Focus on the Veterinary Library, University College Dublin

It may be many years since you have set foot in the Veterinary Library. But, says UCD Librarian Diarmuid Stokes, there’s plenty on offer for the veterinary practitioner.

The Veterinary College of Ireland, originally an independent institution, held its first lectures in its historical Ballsbridge home in 1902. However, it wasn’t until 1967 that a dedicated library service was established. Between 1902 and 1967, each of the various departments in the college held discrete collections of materials pertinent to its teaching and research priorities. Then, in 1967, Mary McErlean was seconded from University College Dublin to the Department of Agriculture to establish a joint library service for the faculties of veterinary medicine at University College Dublin and Trinity College Dublin (both colleges, at that stage, shared the Ballsbridge facilities). Her work over the ensuing years saw the Veterinary Library become an integral part of what in 1977 would become the sole faculty of veterinary medicine in Ireland. In 2002, the veterinary medicine faculty moved from Ballsbridge to the main campus in Belfield and the library is now situated on the first floor of the new Veterinary Sciences Centre. This has ensured that the Veterinary Library has remained an integrated and central element in the veterinary medicine programme at UCD.

Role of the Veterinary Library
The Veterinary Library has a double role. It is a university library and so aims to facilitate the needs of undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as academic staff of the veterinary sciences and related disciplines. It is also the only dedicated veterinary library in the country and provides information and resources to a range of people and bodies including: veterinarians, veterinary practices, animal related business and research organisations. Today, the Veterinary Library is keenly aware of its position as the principal repository of veterinary literature and resources in Ireland and has consistently sought to develop a wide and comprehensive collection. The library currently holds approximately 42,000 books – most of which are on open shelving and are thus freely available to all users of the library. In addition, the library currently subscribes to over 300 journal titles. This collection includes most of the relevant veterinary titles published in English, as well as journals in related disciplines. The library also subscribes to many of the electronic journal suppliers such as Science Direct, SpringerLink, Blackwell Synergy and Nature, meaning that all of the major vet titles are also available online. Furthermore, the Veterinary Library also has access to a wide range of electronic databases, including CAB Direct and Agris. These databases give access to a wide range of veterinary related articles, books and conference proceedings and can be searched by users of the library.

All are welcome
Who can make use of the veterinary library’s extensive resources? The library is primarily used by the veterinary students and staff of UCD. However, the library also has a close connection with graduates of the veterinary programmes and, consequently, any member of the
veterinary profession is always welcome, at no cost, to come to the library and to consult the library collections. Dropping into the library, however, may not be a practical option for veterinary professionals located far from Dublin. To facilitate these individuals, it is possible to become an external borrower of the library. External borrowers can borrow eight books for up to two weeks and can renew them by phone or by email if required. These external borrowers can also borrow some items from our collection of videos, DVDs and CD-ROMs. Items can be posted if distance prevents borrowers from visiting the library. For those looking for information on a specific topic, the librarian will gladly conduct a literature search and forward the list of references. In addition, the library can supply books or articles, from UCD’s veterinary collection or from another institution, for a small fee. The annual cost of membership is €100 for UCD graduates and €250 for non-UCD graduates. In addition, researchers from commercial companies can join individually at a cost of €375 per annum or can acquire corporate membership (for up to three individuals) costing €1,000 per annum. External borrower membership to the Veterinary Library means that members will also have access to the wider UCD library collections.

The Veterinary Library has quite extensive opening hours and, during the academic session, the library is open Monday to Friday from 08:15 to 22:00 and on Saturdays from 09:30 to 17:00. In the summer time, and during holidays, the library is open from 09:00 to 17:00. To support anybody who might want to use the library, there is a dedicated team of library staff on-site who are happy to demonstrate to users how to get the most out the collections and to help with any other queries. Currently, the library staff consists of Diarmuid Stokes, Librarian, Michelle Latimer, Senior Library Assistant, Sarah McCann, Library Assistant and Jean Murphy, Library Assistant, along with other part time staff.

Online information
A veterinary medicine subject portal has been developed to assist users in finding veterinary specific information. The portal, which gathers all of UCD’s relevant information together, can be accessed at http://www.ucd.ie/library/veterinary. Users can search the library catalogue and link to library databases and electronic journals while on campus. The library also has links to a variety of veterinary related websites. These include sites which cover specific veterinary subject areas, professional bodies and associations and Government departments and agencies, not only here in Ireland, but also in Europe and further afield. There is also a regularly updated list of Irish veterinary related legislation and a page with links to information on notifiable animal diseases.

For more information on the Veterinary Library, telephone 01 716 6208 or email vetlib@ucd.ie. As a member of the veterinary profession in Ireland, you are also welcome to drop in and have a look at the library collections and resources.