The New Library Newsletter

NIST
National Institute of Standards and Technology
Technology Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce

isd INFORMATION SERVICES DIVISION

Technology Services, Information Services Division
National Institute Of Standards And Technology

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Who We Are…

ISD provides professional scientific/technical information assistance to NIST research staff throughout their research and publishing cycles.

What We Do…

Provide information and updates to NIST scientists and staff members on Information Services Division resources and services, and on products and technology; to educate and enlighten NIST readers about NIST publications, and the museum and history programs, the contributions of the Research Library, and NIST's rich history.
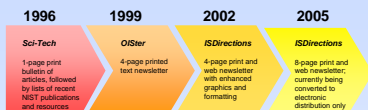
Newsletter Mission Statement

Why/How We Plan To Do It Better…

Change is inevitable. As technologies evolve, ISD plans to improve the way it keeps customers informed. But the question is; "how?" Should we:

- Start an informational blog or a wiki?
- Broadcast podcasts?
- Change to a Web newsletter instead of print?
- Provide an RSS feed to our customers?

What We Have Done and Do Now…

1996	1999	2002	2005
Sci-Tech 1-page print bulletin of articles, followed by lists of recent NIST publications and resources	**OISter** 4-page printed text newsletter	**ISDirections** 4-page print and web newsletter with enhanced graphics and formatting	**ISDirections** 8-page print and web newsletter; currently being converted to electronic distribution only

ISD's newsletter is the division's major marketing vehicle, with nearly all staff contributing content. It contains articles about our resources, services, and capabilities. Within the last decade, the ISD newsletter has gone through four progressive improvement phases. Begun as *Sci-Tech Information*, it was transformed to the newsy *OISter Newsletter*, then evolved to the informative *ISDirections (4 pages),* and now the info packed 8-page *ISDirections.*

The newsletter was distributed in print-only form when it began in 1996. A few years later, we added a PDF version and implemented a distribution listserv where subscribed customers received the newsletter as an email attachment.

Newsletter then and now

Currently we still distribute a printed newsletter, but we are in the process of changing it for electronic distribution only — to remain current with user demands and technological advances.

What Our Customers Said…

Customers who participated in four 2005 focus groups indicated that while a print/PDF newsletter offered value, they would prefer a newsletter in a briefer, "lightning-fast" form. They did not want to wait for a PDF to load. We began investigating alternative formats, including an XHTML newsletter.

Comparison of Digital Formats		
Format	**What it Is**	**Advantages**
Blog	"Weblog," web journal	Flexible, quick –content can be posted *ad hoc*; customers subscribe or visit Web site
Podcast	Web media broadcasts that can be downloaded to a computer or mobile device	Fun content, flexible – customers can watch/listen on the go
News or RSS feed	Subscribed blog or podcast content pushed to user's aggregator periodically	Efficient, low maintenance -- customers receive content automatically
Wiki	Web site that allows users to add and edit content	Collaborative, dynamic – customers can add to content
Emailed web links	Email message with links to HTML articles	Quick, convenient, no customer learning curve

Digital formats we investigated, based on customer results

A 2007 customer survey revealed that a third of the respondents currently read our newletter--22.5% read the print version, and another 10.5% read the PDF version. When asked to name their preferred format, **nearly 50%** requested **email links.**

How would you like to learn about Research Library resources and services in the future?

Email links:

to short notices	37%
to in-depth articles	12%
Wiki	9%
News or RSS feed	2%
Blog	1%
Podcast	1%
No new method; I like the old way	32%

Nearly 50% of respondents asked to receive news information as emailed links

We Listened…

ISD's customers spoke and we listened. As a result of what we heard, we are re-formatting our current (print and PDF) newsletter. In keeping with our current practice, we will continue to deliver a monthly issue, but in different formats. We will no longer supply print copies, although customers will be able to print a PDF copy, if they wish.

What We Plan To Do…

Customers will continue to receive the quality information we currently provide. Towards the end of each month our listserv customers will receive links to articles (4-5). The links will lead to short abstracts in XHTML. Abstract pages will allow customers to view full-text XHTML articles. The full-text articles will be compiled into a single PDF file, an entire issue which can be printed. We will use a font more suitable to the Web, but will maintain the current information style that our customers have become accustomed to.

What Will It Look Like?

New Newsletter	
Distribution	1. Access by email listserv 2. Access by RSS feed 3. Access by URL
Content	Short abstracts linked to full articles including tables, images; no fewer than 4-5 articles in each issue
Format	XHTML abstracts and full articles; PDF file of complete issue
Frequency	Continue regular monthly schedule
Print version	No
Archive	Complete articles will be compiled into a single PDF file (issue)

New newsletter overview

So, What's New About It?

The short abstracts will link to both full-text XHTML and PDF articles. The newsletter page will include contact information, date, volume and issue number, and a search tool. There will be links to subscribe to an RSS feed. Information about this will be delivered in the emails along with the article links. The feed links will also be available on the NIST Virtual Library home page.

Sample of the new abstract Web page

We plan to launch in 2008. We will continue to provide an archive of previous issues.