatly facilitates the scientific process by allowing one to quickly check on a hunch without ever having to leave the lab,” says Stephen Jesch, a Cornell postdoctoral researcher. “Verifying or negating a hunch then allows one to judge efficiently how to proceed with a set of experiments. Moreover, electronic access to research articles makes it easier to stay on top of the current literature.”

As more research on the Ithaca campus is directed toward the biomedical sciences, it’s increasingly important to provide online access to the key medical literature as well. Cornell’s libraries have pooled their resources and, whenever possible, negotiated joint online subscriptions so that biomedical literature is available on the desktops of Cornell researchers in Ithaca, Geneva, N.Y., and New York City; extension educators in the Adirondacks; and also at the Weill Cornell Medical College in Doha, Qatar. For example, Cornell’s libraries have jointly purchased electronic access and complete back files to *Methods in Enzymology*, a key resource for laboratory research in the life sciences, and coordinated purchases for *Nature* and *Nature Monthlies* (i.e., *Nature Genetics* and *Nature Biotechnology*), as well as other review journals.

In a recent review of Cornell’s medical journal collection, Cornell librarians found that 75 percent of the some 1,500 specialized titles subscribed to by the Weill Cornell Medical College (WCMC) library are now available to users on the Ithaca campus. These include such popular titles as the *New England Journal of Medicine* and *British Medical Journal*, but also all the other key medical journals from major scientific

publishers, including Lippincott, Williams and Wilkins, Springer and Wiley, and important society publications from such organizations as the American Association for Cancer Research. Some of the remaining 25 percent are still not available online.

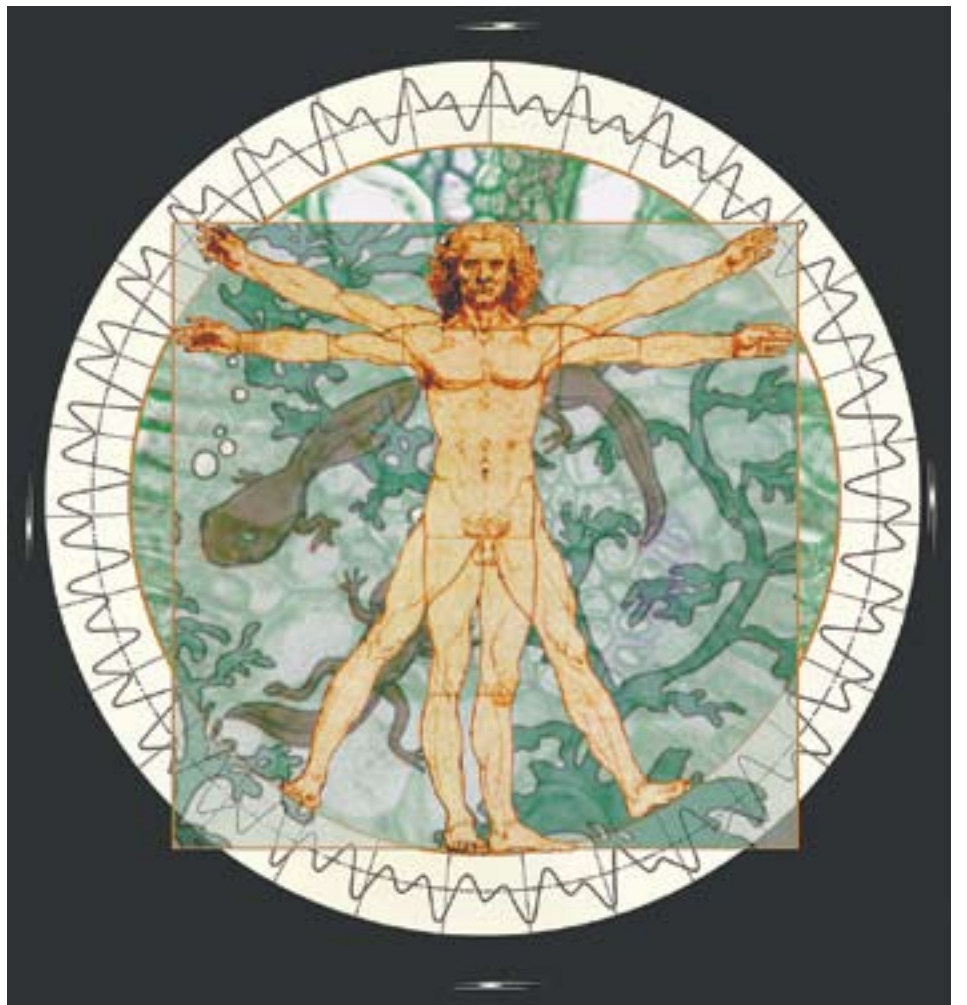
Similarly, Cornell’s libraries are expanding their licenses and revamping their authentication systems so that researchers at WCMC and students in the Tri-Institutional Research Program in New York City can access the resources they need – whether in chemistry or psychology. Librarians also have enhanced Cornell’s document delivery services among the libraries in the Tri-Institutional program, including Rockefeller University and the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, providing faster turnaround time and better user services at each of these locations.

At the same time, library staff members are developing services to foster collaboration within the life sciences community. Researchers or potential graduate students, administrators or undergraduates, for example, can use VIVO to discover who is working on a particular research topic, what a professor or researcher has taught or published recently, where relevant facilities might be and what online tools are available to expedite research.

Similarly, library instruction programs have recently expanded and now include workshops at Mann Library, the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station Library in Geneva, the WCMC libraries in New York City and Qatar, the Veterinary Library, the Engineering Library and the Physical Sciences Library. New classes include a collaboration with the Department of Public Health to teach evidence-based medicine to first-year medical students.

In spite of all this new technology, the library remains a place to grab a cup of coffee, huddle with others on a group project or to get help finding articles for a research paper.

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VIVO LOGO/PROVIDED

## Who is doing virtually what, where and how in life sciences at Cornell

BY MEDHA DEVARE

VIVO <<http://vivo.library.cornell.edu>> creates a virtual life sciences community, bringing together in one Web site all the information needed to figure out who is doing what, where and how in the life sciences at Cornell.

A VIVO search transcends campus, college and department divides to provide an integrated view of the life sciences at Cornell. Students and faculty members can find information on scientists and their research, including grants and recent publications, facilities, undergraduate majors and graduate fields, and seminars and other events. This virtual life sciences collection provides easy access to online databases, software tools and image collections licensed for use by the Cornell community, as well as to important external resources.

Unlike most search engines, VIVO displays results with appropriate cross-referencing to place them in a context that makes sense and saves time. For example, a search for “proteomics” displays listings categorized by:

- “people,” for comprehensive profiles of faculty members working in this field no matter which Cornell college or department they belong to;
- “activities,” for courses, graduate fields and grants related to that subject;
- “events,” for lectures, seminars and workshops;
- “organizations,” for research programs, units or centers;
- “online resources,” for online research tools related to proteomics; and
- “publications,” including recent proteomics-related articles published by



Cornell faculty members and news releases and impact statements. Each entry is linked directly to the original resource, which could be the full text of a recent journal article, a new genomics service or a faculty member’s Web page.

VIVO was developed by the library’s Life Sciences Working Group, a committee of librarians and information technology specialists

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from the Ithaca campus, Weill Cornell Medical College and the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, Geneva, N.Y.

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*FOCUS on Cornell University Library is compiled by Library Communications. Contact the office at <[libcomm@cornell.edu](mailto:libcomm@cornell.edu)>.*

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Results of plugging the search term *proteom\** into the VIVO search engine showing links to key categories.