

## THE CONCEPT OF THE THREE-WAY MARRIAGE:

## LIBRARIANS, MEDIA SPECIALISTS

## AND EDUCATORS

by

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The librarians, media specialists, and educators specializing in any field, whether that is medicine, engineering, industry, or any other, must maintain a constant interaction in order to best meet the needs of their users. In the health field, this interaction has been only loosely defined. Librarians have cooperated with each other in networks, on a regulated inter-institutional basis for years. Media specialists in health care institutions are relatively new, and therefore have not yet established regulated channels for cooperation, but operate through personal contact, and more recently, through professional organizations. Educators in the health sciences have traditionally limited themselves to one aspect of medical education; with a single institution housing an educator for each educational program they offer. The concept of an educational coordinator to oversee and aid in the interaction of all the programs in a single institution is also relatively new. All of these things combine to make interaction between the three professions slightly less than organized. If such interaction exists, it exists because of individuals, not through the leadership of professional organizations with well defined systems or concepts. That it does exist on this basis in some health care or health educational institutions, there is no doubt. That it can greatly increase the scope of services available in those institutions, there is also no doubt. Single, scattered, institutions have proven that intra-institutional cooperation, the interaction and cooperation of professionals from different disciplines within the institution, does better the flow of health science information, bettering the delivery of medical education, leading to the betterment of health care. Until now, there have been no efforts to provide this type of intra-institutional cooperation on an inter-institutional basis. The Health Instructional Resources Associated (H.I.R.A.) is an organization which fosters this concept of inter-intra-institutional cooperation.

Health Instructional Resources Associated is an ambitious name. So is the group. It is attempting to tap the wealth of knowledge, talents, and skills found in media technology, librarianship and education in the health sciences in order to form a central pool which all health care and health educational institutions can draw on.

H.I.R.A. is the second generation of an example of Intra-institutional cooperation. It began at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Pontiac, Michigan, when the Director of Biomedical Photography and the Chief Medical Librarian of that institution joined forces to meet the needs of the various and numerous educational directors. As the scope of their cooperation began to increase, it was obvious that the success of their independent services was also increasing. They were meeting more needs through their cooperation than had been met through separate efforts. Shortly the idea of spreading the wealth further evolved, until it seemed only natural to contact personnel from neighboring institutions. As a result, late in 1971, St. Joseph Mercy Hospital

Invited representatives from eight surrounding institutions to a meeting in which the possibility of a larger cooperative effort would be discussed. The response was nearly overwhelming. Every invited institution sent at least one representative, most sent several. The meeting culminated in unanimous agreement to form a formal organization with three major objectives.

The first objective of the still nameless group was to actively share all available materials: the traditional printed materials of course, but also software and possibly hardware. It was determined that a defined loan system would have to be outlined, based on proven interlibrary loan methods. The second objective included the active sharing of talents, knowledge and skills of representatives, through the creation of a forum for discussion and consultation. It was agreed that expertise should be made available on a basis similar to loan of materials: each individual would make his time and expertise available only after primary responsibilities to his institution were completed. Specific questions such as discussion of particular types or brands of equipment, evaluations of commercial software, or mention of new materials and hardware would be handled at regular meetings of the organization. The third objective was to produce whatever software was necessary to meet local needs that were not being met through commercial software. This, too, was to be carried out on a cooperative basis.

By December, 1971, the representatives from the nine institutions had met three times. Since all the institutions were in or near the city of Pontiac, and since there was a conviction that a local group would be much easier to organize than a more comprehensive one, it was agreed to limit, geographically, the proposed membership. The name "Pontiac Area Instructional Resources" or P.A.I.R., was chosen for the limitations inherent in the title, and for the appropriateness of its acronym. It was agreed that after some organization had been accomplished, the membership would be opened to all interested institutions, and the name would be changed as necessary.

As P.A.I.R., the group quickly reached a stage of notable progress. Within the first year of its existence, it not only maintained its philosophy, purpose, and interest, it gained new interest at a very rapid rate. By late 1972 it had already reached the point where expansion was necessary. The name Health Instructional Resources Associated was chosen for its lack of limiting factors and its descriptiveness. The membership had grown from those first nine institutions to a whopping thirty-one institutions. H.I.R.A. is no longer just an experiment, it is proof of the power of cooperation.

The current H.I.R.A. mailing list still includes thirty-one institutions, with sixty-two representatives. Recently, H.I.R.A. requested all member institutions to submit commitment letters from their respective administrations, as a requirement of membership. To date, twelve of these letters have been received, with the remainder in varying stages of preparation. Member institutions may send as many representatives to H.I.R.A. meetings as they wish. Each institution is given two votes with which to voice their opinion. General membership meetings are held bi-monthly, rotating from member institution to member institution.

H.I.R.A. is governed by an Executive Committee, half of which is elected, and half of which is appointed. Members include the three major officers: the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary-Treasurer. The other members are the chairmen of all standing committees. Presently, these number four: a Nominating Committee, to nominate candidates for office as necessary; a Loan/Procedures Committee, to regulate loan procedures; a Catalog Committee, to revise the group's union catalog; and a Funding Committee, to seek sources of funding for H.I.R.A. projects. The H.I.R.A. officers are elected for two year terms, with the Vice Chairman serving as Chairman-elect for the following term. Committee chairmen are elected by the members of the respective committee annually.

In the eighteen months of its formal existence, H.I.R.A. has accomplished many things. It has continued to gain interest and cause excitement wherever it has been mentioned. It has produced a Union List of Software, Hardware, and Serials. It has created an open forum where expertise is available on a discussion or consultant basis. It produced a sound/slide program on hospital infection control, one of the areas in which it was determined none of the commercially available materials were satisfying the group's needs. It has written a Constitution and By-Laws, and has begun requesting formal commitments from members. Loan procedures are being written, and loans are being transacted. A revision of the Union List is underway. A grant application has been submitted for funding to set up a permanent resource office to handle H.I.R.A. actions, projects, and finances. A strong Executive Committee has emerged, and an interested potential membership has continued to grow.

It is impossible to foresee a future for medical education that does not include extensive use of cooperative efforts and regionalization. No single institution, whether it is primarily a care facility or an educational facility can embody all the materials and expertise its staffs will need to provide complete medical education. The key to any cooperative effort is finding a workable combination of people, knowledge and skills. The three disciplines of librarianship, media technology, and education all have something to offer each other in a cooperative organization. Education sees the needs of its students and teachers, media technology provides the resources for meeting these needs through the production of new materials, and librarianship provides the expertise to organize these materials and coordinate them with existing materials. The cooperation between these professions leads naturally to a cooperation between the specializations of these professions, such as the health sciences. It's a natural progression for medical librarians, medical illustrators, biomedical photographers, nurses, doctors, and paramedical educators to cooperate inter-intra-institutionally. The growth of the organization H.I.R.A. from the P.A.I.R. experiment proves the workability of this type of interaction.

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