

## **Chasing the Sun: a virtual reference project between Australian and UK health libraries**

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### **Abstract:**

In 2002, a discussion in the United Kingdom (U.K.) between South West Information for Clinical Effectiveness (SWICE) librarians (U.K.) and a member of the South Australian Department of Human Services Libraries' Consortium (SAHSLC) raised the possibility of developing an after-hours virtual reference service between the two consortium groups.

The aim of the service is to put health professionals in contact with a librarian when urgent help is required in finding clinical medical information after hours.

A trial project has begun and has been given the name "Chasing the Sun". The service will make use of time zone differences between the United Kingdom and Australia, so that librarians at work in another country will be able to answer urgent patient related queries that cannot wait until normal office hours.

This talk looks at the development of "Chasing the Sun" from initial concept, funding proposal and trial project stage to implementation. It includes details of the groundwork, software evaluation, trials, outcomes, cost and benefits, future directions and problems yet to be experienced or overcome.

This service is the first of its kind between health libraries in the world and offers potential for future worldwide expansion. The project was recently awarded the inaugural Swets Professional Envoy travelling Award, which enables an Australian health librarian to either learn about or promote projects or skills which will further the development of Australian health librarianship. The Award was used to enable Sue Rockliff to attend the Canadian Health Librarian's conference in St Johns, Canada in May 2004, and deliver a paper on Chasing the Sun with a view to encourage participation in the project by Canadian librarians.