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The Newsletter of the Library Research Section of MLA

Fall, 1994

Minutes of the 1994 Library Research Section Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the Library Research Section, convened at 3:30 p.m. Sunday, May 15, in San Antonio, TX. Chair Beth Paskoff welcomed section members and introduced 1994-95 Chair Nancy Woelfl, who presided for the business meeting.

OFFICER and COMMITTEE REPORTS

The minutes of the 1993 meeting were approved unanimously. Nancy Woelfl presented a certificate of appreciation to Elizabeth Wood, University of Southern California, for three years service as editor of Hypothesis, the section newsletter. She announced that Emily Fang, University of California, San Francisco, had volunteered to succeed Elizabeth as editor.

Section Council Representative

Karen Hackleman Dahlen referred three items from Section Council to the members. Two were informational; the third required a vote. Karen shared information about the 1995 annual meeting program and noted that the 1995 would be held in conjunction with the 7th International Congress on Medical Librarianship. The 95th annual meeting of the Medical Library Association will precede the International Congress. Karen stated that section programming would be emphasized and encouraged the section to develop a strong program.

Karen then discussed chapter and section listservs, the second issue. She noted that a number of these were developing and that the MLA Board had asked Janet Fisher to track and coordinate this issue. It is hoped that MLA-net will provide a platform for any chapter or section that wishes to develop such a service.

The third issue concerned three proposed new special interest groups: a clinical librarians SIG, a gay/lesbian SIG, and a US Army librarians SIG. Opinion opposed to new special interest groups feared that giving meeting time to SIGs would divert time from established sections and added to increasingly hectic annual meeting schedules. Opinion for the new SIGs recognized the fact that they are an effective way to deal with what are in many cases short term issues.

A motion that SIGs receive a lower priority than sections for program time was put to the members and failed. Additional discussion focused on the fact that the association should be an open forum for relevant professional issues and that it should welcome and support diversity among its members. The Chair called for a separate vote on each of the proposed SIGs; each received unanimous support.

Research Resources Committee

M. Emily Fang, Chair, reported that three products of the Committee, research bibliography, research mentors' list and research in-progress directory, have been revised and updated. The Committee has made every effort to publicize and distribute those products to reach a wider audience. Particularly, the Committee explored other options for distribution of all Committee products electronically. As a result, all three products can be accessed via ftp server at the University of California, San Francisco. In the Committee meeting, members would discuss the possibility of incorporating the research mentors' list and research in-progress directory into the Section's database which is supported by Erika Love, Chair of the Membership Committee, and the University of New Mexico Medical Center Library. Also, the Committee investigated the potential WWW sites to make research bibliography

accessible through Mosaic. Ultimately, one will have several options to access the research resources through Internet.

OLD BUSINESS

Nancy Woelfl urged members to attend the open forum on MLA's research policy statement, scheduled from 9:00 to 10:30 on Wednesday, May 18. She also announced the time and date for the Library Research Section's annual program, a research results poster session organized by Beth Paskoff.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Erika Love, Chair of the Library Research Section Membership Committee, reported on efforts to establish a Research Section database. This work is being supported by Ms. Love and the University of New Mexico Medical Center Library. Erika presented the proposed format for entries, briefly discussed scanning of the entries into an ORACLE relational database, and solicited feedback on the project.

B. In lieu of a separately appointed committee, the section Executive Committee functioned as the nominating committee for 1994-95. Nancy Woelfl presented two nominations: Jocelyn Rankin (Mercer University) for chair-elect and K. Ann McKibbon (McMaster University) for secretary-treasurer. Woelfl noted the need to find additional candidates for chapter council representative, chapter council alternate, and a candidate for the MLA nominating committee. Woelfl pledged to locate qualified chapter members and to distribute a mail ballot to all section members within one month of the San Antonio meeting.

C. The 1995 section program was discussed and Woelfl called for suggestions from the members on the form of the program. She noted that Chair-elect Jocelyn Rankin, if confirmed by members, would coordinate Library Research Section programming for Washington. Members expressed a strong support for a contributed papers session.

The Chair called for additional business from the floor. There being none, the meeting adjourned shortly before 5:00 p.m.

*Submitted by Ann McKibbon
Secretary/Treasurer*

Library Research Section Officers & Committee Chairs, 1994/1995

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

Good communication is vital for success in any organization. The Section Newsletter is open to everyone. It should serve as a vehicle for effective communication among section members and beyond.

A new column will be added in the coming issue of the Newsletter, which is dedicated to "Talk about Research". The experienced and junior researchers will be invited for discussion. They will talk about their experience /perspectives in their research endeavor and sharing their inside stories with us. In addition, in response to the MLA research policy the column will also serve as a channel to highlight research in progress and new research findings with important ramifications for health sciences librarians. Call me or email me whoever you wish to include in the forum by December 1.

To recognize and encourage the professional accomplishments of the section members, I would like to list the citations of your recent publications and include news regarding to any members' recent professional achievement in the Newsletter.

Finally, please note that **January 15, 1995** is the deadline to submit news items for the Spring issue of the Newsletter, preferably via email at the following address: fang@library.ucsf.edu. Any newsletter articles or comments/suggestions are most appreciated.

M. Emily Fang, editor

RESEARCH RESOURCES AVAILABLE on the INTERNET

The Research Resources Committee is pleased to announce that the research resources are currently available via ftp server in the Library, at the University of California, San Francisco.

Do an anonymous FTP to:
<ftp.library.ucsf.edu>

Change directories to:
<pub/library/mla>

If you have any problems accessing the documents, please email M. Emily Fang, at the following address:
fang@library.ucsf.edu.

THE RESEARCH TASK FORCE REQUESTS MEMBER FEEDBACK

Goal 4 of MLA's Strategic Plan states: MLA promotes the research role of the health sciences library and information professional.

- a. fosters the development of an infrastructure to support the research activities of the profession;
- b. fosters, identifies and publicizes opportunities for research support of multiple kinds;
- c. promotes research results through publishing and awards for excellence.

The Research Task Force was charged in 1992 to elaborate and implement these goals of the Medical Library Association. The first draft of the Research Statement was distributed at the 1994 MLA annual meeting in San Antonio. MLA members had the opportunity to review the document and provide feedback during an Open Forum. These ideas guided the writing of a second draft which is being disseminated to the chapters at their fall meetings for feedback. The entire text was also posted on MEDLIB-L and printed in the September issue of *MLA News*.

The approach taken by the Research Task Force is to suggest an action plan which will strengthen the infrastructure that supports research. The document recognizes the health sciences librarian as having multiple roles in research: as provider of health care research knowledge that can be used by health professionals for evidence based practice, as a research quality filter, and as a producer and user of quantitative and qualitative research in health information science.

All feedback regarding this document will be collected by your Chapter Council representative and directed through that channel to the Research Task Force. The final draft of the statement will be printed in the spring and distributed to the membership at the 1995 annual meeting.

Submitted by Reneta E. Webb, Ph.D.

WORKING DRAFT

USING SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE TO IMPROVE INFORMATION PRACTICE: The Research Policy Statement of the Medical Library Association

Introduction

This policy statement expresses the Medical Library Association's vision of research as a foundation for excellence in health information practice, for new and expanded roles for health sciences librarians, and for attracting excellent people to the profession. It also affirms the Association's commitment to collaborating with other organizations to increase support for the research activities of health sciences librarians.

MLA's research policy is guided by its Strategic Plan, which identifies research in health information science as a key part of the mission of the Association. The research policy statement builds upon and complements MLA's educational policy statement, "*Platform for Change*" which identifies research, analysis, and interpretation as one of seven broad categories of knowledge and skills needed by health sciences librarians. Like the Strategic Plan and "*Platform for Change*", MLA's research policy statement is addressed to a wide audience, including MLA members, library and information science educators, administrators, health care professionals, researchers, and policy makers.

Information, Health Care, and Health Sciences Librarians

Society is concerned about access to quality health care at reasonable cost, and health care leaders are increasingly aware of the importance of information to quality improvement and cost containment. Clinical decisions should be based on the scientific evidence traditionally recorded in the health sciences literature. The development and use of evidence-based practice guidelines demand a sophisticated analysis of the literature, creative ways of delivering information to practitioners at the point of care, and an understanding of the effect of information on practice patterns and costs. There is a growing need for computer-based patient record systems that can generate new scientific knowledge as a by-product of improved current care.

While health care institutions look for better ways to conduct local health services research and to apply the results of research to practice, the amount of evidence-based information continues to expand and the options for organizing and disseminating it multiply. In the electronic era, the number of potential "publishers" is unbounded, and the very concepts of publication and database are changing. New electronic formats have not replaced traditional printed forms of recorded knowledge, but have simply increased the range of information products available. The application of the emerging National Information Infrastructure to health care, education, and library services opens up new opportunities for enhanced information delivery, but also raises serious policy questions related to security, privacy, and intellectual property rights.

As managers of scientific knowledge, health sciences librarians play a key role in helping health care professionals to find scientific evidence that is applicable to individual practice decisions or to the complex task of developing clinical practice guidelines.

As part of the health care enterprise, librarians must develop their own evidence-based information practice, identifying the methods and technologies that will provide the most cost-effective and high quality service in different health care, education, and research contexts. As information professionals, librarians should apply their research knowledge-base to a broad range of information management and policy problems facing the health care community. There is a vital need to apply information technology, theory, and practice not only to organizing, filtering, and delivering scientific knowledge, but also to organizing, managing, and safeguarding patient-specific data, to linking patient data to scientific knowledge, and to aggregating and analyzing patient data within and across institutions.

Research and Health Sciences Librarians

Information issues have moved to a prominent position on the health care research agenda, and health sciences librarians are well placed to investigate many of them. To exploit this strategic position, health sciences librarians must increase their ability:

- * to serve as research quality filters for their users;

- * to apply health information research to information service practice, information policy, and other information issues confronting their institutions; and

- * to conduct research relevant to health information problems.

Research is systematic inquiry into a problem with the goal of gathering evidence to produce new knowledge. Research relevant to health information covers a spectrum which includes development of clinical indicators, curriculum analysis, program evaluation, information storage and retrieval, thesaurus construction, technological innovation, assessment of information needs and information-seeking behavior, and study of the use and impact of information on patients, caregivers, researchers, and students. In the inherently complex and multidisciplinary world of health information, many important research questions demand collaborative study -- involving practitioners and academicians, data from multiple sites, and experts from several disciplines, including information science.

Scientific evidence gained from research supports better decision-making -- in information service as well as in health care. The key to evidence-based information practice is the ongoing development and application of health information science research. Not all health sciences librarians will be producers of research, but all must be effective users of the knowledge base generated by research. By using and adding to the research knowledge-base of health information science, health sciences librarians can increase their real and perceived value to the health sciences community.

Research Goals for Health Sciences Librarians

Health sciences librarians have an unmatched opportunity to make positive contributions to health care and to information policy. To take advantage of this opportunity, librarians must:

- * understand that the knowledge base of their profession applies to health information problems which go beyond bibliographic data and library collections;
- * increase their ability to analyze and appraise research results in their own discipline as well as their users' disciplines;

- * use the health information science knowledge base to design, develop and market new health information systems and services, including those that integrate scientific literature with other types of health-related information;

- * apply the health information science knowledge base to other clinical, educational, and research information problems confronting their institutions; and

- * add to the health information science knowledge base by carrying out research that is broadly relevant to the organization, delivery, use and impact of information on health care, biomedical research, and health professionals' education.

The analysis and application of the research knowledge base of information science must become part of the culture of health sciences librarianship. In addition to basing decisions about information services on scientific evidence, health sciences librarians must be alert to opportunities to apply their knowledge base to any information issue that is important to health care, research, and education.

The percentage of health sciences librarians with full or part-time research as a job responsibility should be comparable to the percentage of researchers in other health professions. The number of practicing health sciences librarians who are directing or participating in research and disseminating research results must increase.

Role of Individual Health Sciences Librarians

The primary responsibility for increasing the profession's research contribution rests with individual health sciences librarians. Individuals must:

- * design a personal life-long learning program that includes improvement of research skills, including critical appraisal or quality filtering of published research;
- * take advantage of available training, funding, and other research support services;
- * apply the results of research routinely -- to library and information service practice, to the development of information policy, and to their information issues important to health care institutions;
- * seek out potential research collaborators

within their institutions, in other libraries, in schools of library and information science, and in other organizations;

- * devote professional time to direct research activity or to facilitating health information research by others;
- * disseminate results of critical analyses of research evidence, reports of applications of research to practice, information about research in progress, and new research findings;
- * recognize and encourage the research activity of colleagues.

Role of the Medical Library Association

To facilitate research by its members, the Medical Library Association collaborates with other groups -- including educators, administrators, health care professionals, researchers, policy makers, and funders -- to establish an environment that is conducive to increased production and use of research. This positive environment includes:

- * access to a broad range of relevant education and training;
- * advice and assistance for librarians embarking on research;
- * adequate research funding;
- * incentives for collaborative research;
- * flexible and supportive employment situations;
- * recognition for research work.

As part of a broader program of data collection and analysis aimed at understanding the activities and needs of health sciences librarians, the Medical Library Association develops and applies measurements of the research activity of its members.

Action Plan for the Medical Library Association

To improve the research environment for its members, the Medical Library Association will undertake new or expanded initiatives in the following key areas, relying on the use of electronic communications where feasible and appropriate:

Education

Health sciences librarians need a continuum of research-related training throughout their careers, beginning with a firm foundation in their Master's degree program. To ensure that suitable training opportunities exist, MLA should:

1. work with academic programs in library and information studies to ensure that opportunities to develop quantitative and qualitative research knowledge and skills appear throughout the curriculum for both Masters and Ph.D. programs. Seek funding for pilot implementations of programs with an increased research focus.
2. review, revise, and expand MLA's continuing education program to provide a complete range of basic and advanced courses in quantitative and qualitative research methodology and in the critical analysis of research. Incorporate the assessment of related research into every MLA CE course.
3. identify the kinds of training fellowships or grants that are likely to attract beginning and mid-career librarians, including internships at "Centers of Excellence" in health information science research. Encourage funders and employers to support these arrangements.
4. Increase amount of funding available in MLA's Doctoral Fellowships.

Research Support

Organizations in which health sciences librarians study, teach and work should foster a culture that facilitates research. To promote this culture, MLA should:

1. define model health sciences librarian positions which combine research with practice or with teaching. Develop a strategy to establish and obtain funding for a small number of such positions in academic departments and in health sciences institutions.
2. develop guidelines for research support services that health sciences institutions should provide to their librarian employees.
3. organize a research methodology consulting service for MLA members.
4. establish a brokering service that matches practicing librarians who have research

questions and suitable research populations with academic librarians and information scientists who have research expertise and time to conduct research.

5. expand and publicize the research mentoring programs established by the MLA Research Section.
6. involve MLA Sections and other units in the critical appraisal of research results relevant to their interests, in the identification of important researchable topics, and in the design of collaborative research projects that provide research experience to a range of MLA members.

Funding

Money can buy the time needed for health sciences librarians to conduct high impact research. To promote adequate funding for its members' research, MLA should:

1. identify the kinds of funding mechanisms, such as "Centers of Excellence" in health information science or substantial awards targeted toward collaborative research, that are likely to be attractive to health sciences librarians and their collaborators. Encourage the development of funding programs to support these arrangements.
2. develop an MLA program of small research planning grants which will enable members to do the background work necessary to develop solid research proposals.
3. publicize research funding mechanisms applicable to health sciences librarians.

Dissemination

Research results must be broadly disseminated through formal and informal channels if they are to have a positive effect on practice. To facilitate the transmission of scientific evidence gained from research, MLA should:

1. structure MLA publications, including the Bulletin, to give greater prominence to new research findings, critical analysis of research, and the implications of research for practice.
2. feature reports of research results at all MLA meetings.

3. use MLANET or other mechanisms to highlight research in progress and recent research findings with important ramifications for health sciences librarians.
4. develop a program of joint meetings and publications with other professional associations whose members are natural research collaborators for health sciences librarians.

Recognition

Recognition encourages the researcher to sustain the research endeavor. To encourage the research achievements of its members, MLA should:

1. publicize the research accomplishments of health sciences librarians to employers and to other health professions.
2. review and, if necessary, restructure MLA's credentialing program to provide enhanced recognition for the production and use of research.
3. ensure that production and use of research is given increased recognition in MLA's award program, by establishing a new award for best research project of the year and other appropriate means.

Measurement

Better information is needed about the research activity of health sciences librarians and about the infrastructure, including educational and funding opportunities, that supports this activity. To monitor the effect of the implementation of its Research Action Plan, MLA should:

1. identify appropriate indicators of the levels of research activity and support for research.
2. collect baseline data on these indicators and monitor any changes over time to assess the impact of actions to encourage increased research activity by MLA members.