

HYPOTHESIS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE RESEARCH SECTION OF MLA

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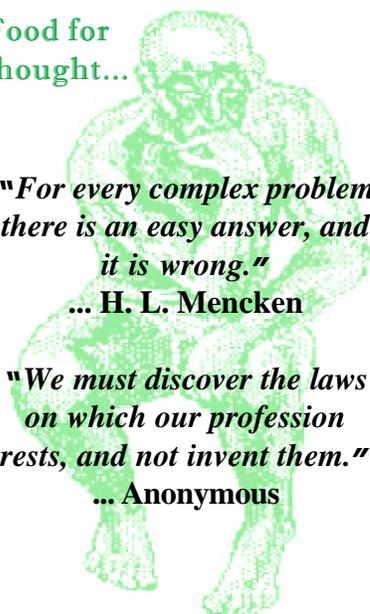
Food for thought...

**"For every complex problem
there is an easy answer, and
it is wrong."**

... H. L. Mencken

**"We must discover the laws
on which our profession
rests, and not invent them."**

... Anonymous



Message From the Chair

by Ruth Fenske, Ph.D.

The Research Section had a successful year in 97/98 and planning is underway for another successful year in 98/99.

At the 1998 Annual Meeting, the Section sponsored three contributed paper sessions and co-sponsored a post-conference symposium with the American Medical Informatics Association. A fifth program, postponed due to illness, will be presented at the 1999 Annual Meeting.

Gary Byrd, Chair-Elect and Program Chair, has submitted four proposals for programs for the 1999 Annual Meeting. Committees have been appointed (see pg. 2) and work for each committee has been outlined.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Liz Bayley of McMaster University for her excellent service as Editor of our Web page. Kristin Stoklosa will be the new Editor. Do take an opportunity to check us out by making the links from MLANET(<http://www.mlanet.org>).

The *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association* Editorial Board has appointed a subcommittee to consider suggestions relating to research presented to the Bulletin by the Research Section.

The Research Policy and Implementation Task Force has finished its excellent work. It is now up to the Research Section to be sure research stays in the forefront in MLA. One program under consideration is having a Research Section liaison to each of the other sections of MLA. Please take some time to read pages 8-12 of *Using Scientific Evidence to Improve Information Practice: The Research Policy Statement of the Medical Library Association*, to consider how the Research Section should be involved in implementing the recommendations of the Task Force, and to communicate your ideas to the officers of the Section.

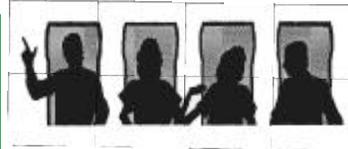
It is my pleasure to serve as Chair of the Section in 98/99, and I hope each one of you will join me in our endeavor to make research an important part of MLA.



Officers & Executive Committee, 1998-1999

- Chair Ruth Fenske, Ph.D.
- Chair-Elect & Program Chair. Gary Byrd, Ph.D.
- Past Chair Julie McGowan, Ph.D.
- Section Council Representative Julie Kelly
- Section Council Alternate John Coffey
- Secretary/Treasurer Lothar Spang
- Newsletter Editor Jan LaBeause
- Web Site Editor Kristin Stoklosa
- Awards Committee Chair Zoë Stavri, Ph.D.
- Bylaws Committee Chair Andrea Ball
- Membership Committee Chair Ann Weller
- Nominating Committee Chair.
 Jocelyn Rankin, Ph.D.
- Research Resources Committee Chair
 Leslie Behm
- Continuing Education Liaison Julia Kochi
- Governmental Relations Committee Liaison.
 Jon Eldredge, Ph.D.
- Section Nominee to the MLA Nominating Committee . .
 Elizabeth Wood

For contact information, see MLA Directory or Research Section Home Page (<http://www-hsl.mcmaster.ca:80/lrs/index.html>)



Research Section Committees and Liaisons

The following members have been appointed to Research Section committees for 98/99:

- Awards Committee
 Zoë Stavri, Chair
 Gary Byrd
 Jolene Miller
- Bylaws Committee
 Andrea Ball, Chair
 Ellen Detlefsen
- Membership Committee
 Ann Weller, Chair
- Nominating Committee
 Jocelyn Rankin, Chair
 Prudence Dalrymple
 David King
- Research Resources Committee
 Leslie Behm, Chair
 Jana Allcock
 Joyce Backus
 Mary Walker Jackson
 Julie Kochi
 Ted Morris
 Kristin Stoklosa

Liaisons for 98/99 are as follows:

- Continuing Education Liaison
 Julia Kochi
- Governmental Relations Committee Liaison
 Jon Eldredge

HYPOTHESIS. The Newsletter of the Research Section of MLA

<http://gain.mercer.edu/mla/research/hypothesis.html>

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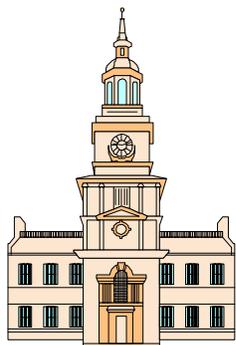
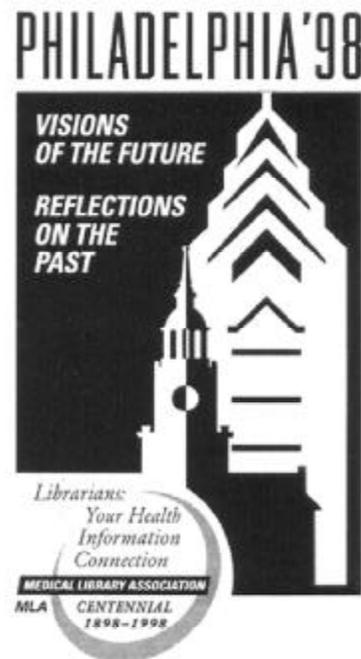
Research Awards at MLA '98

The Awards Committee, composed of Ruth Fenske, Maren Haaland, and Zoë Stavri (Chair), selected two papers to receive our Best Research Paper Awards at the 1998 Annual Medical Library Association Meeting. Congratulations to:

Tracing the Development of Critical Evaluative Skills with the Use of the Internet. Phyllis Blumberg, Allegheny University of the Health Sciences, and JoAnne Sparks, Drexel University

*A Journal Availability Study: A Tool for Determining User Access.** Julia Shaw-Kokot, Martha Bedard, Steve Squires, Diana McDuffee, Linda Frank, Mike London, Charlotte Keeler, Joe Williams, and Therese Capal, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

*See the Research Spotlight on page 4 for a synopsis of this project.



MINUTES OF 1998 MEETING May 25, 1998 Philadelphia, PA

SUBMITTED BY
Lothar Spang,
Secretary/Treasurer

The meeting was called to order by Chair Julie McGowan. Minutes of the 1997 meeting were approved as published in the Summer 1997 issue of *HYPOTHESIS*, v. 11, no. 2.

Julie took the opportunity in her opening remarks to thank committee members for their contributions. Special thanks went to Zoë Stavri, Ann McKibbon, Jan LaBeause and Gary Byrd for their efforts during the past year.

The Treasurer's report was given by Ann McKibbon. The budget is sound with a current balance of \$4,448.19. Lothar Spang will assume reporting responsibility for the current year.

Joanne Marshall reported on behalf of the Research Policy Implementation Task Force. Once its report is made, the Task Force will cease.

Julie Kelly reported as Section Council Representative that there is an effort to create a Corporate Section of the Medical Library Association, and that MLA will discontinue scheduling general meetings over the Memorial Day weekend. Everyone seemed pleased.

Julie also reported as Chair of the *BMLA* Subcommittee that the overall theme of suggestions was the need for wider publicity for all research. One suggestion was that the proceedings of papers (abstract form) be published in the *Bulletin*. Zoë Stavri suggested that all awards be published in the *MLA News*.

Jan LaBeause, Newsletter Editor, reported that three issues of *HYPOTHESIS* were published during the past year at a total cost of \$1,559.73. She agreed to continue as the Editor.

Ann McKibbon asked members to recognize the special efforts of Liz Bayley in maintaining the Research Section Web page at McMaster University.

See Minutes, page 9



A Journal Availability Study: A Tool for Determining User Access

... submitted by Julia Shaw-Kokot and
Claire De La Varre

The User Services Coordinating Group (USCG) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's (UNC-CH) Health Sciences Library (HSL) was asked to determine if users could get what they need in a reasonable period of time (as determined by the user), and to work towards establishing performance standards for access and availability. USCG's charge was to solve problems and engage in continuous quality improvement for user services to meet information needs in an environment of rapid change. The group was comprised of members from the library's functional units and included both professional and paraprofessional staff.

USCG members searched the literature for relevant articles or studies on availability. Most of the information found focused on book availability, with few on journal availability and no studies in the 1990's. After review, USCG members felt that it would be more important to assess the access and availability of journal resources rather than books. This decision was based on patron observation, patron requests and budget allocations. All of these indicate that the HSL's primary resources are journals. At the time of the study, the number of journals that HSL subscribed to was 2,783.

After looking at the literature and the problem, USCG identified several possible approaches. The most relevant and useful of these was to replicate a 1989 University of New Mexico journal availability study

[1] with modifications to take into account the use of current resources, i.e. the online catalog and electronic searching and resources.

As in the UNM study, Paul Kantor's branching technique was selected as the appropriate method of analysis for the study [2]. This technique measures objective data, is easy to apply, and is economically feasible. It is a proven method which has been used in other availability studies in medium to large academic libraries and a performance tool recommended by the Association of Research Libraries.

Some modifications to the UNM version of Kantor's model were made to accommodate processes specific to HSL. The study also gives baseline information on locating journal materials, the time spent in the quest, and user satisfaction with the process. While these are somewhat subjective measures, they give HSL a feel for the user experience.

Procedures for the Study

Survey dates were spread over twelve weeks, in order to represent the wax and wane of the semester. Survey staff were located in front of the elevators at the entrance to the library. Patrons entering the library were first asked whether they would be looking for journals, and then they were invited to participate in the survey. Participation was entirely voluntary. Staff explained how to fill out the survey form and where to return it once items had been located. Participants were also asked if they had located what they needed and, if not, were offered help in the form of a Journal Location Service (JLS). The JLS offered participants some reward and allowed the library to collect more specific information from people using the service and thus learn about participants' problems immediately.

Results

A total of 2056 journal items were sought, and of these, 1663 were successfully located. This gives an overall performance measure of 80.9 percent, which Kantor calls the Measure of Availability fraction (MAV).

Based on Kantor's six factors related to unsuccessful retrieval (failure), users did not find materials for the following reasons: Bibliographic (50), Acquisitions (101), Catalog Use (26), Circulation (15), Library (150), User (51). Therefore, the study indicated that HSL should examine library related functions. Other factors directly

linked, but only identified by users' comments, also reflect user satisfaction. A detailed list of journals sought is also available.

One recommendation was that the study be repeated after several changes have been made. The results have already led to changes in library orientations, and have been used in evaluating journal retention and new subscriptions. The study required a large group effort and additional responsibilities for many people throughout the library. The key to the study's success was planning and cooperation by users and staff.

USCG met the challenge of looking at library access. The group is currently being reorganized to reflect other changes in the organization, but will continue to look at public service problems.

Reference List

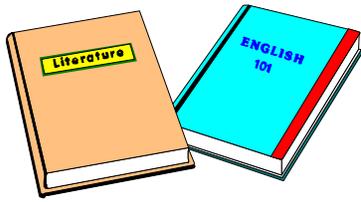
1. Bachmann-Derthick J, Spurlock S. Journal Availability at the University of New Mexico. *Advances in Serials Management* 1989; 3:173-212.
2. Kantor PB. *Objective Performance Measures for Academic and Research Libraries*. Washington, DC: Association of Research Libraries, 1984.

Editor's Note: "A Journal Availability Study: A Tool for Determining User Access" by Julia Shaw-Kokot, Martha Bedard, Steve Squires, Diana McDuffee, Linda Frank, Mike London, Charlotte Keeler, Joe Williams, and Therese Capal (all of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) was presented at MLA '98 in Philadelphia, PA, at the contributed papers session "Research for Decision Making: Evidence-based Practice for Librarianship." The session was co-sponsored by the Research Policy Implementation Task Force, and the paper received one of this year's Research Section awards for Best Research Paper.

User Services Coordinating Group:

Back Row (L-R): Mike London and Joe Williams. Front Row (L-R): Martha Bedard, Therese Capal, Diana McDuffee, Charlotte Keeler, and Julia Shaw-Kokot. Absent: Linda Frank, Steve Squires, and Claire De La Varre, Project Assistant.





Literature Review

Prepared by Ruth E. Fenske, PhD

Gross, Melissa. What Do Young Adult Novels Say about HIV/AIDS? *Library Quarterly*. 68(1):1-32, January, 1998.

This study looks at messages about HIV/AIDS in twenty-six young adult novels published between 1981 and 1994. In order to be included, at least one character had to be HIV positive or have AIDS. The character did not have to be central to the plot or the themes of the book. Content analysis was used to answer five research questions. The researcher took an objective view, rather than performing a literary analysis, ascertaining the author's intent, or measuring the effect of the book on the reader.

Results show that young adult novels do little to help young adults in handling their own sexuality vis a vis HIV/AIDS. Persons with HIV/AIDS in the novels are primarily adult males, often having no relationship to the main character. Modes of transmission are blood/blood products, unknown, or homosexual sex, rather than the primary adolescent risk factors of unprotected sex, IV drug use, and vertical transmission from the mother.

An obvious suggestion for additional study would be to identify and study information about HIV/AIDS in young adult novels, without the restriction that a character be HIV positive or have AIDS. Perhaps this wider body of literature performs a more valid educational function. Reading this study causes one to wonder about the portrayal of health and disease in other works of fiction. How can we, as health sciences librarians, influence authors of fiction to include accurate information about health and disease in their writings? How can we influence young adult librarians to promote young adult novels which present accurate and realistic depictions of health and disease topics?

Baker, Lynda M., Felata L. Wilson, and Marge Kars. The Readability of Medical Information on InfoTrac: Does it Meet the Needs of People with Low Literacy Skills? *Reference & User Services Quarterly*. 37(2):155-160, Winter, 1997.

Conditions leading to low literacy may also yield a higher incidence of complex health problems and failure to seek early care. Hence, it is important that consumer health information be accessible by those with poor reading skills. Sampling methods used to select 252 periodical, newsletter and newspaper articles, and pamphlets are described. Reference books and professional medical journal articles were eliminated. Grammatik 5 was used to calculate Flesch-Kincaid readability scores. Readability scores ranged from tenth to fourteenth grade, higher than the eighth grade level acceptable for the general public. It appears the InfoTrac Health Reference Center better serves the educated public than those with low reading skills.

Thornburg, Gail E. and Brandt W. Pryor. Attitudinal and Normative Predictors of Continuing Library Education: An Application of the Theory of Reasoned Action. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*. 39(2):118-133, Spring, 1998.

The authors use the theory of reasoned action to examine members' of the Southern Ohio Chapter of the American Society for Information Science intention to attend chapter meetings. First, telephone interview of a random sample of twenty-two of 54 members were conducted to determine sixteen possible outcomes (e.g. learning about new technology) of attending chapter meetings and six groups (such as colleagues and family) who might influence intention to participate in SOASIS meetings. Questionnaires were mailed to 54 members, twenty-seven of whom responded.

It appears that subjects were asked more than one similar, but differently worded, question about each outcome and group. They were also asked about their intention to attend SOASIS meetings. Differences between high and low intention groups for each outcome and group were examined. Extensive statistical analysis was performed.

Descriptive results may provide some guidance for SOASIS meeting planners. The authors also imply

the utility of the theory of reasoned action for predicting and explaining intention to participate in meetings has been upheld. I suspect that respondents were confused by slightly different wordings of questions about the same things, therefore, yielding invalid answers. If this is true, attempts to correlate and predict are invalid. Debriefing of respondents appears to be in order before saying the utility of the theory is upheld.

Xu, Hong and F. W. Lancaster. Redundancy and Uniqueness of Subject Access Points in Online Catalogs. *Library Resources & Technical Services*. 42(1):61-66, January, 1998.

With the advent of online catalogs, fields other than the subject field may provide subject access. The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent titles and classification numbers provide subject access not also available in traditional subject headings. Classification numbers were translated into words used in DDC tools to describe the numbers. A 3 X 4 factorial design was used.

Results show that subject headings contribute more unique subject access points than either titles or call numbers for the subject areas studied. The authors conclude that the value of additional searchable fields available in online catalogs does more to improve precision than recall in subject searches. Since most health sciences libraries already have the entire catalog in machine-readable form, the results of this study are of limited use in the health sciences. Searchers subjectively know that the online catalog improves search capability and probably would not change their practice, based on this study.

He, Shaoyi. Concept Similarity and Conceptual Information Alteration via English-to-Chinese and Chinese-to-English Translation of Medical Article Titles. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*. 49(2):169-175, February, 1998.

Fifty pairs of Chinese-to-English medical article title translations and fifty pairs of English-to-Chinese medical article title translations were examined for gain or loss of conceptual information in translation. Extensive reliability testing was performed. There is more loss than gain in the translation process with the amount of conceptual loss from Chinese to English being greater than the loss from English to Chinese.

The author plans an expanded study and suggests similar studies for other language pairs. The results of this study are important for MEDLINE and Index Medicus users depending on translated titles for searching and for Chinese physicians who read translations of English language articles.

Wilbur, W. John. A Comparison of Group and Individual Performance among Subject Experts and Untrained Workers at the Document Retrieval Task. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*. 49(6):517-529, May 1, 1998.

A previous study by the author showed that a "panel of judges whose votes are weighted equally is able to predict better than an individual, what are useful documents in order to answer a query," and it seemed to indicate that the "group's superior performance must be a consequence of detailed subject knowledge in the area of the documents involved which is possessed by the members of the group but not uniformly by any one member." In the present study, a panel without training or background in the subject area performed the same tasks better than any one of the trained panel and almost at the level of the trained panel as a whole.

Two test sets were used. Test Set I comprised 71,312 MEDLINE citations in the area of molecular biology and Test Set II contained one million documents. In the first study, five knowledgeable judges were presented with 50 documents having lexical similarity to a known relevant document. Judges were asked to rank each document on a scale of 0 to 4 where 0 is no probability of relevance to the query and 4 is certain probability of relevance. This was done for 100 queries. Judges were asked to rate each document independent of all others. For Test Set II, seven knowledgeable judges were asked to rank documents. Only the top 20 were included in calculations. Next six people without background or training in molecular biology (but who did have a Ph.D. in their field) performed the task, using Test Set II. Results for both test sets are specified above.

The author attributes the performance of the non-experts to pattern recognition which enables one to tell if the same entities are being described in two documents and an ability to judge the importance of the common entities in the two documents, using the "generic" language and common patterns in technical

terminology. He then speculates about whether his results could be used to enhance machine retrieval performance.

This study gives rise to questions about the importance and nature of in-place subject expertise or acquired expertise on the part of librarians performing subject searches. Also, would the results be different if the searcher started with a question, rather than a known relevant document?

Bruce, Harry. User Satisfaction with Information Seeking on the Internet. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*. 49(6):541-556, May 1, 1998.

This study looks at Australian academics' satisfaction with use of the Internet to search for information. A secondary purpose was to test the validity of magnitude estimation as a technique for gathering interval level satisfaction data.

Satisfaction was defined as "an end-users' view of the performance of an information system." Magnitude estimation is a technique drawn from psychophysics having to do with using physical-sensory stimuli to measure social-psychological stimuli. He explains its use in information science in detail.

Subjects were thirty-seven volunteers from a randomly selected list of 200 e-mail addresses of employees of five Australian universities. He argues that this is a random sample, which it really is not. Structured interviews were performed. For some answers, subjects had to give both a numeric estimate and a force of handgrip answer, in order to test magnitude estimation. Subjects were asked how often they used the Internet and whether they had attended an Internet training course. Subjects were asked to recount their most recent episode of information seeking on the Internet and one other episode of information seeking on the Internet. They rated their expectation of success and satisfaction with information seeking for each incident. Expectation of success data were thrown out for the second, freely chosen, episode, because respondents probably would choose a successful use and in retrospect tend to recall they expected to succeed. Reported results are that magnitude estimates are reliable and valid for this application. Subjects had a high expectation of success when seeking information on the Internet, and they are satisfied with information seeking on the Internet, regardless of frequency of use or whether they have

had formal training. It does appear he has affirmed the null hypothesis, rather than saying his data do not sustain the null hypothesis, for two of his conclusions. The most interesting part of this study is his discussion of measuring satisfaction with information seeking.

Minutes, from page 3



On behalf of the members, Julie agreed that a letter of appreciation would be forwarded to Liz. Due to other commitments, Liz can no longer serve as Web Site Editor and a volunteer was requested. The site may need to be moved when a new Editor is named.

Bob Braude, Historian, suggested that the history of the section would be better served if it's efforts were reported on the home page.

Current membership was last reported as 279. There was no report from the Membership Committee.

The Bylaws Committee recommends no changes for this year.

Ruth Fenske reported that David Owens had resigned as Chair of the Research Resources Committee. Kristin Stoklosa reported she had completed the first Research Spotlight literature review, as a member of that Committee, and that it was published in the *MLA News*.

Zoë Stavri reported that the winners of the two Research Paper awards were Julia Shaw-Kokot and JoAnne Sparks.

The Nominating Committee was chaired by Andrea Ball. Gary Byrd was introduced as the new Chair-Elect. He will also chair the Program Committee for the coming year. Several ideas for programs were mentioned, some co-sponsored with other sections.

Julie introduced Ruth Fenske as the new Chair for 1998-1999. In her remarks, Ruth reported that the Section had been approached by Rosalind Dudden for help with an application for a digital library grant. The meeting adjourned at 3:45 PM.

The Research Section of the MLA : The First Fifteen Years 1982-1997

by Robert M. Braude, MLS, Ph.D., AHIP

Goal 4. Research

MLA promotes the research role of the health sciences library and information professional. The association:

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

This statement from the 1996 revision of the MLA Strategic Plan is well known to every member today but the road that led to it began over twenty years ago. Although the Research Section is just fifteen years old, its origins are somewhat older and the path that MLA took to arrive at this focus on research encompassed several bends along the way. In fact, MLA's active involvement in research began in 1978 with the vision of Erika Love, then MLA President. That vision and the efforts she set in motion, resulted in the active research program of the MLA today. It is important to return to our antecedents and review our history, despite its relatively recent beginnings, since it is always useful to take stock of where one has been before starting off on a new journey. As we celebrate our Centennial and plan for the next millennium, it is appropriate to review our historical foundation so that our journey to the future can be informed by the understanding of our past.

The October 1978 Association Record column in the *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association* provides the Roster of Officer and Committees for 1978/79 [1]. Erika Love was President and her long-standing interest

Editor's Note: This history of the Research Section will appear in a forthcoming publication of the Medical Library Association. According to Carla Funk, Executive Director of MLA, a compilation of the histories of MLA, its Chapters and its Sections will be available in 1999 as part of the Centennial Celebration. Watch for information on its availability in the *MLA News* and on the MLANET Web site (<http://www.mlanet.org>).

in research, along with her Presidential prerogatives, stimulated her to appoint the Ad Hoc Committee to Study MLA's Role in Library-Related Research in June of 1978. Nancy Lorenzi was the Chair and the Charge read as follows:

This ad hoc committee shall conduct a study which will:

1. *State present and future perceived need for MLA's involvement in library-related research;*
2. *Review and assess past or present related activities within MLA that have research implications; and*
3. *Identify and describe other library associations' activities or positions concerning library-related research.*

Based on a statement of specific objectives, the committee shall:

1. *Develop a proposed position on MLA's role as a national professional organization in matters of library-related research;*
2. *Make specific recommendations for future action by MLA;*
3. *Identify mechanisms and resources available;*
4. *Assess extent of MLA's monetary commitment these recommendations might entail; and*
5. *Develop a timetable for implementation, as appropriate.*

The ad hoc committee shall establish lateral communication with other standing MLA committees and with equivalent entities in other organizations, as appropriate.

The committee shall present a final report to the board of directors at its midwinter meeting in December 1979.

The ad hoc committee pursued its task diligently throughout 1978 reporting on its progress at the 1979 Annual Meeting [2]. And the thoughtful outcome of that progress was reported at the 1980 Annual Meeting. This final report, in addition to addressing the issues of why MLA should be concerned about research, proposing a conceptual framework for research, proposing goals and objectives, and proposing recommendations, included the following motion:

Moved, that a standing Research and Evaluation Committee be convened after the June 1980 MLA meeting. The members of the committee should have an interest or background in research. And, the Research and Evaluation Committee should be charged to develop a list of research-related priorities and to identify persons who are potential researchers [3].

It is interesting to note that one of the recommendations in this report was to form a special interest group on research and evaluation within MLA by June 1, 1981 which would sponsor research-related programs at annual MLA meetings. Although the motion was withdrawn by the ad hoc committee pending further discussion by the Board, the effort was not in vain. At its midwinter meeting in December, 1980, the Board approved the formation of, and formulated a charge for, the Research and Evaluation Committee as a new standing committee of the Association [4]. Action complete; in just two years the vision Erika Love had of an active research program for MLA had been realized. Of course, by this time Erika had completed her term as Past-President of MLA so no time was lost in appointing her the first Chair of this new committee.

One would have thought that all was well at this point and that MLA's strategic direction in research was firmly established but one would be wrong. It may be a characteristic of association operations or it may just have been related to research, but the path from birth to childhood was not quite straight. The first annual report of this new standing committee begins by describing the first task as one of revising the charge and recommending a name change [5]. It also related the efforts involved in drafting a research policy statement for the MLA. Although just an infant committee, its voice was loud and the Board approved the recommended changes. From this point on, the name would be Research Committee. And again, as part of this report, the committee made a major motion: Moved, that the MLA Board of Directors adopt the Policy Statement on the Role of Research in the Medical Library Association. And again, the motion was withdrawn with the proviso that the policy statement will be integrated into the strategic planning process which had begun in June of 1982. The report of the President at that year's Annual Meeting had stated that the Board had adopted the concept of strategic planning at its December meeting and the executive Committee agreed to assign June 10, 1982 to activity that would be led by President-elect Nancy Lorenzi

[6]. And in his Presidential Address, Charles Sargent referred to his appointment of the new Committee on Research and to the new interest group on research which was about to have its birth at this meeting [7].

Thus did the Research Section of the Medical Library Association come to be. On June 16, 1982, born out of the infant Research Committee, by way of the strategic planning initiative, with Erika Love as midwife came this new section with new energy and just the beginnings of a new vision for research for the Medical Library Association. How that vision has been shaped is the story of the first fifteen years of the section. (*See Chronology, page 11*).

But I am ahead of my story and need to back up to the beginning of 1982. The Research Committee was engaged in its tasks one of which had been the formation of a special interest group on library related research. In March 1982, Erika, in her position of Chair of the Research Committee, wrote a piece for the *MLA News* addressing research issues and describing the nascent effort to form a new special interest group for research [8]. She described the various tasks the Research Committee had identified and mentioned the petition drive for the new group. The Research Committee had circulated a petition and had obtained over one hundred signatures from interested individuals. But what was the next step? Erika knew that the petition and a request to form a new section would need to go to Section Council but who would submit it. She did not feel that it could be done by the Research Committee itself and felt that it needed to be submitted by some provisional group. Erika, always a person of action, called me. I don't remember the exact date of the call, sometime in the spring of 1982 prior to the Annual meeting but I certainly remember the content. We need to form a library research section she told me and the Research Committee has circulated a petition and now we need someone to organize an inaugural meeting at the 1982 MLA Annual Meeting and you are the one to do it. Me, I said why me? "Because" was Erika's reply, and she did not have to go any further. When Erika spoke, a request became a command. "O.K., O.K.," I said. "I'll do it." At least I was familiar with MLA organizational procedures and since I had signed the petition I felt I could not do otherwise than to see this group through its birthing process. I agreed, closing the circle from the ad hoc committee to the beginnings of the section. Our current efforts are rooted in the MLA Research Committee which originally had proposed the formation of our section.

Agreeing to Erika's request was the easy part; figuring out how I would go about accomplishing what I had agreed to would be more difficult. As I thought about how to go about getting a group started, I fell back on an approach that had always worked for me before, find someone good to help. In this case, I knew just where to look, our own library staff. I talked with Mark Funk, at that time Head of Collection Development at the McGoogan Library of Medicine and an MLA member who had carried out and published research, and whose signature was on the petition. I asked Mark to collaborate with me on this issue of starting up a new group. The Research Committee and Erika had thought of this first meeting as the starting point for creating a new section. Mark and I discussed the process for petitioning Section Council for the formation of a new Section and decided upon the following plan. I would ask Erika to appoint me Chair, pro tem and then I, in turn, would appoint the rest of the officers to pro tem appointments. In that way we would have an official set of officers who could carry out the process. Mark agreed with this approach so I called Erika. She and the Research Committee had been reluctant to take on this task themselves since it was outside their charge but they were willing to sponsor it so that was the way we got it started. Erika agreed to appointing me Chairman, Pro Tem of the Library Research Section, to having the Research Committee be the sponsor of our inaugural meeting, and to presenting a brief history of the efforts leading up to the formation of this new section at that meeting. Mark and I discussed other potential pro tem officers for me to contact and the mechanism for obtaining a time slot and location for a meeting at the MLA Annual Meeting that coming June in Anaheim. So we were on our way.

June 16, 1982, Anaheim, California, the organizational meeting of the Library Research Section, thirty interested MLA members were in attendance. The minutes reflect our organizational efforts. Erika Love, Chair of the Research Committee provided an overview of interest in library research among MLA members and support for formation of a separate section within MLA. The pro tem officers and committee chairs were introduced as follows: Chair, Pro Tem Robert M. Braude, University of Nebraska Medical Center; Vice-chair, Pro Tem Mark Funk, University of Nebraska Medical Center; Secretary-Treasurer, Pro Tem Dottie Eakin, University of Michigan; Chair, Nominating/Elections Committee, William Maina, University of Texas Health Sciences Center, Dallas; Chair, Membership Committee, Phyllis Lansing,

CHRONOLOGY

1978 June	Appointment of the Ad hoc Committee to Study MLA's Role in Library related research.
1980 December	Board approved Research and Evaluation Committee as a new Standing Committee of MLA.
1981 December	Board approves change of name to Research Committee at Midwinter meeting.
1982 Spring	Petition drive by Research Committee soliciting interest in a new Special Interest Group related to research.
1982 June	Organizational meeting of individuals interested in forming a Library Research Section, Anaheim, CA.
1982 June	Board grants provisional status to Library Research Section at the post-conference Board meeting.
1983 June	Permanent officers elected at MLA Annual Meeting, Houston, TX.
1987 Summer	First issue of <i>Hypothesis</i> , the newsletter of the Library Research Section is issued.
1989 May	Symposium: Evaluation in Health Sciences Libraries: Measuring Our Contribution and Our Value.
1991 June	Symposium: The Research Process: From Proposal Writing to Publication.
1992 May	Think Tank on MLA's Research Initiative.
1995 December	Research Spotlight column in <i>MLA News</i> .
1996 July	Name changed to Research Section by the Board of Directors at its preconference meeting, Kansas City, May, 1996.

University of Oklahoma; Chair, Bylaws Committee, Justine Roberts, University of California, San Francisco; Chair, Program Committee for 1983 Annual Meeting, Eleanor Goodchild, University of Pennsylvania; and Liaison with MLA Research Committee, Faith Van Toll, Wayne State University.

There was a general discussion of the name of the section since many thought we would be confused with the Research Libraries Section; conflict between choice of primary section among those organized by type of library and those organized by function; how to get our new section listed on the MLA dues renewal notification; and what program we wanted to plan for the 1983 MLA Annual Meeting. We established the following objectives for 1982-83: establish an initial mailing list from the signers of the petition; draft bylaws; elect permanent officers; prepare an article for the *MLA News* to describe the initial meeting and encourage interest among MLA members; and decide upon dues. Finally, we discussed potential concerns and issues presented by Erika that had come from the discussions of the Research Committee. These were:

- ◆ the relationship of MLA to library schools; recognition of current communication problems between library schools and health science libraries;
- ◆ the focus of current formal education is on practice. Present orientation is toward service, with little or no promotion of research, either with time or funds, into why we do what we do and what the alternatives might be. The importance of education, as well as training of the young professional needs to be addressed;
- ◆ the need for support for research training in continuing education programs;
- ◆ the research opportunities libraries could potentially offer to library school faculty;
- ◆ the need for establishing relationships with other professional organizations engaged in library research, such as the Council on Library Resources (CLR);
- ◆ funding possibilities for library research. A very small percent of NLM grants goes to librarians;
- ◆ the need for a bibliography of research in progress;
- ◆ the need to increase awareness and stimulate interest in research-what is possible and what needs to be done.

That summer was a busy one as we completed our organization and planned the year. In July 1982, I sent each committee chair a provisional charge for their committee along with the names of individuals who had attended our organizational meeting and who had volunteered to work on that committee. In August, 1982 I contacted the Officers and Committee Chairs to review progress on our objectives and by the end of September we had made substantial progress on all of them. We considered listing our section on the MLA dues renewal form so members could select it and thus we would compile our membership list from the MLA data. While MLA was not yet collecting dues for Sections, they were providing information about Sections on the MLA membership renewal form and asking members to select a primary Section. We agreed to do this. We reviewed our progress on bylaws. Since we had submitted draft bylaws to Section Council early in our organizational efforts, we had been granted provisional status as a section. We had been informed that we needed to submit our final bylaws to the MLA bylaws committee and we decided to wait until our revision was complete to do that. We developed nomination and election procedures and decided on a mail ballot so that permanent officers, committee chairs and our Section Council representative would all be elected and in place prior to the 1983 meeting in Houston. We decided to submit an article to *MLA News* describing our new section and its purpose in order to publicize it. And we decided to charge dues for section membership and would discuss the amount and vote on it at the Houston meeting.

By March 1983 the section was well on its way to being fully established. Revised bylaws had been completed in November 1982 and submitted. The purpose described in those bylaws was:

Article II. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Library Research Section is to foster research-related skills of individual health sciences librarians; to promote interest in research and an awareness of research need among members of MLA; to recommend and promote Association programs and policies which advance research development and excellence; and, further, in concert with other MLA groups and committees, especially the Research and Continuing Education Committees, to serve as an

action group for the advancement of library related research.

Our ties to the Research Committee were evident in this purpose and although we included the CE committee, we were still the child of the Research Committee. The 1982/83 MLA Directory listed us with this purpose for the first time and with only minor changes from that date to the present.

On March 25, 1983 the Section's first Annual Report was submitted to MLA Headquarters. It described our organizing year as follows:

The Library Research Section held its first organizational meeting in Anaheim on June 16, 1982 under the sponsorship of the MLA Research Committee. At that meeting the section formally organized and submitted to the Section Council a petition calling for the organization of the Section. Officers were appointed for the first year in order to carry out the organization of the Section and arrange for formal elections in the coming year. The officers are: Robert M. Braude, Chairman pro tem.; Mark Funk, Vice-Chairman pro tem.; and Dottie Eakin, Secretary/Treasurer pro tem. Four committees were appointed: Nominating/Elections, Chair Bill Maina; Membership, Chair Phyllis Lansing; Bylaws, Chair Justine Roberts; and Program, Chair Eleanor Goodchild. Faith Van Toll was appointed Liaison with the MLA Research Committee.

A discussion of objectives for the initial year was carried out and resulted in a set of objectives related to completing the organization of the Section. The Section Council accepted the petition and recommended to the MLA Board the creation of the Section. The Board approved the organization of the Section at the Post-Conference Board meeting.

During the year the Section prepared Bylaws that will be voted on at the Houston meeting. Publicity about the Section appeared in MLA News. And the agenda for the Section business meeting at Houston has been developed. At that meeting the Section will complete its organizational year and develop programmatic objectives for 1983-84 [9].

On March 29, 1983 I submitted the first MEDICAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION (MLA) ANNUAL DECLARATION OF SECTION COMPLIANCE. I had to indicate that we had submitted an annual report, had held at least one meeting, and numerous other criteria had been fulfilled. Although the Houston

meeting was still two months away, I had completed my personal objectives. The Section was firmly established, elections for permanent officers were underway, a program had been developed for the Houston meeting, and an agenda for our business meeting had been prepared. I had done what Erika had asked of me just one year ago. The new section was off to a strong start thanks to many individuals who had joined with me to initiate this effort. The first elected officers of the Section were:

Gwendolyn S. Cruzat, Chair
Anna D. Cleveland, Chair-elect
Dottie Eakin, Secretary

One of the purposes of the Library Research Section was to promote interest in research and an awareness of research need among members of MLA and our new Section realized that we needed to address that purpose quickly if we were to survive as a Section and accomplish our other objectives. Publicizing our presence became an immediate task and we set about it quickly. An announcement of our formation and our pro tem. officers appeared in the *MLA News* for August 1982 [10]. And another item appeared in 1983 which included both our concerns and our invitation to MLA members to join our Section [11]. We had not yet had our first formal program session but we were already bringing our activities to the membership of MLA.

In addition to publicizing the new Section, we wanted to develop programming that would meet the needs of our Section members as well as attract other MLA members. We felt that substantive programs dealing with research issues were important for the profession and for improving our research orientation. Consequently, we wasted no time in developing a program for the 1983 MLA Annual Meeting even though we were not yet formally established. With very little lead time but an enthusiastic group of officers and committee chairs, we organized a program for the Houston meeting [12]. Eleanor Goodchild, Chair of the Section's Program Committee moderated a panel on the library research environment. I spoke on the research environment in the medical library setting and C. Lee Jones of the Council on Library Resources (CLR) spoke on CLR-sponsored research and training programs. A general discussion of library research issues followed and the general impression was that the program had been an outstanding success. And so, by June of 1983, the new Library Research Section of MLA had elected permanent officers and presented

the first program focused on library research at the MLA Annual Meeting. The Research Committee was continuing with its other objectives, having accomplished this one of stimulating the formation of a special interest group concerned with research. Together we would continue to focus MLA's attention on research and the research process. But not for long. Our collaborative efforts would be short lived for at its 1984 Midwinter meeting, the Committee on Committees dissolved the Research Committee. Only four short years after it had established this committee, the Board dissolved it. The rationale was that research efforts would be incorporated within the context of other appropriate committees and activities of MLA [13].

The Section was not adversely effected by this action and enthusiastically participated in the development of its own program and the strategic planning effort of MLA that incorporated research as one of its goals. Just five years after dissolving the Research Committee, the strategic planning process had identified research as an important priority for the Association. A committee of the Library Research Section had developed a research agenda for the Association and submitted it to the Board at its 1989 Midwinter meeting as part of its contribution to strategic planning [14]. Several other projects were initiated by the Section to both publicize research and assist members in getting started with research projects of their own. Notable among these projects were a bibliography of research publications, a research mentors directory that identified Section members who were willing to be mentors to MLA members beginning research projects, a research projects database listing current research projects of members, sponsoring contributed paper sessions at MLA Annual Meetings, and a variety of surveys dealing with research or the research process, e.g., a survey on academic release time for research and one on MLA member interest in research education, this one done in cooperation with the CE Committee. The Section was busy and its activities were documented in its annual reports each year. The Section had also started a newsletter, *Hypothesis*, for keeping members informed. The first issue was published in Summer, 1987.

But the Section was still evolving. Along with the changes that were occurring in MLA itself as well as the changes occurring in the larger environment of health sciences librarianship, changes were occurring within the Section. The scope of its activities were expanding, building on the new emphasis on strategic

planning and the continuing discussion of the research agenda that had been initiated by the Section and incorporated into the planning process. As the environment changed, so did the purpose of the Section to a more proactive one.

The first major event sponsored by the Section was a symposium on evaluation jointly sponsored with the Hospital Libraries Section and held on the last day of the 1989 MLA Annual Meeting in Boston. Evaluation in Health Sciences Libraries: Symposium Measuring Our Contribution and Our Value attracted 157 registrants and was extremely successful [15]. It was so successful that the Library Research Section sponsored a second symposium in 1991 following the MLA Annual Meeting in San Francisco. The Research Process: From Proposal Writing to Publication attracted 38 registrants who heard from successful grant seekers and authors and participated in small group working sessions [16].

The MLA was actively pursuing research as well and drawing upon the expertise of the Library Research Section and its members. By 1992, research issues had achieved such prominence within the MLA that a Think Tank on MLA's Research Initiative was held following the 1992 Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the Library Research Section and Knowledge and Skills Task Force [17]. The Think Tank was successful in focusing attention on the research process and MLA's research initiative.

So important was this issue that the Library Research Section published a special issue of *Hypothesis* containing the abstracts of the papers presented at the Think Tank [18]. The importance of this effort was demonstrated immediately as one of the recommendations that came from this effort was for MLA to establish a Research Task Force. The Task Force was appointed and began its work in December 1992. And so MLA had come full circle. The first effort in 1978 which had led to the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee to Study MLA's Role in Library-Related Research followed by the Research Committee, established in 1982 and dissolved in 1984, to this new Task Force in 1992, fourteen years after the first effort. The charge to the Task Force was to design an action plan to develop an MLA research program.

In the meantime, the Section continued its efforts at keeping the research issue before the membership. Two more significant programs were initiated by the Section

to accomplish this. The first was to publish a Research Spotlight column in the *MLA News*. An announcement of this column appeared in the November/December 1995 issue [19]. Members were encouraged to submit their own work or nominate a colleague's project. The second was the establishment by the Section of awards for the best research paper and research poster presented at the MLA Annual Meeting. The first awards were made for presentations at the 1996 Annual Meeting in Kansas City [20].

The Research Task Force had been busy as well. It had developed a research statement for MLA after several drafts and public hearings. Using *Scientific Evidence to Improve Information Practice: The Research Policy Statement of the Medical Library Association* was approved by the MLA Board at its Midwinter meeting in 1995 [21]. Although not directly a product of the Library Research Section, there is no doubt about the Section's influence in its creation both as a result of the emphasis on research provided by the Section as well as the many Section members who served on the Task Force. The Section could look back on its short history with a strong sense of accomplishment. It had more than fulfilled the challenge it had been given by Erika Love, more than a dozen years before.

It is clear from what has come before, that Erika Love was the spiritual leader of the research effort within MLA and certainly the one key individual in the history of the Library Research Section. From her first public pronouncement on the importance of research to our profession in her Presidential Keynote Address, delivered at the Seventy-ninth Annual Meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii, June 4, 1979 through her Janet Doe Lecture of 1987, and culminating with her term as Chair of the Library Research Section in 1987-88, Erika has been MLA's and the profession's strongest advocate for research [22,23]. She created the Ad Hoc Committee to Study MLA's Role in Library-Related Research in 1978 when she was President of MLA. She served as the first Chair of the Research and Evaluation Committee of MLA, a new standing committee that had been recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee. And it was in this capacity that Erika stimulated the formation of the Library Research Section. There is no question that she was the preeminent influence over these first short years of our history.

Of course there were other MLA members who contributed to the Section. Every officer, committee

chair, and member provided dedicated effort to the growth of the Section and its projects and programs. These individuals, and their accomplishments, are recorded in the various Annual Reports of the Section and in its newsletter. Many Section members have contributed to the overall growth in the research position of the MLA through their efforts on other projects, such as the development of the research policy statement or the report of the Knowledge and Skills Task Force. Again, their names are associated with those activities. Each Chair of the Section, from the first formal year of organization to the present has brought something to our progress. Most importantly, they have all brought a dedication to the notion of research and a zeal and enthusiasm for proselytizing it throughout the MLA.

And the Section's short history reflects their efforts. In 1982, 117 MLA members signed the petition to organize the section. At the initial meeting in June of that year, 30 members attended. And in 1996, the Section could boast of 179 members, a phenomenal growth over a short period of time and even more remarkable given the number of Sections that compete for members.

So this is our past; what is our future? The promise is bright. Not only does MLA have an active research agenda, but also the Section has built strong collaborative relationships with other Sections of MLA and with other organizations, most notably, the American Medical Informatics Association. These relationships have led and will lead to increasing research oriented programs, symposia, or workshops. Research issues are considerably more visible within our profession today and we can take some credit for that. The profession is becoming more attuned to the need for research and the need to understand both research principles and the research process and we can take some credit for that. And our growing participation in such broader efforts as evidence-based medicine is a natural extension of our growing awareness of the value of research and we can take some credit for that. And our future programs will continue to promote research among health sciences librarians so we can extend our participation and our influence within the broader health care field.

The profession is changing but not in its fundamental position. We still provide information services with the emphasis on service. What we do now, however, is assess the different services that could be provided and determine those that are most effective and efficient.

We investigate how those services influence health care providers' practice along with how they influence both the cost of delivering health care or the efficacy of it. We are fully capable of collaboration with other scientists in the health care field whether it is in the development of information-based educational material, the evaluation of information systems, or the investigation of the role of information in health care. All of this has occurred as the natural consequences of identifying research as a legitimate aspect of our profession. The MLA and its Research Section have been instrumental in stimulating these changes.

The future stretches out before us and we are prepared for it. In 1996 we changed our name to Research Section of MLA reflecting our interest in research in general and not specifically or solely in library research [24]. This name change is consistent with the research policy statement that research is the foundation for excellence in health information practice. And the potential confusion with the Research Libraries Section that had influenced us in 1982, was no longer an issue since that Section had disbanded in 1993. We will continue to contribute to and push the research agenda of MLA from our unique perspective as librarians. There are many challenges that lie ahead; we are well prepared to meet them; our history, while short, is significant beyond proportion to its time; and it is a substantial foundation on which we can build our next one hundred years. Let us celebrate it!

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