

MHSLA

NEWS

No. 80

WINTER 2006

NEWSLETTER OF THE MICHIGAN HEALTH SCIENCES LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION

President's Message: The Future of Hospital Libraries

By Arlene Weismantel, MILS, AHIP
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Since the MHSLA Board meeting in November, 2005, I've been thinking about a report submitted by one of our regional groups. MHSLA had recently gathered for a very successful annual conference and had also produced an insightful draft strategic plan. Yet, this regional group felt that the conference wasn't as helpful to hospital librarians and that conferences need to focus more on practice and less on philosophy. The group also felt that hospital libraries were a low priority in the new strategic plan and that action should be taken to "make the medical library worth something to administration".

I've been haunted by this criticism for two months now because this regional group is right: MHSLA needs to do a better job of advocating for hospital librarians. If we don't start doing an effective job of this, we might as well change our name to the Michigan Academic Health Sciences Libraries Association. And our numbers will be so alarmingly reduced that medical librarians might as well be declared an endangered species.

At least our strategic plan identifies hospital library cutbacks and closures as a threat. It also identifies what I think is the single most important way to address this threat, through standards support, that is, through JCAHO and other accreditation and regulation processes.



CONTENTS

President's Message	1
Ferris State University Accepts MHSLA Archives	3
Conference Scholarship Winners	3
Internet Librarian Conference	6
VA Online Resource: My HealthVet	8

Then, I began thinking that the Medical Library Association isn't making this issue as high a priority as it should either. Take a look at MLA's strategic plan at <http://www.mlanet.org/about/strategc.html>. It turns out that MLA *does* identify its role in aggressively promoting the "value of health sciences librarians". For a minute I was surprised MLA used the "L" word. And then I wondered how MLA defined "librarian" since the MLS was not mentioned. And why do I have all this suspicion where MLA is concerned? I think my suspicion was raised after all of those discussions about the informationist, which seemed to imply that the MLS wasn't nearly enough. MLA isn't advocating for librarians; it's advocating for a nebulously-defined profession, the informationist, that does not yet exist and that no institution, not even the academics, can afford. Based on recent MLA conferences and publications, MLA seems to be devoting far more time to discussing the informationist concept than advocating for current dues-paying members: hospital librarians.

Cheryl Banick published an article in the November 15th issue of *Library Journal* titled, "RX for Medical Libraries". She observes, "In the past two years I've seen dozens of libraries closed or outsourced, five go to reduced hours, four combined, over a dozen librarian positions eliminated, and the birth of the Super Library Tech who runs the library but doesn't need to have an MLS...There are now approximately 2900 hospital libraries and an estimated 4000 staffers working in them, and they are at risk".

We've witnessed similar cuts in our own state. And the cuts will continue until the Standards for Hospital Libraries are adopted by JCAHO and other accrediting agencies. Banick notes that the head of nursing must be a nurse practitioner with experience in the field: "Guess what? Because the Joint expects

this standard to be met, it is. If management knows it can get accreditation without a degreed librarian or an actual library in place, then it has no incentive to provide either." JCAHO requires that, "nursing services are directed by a nurse executive who is a registered nurse qualified by advanced education and management experience" (http://www.wramc.army.mil/JCAHO/Division.cfm?D_Id=13). We should work to make sure that JCAHO requires library services to be directed by a qualified librarian. Medical librarians have the Rochester study to demonstrate that we benefit patient care. And, of course, it's not just the Rochester study. There are a number of other studies that can be photocopied and placed on administrators' desks clearly demonstrating the value of the library (See O'Connor (2003), *Determining the Impact of Health Library Services on Patient Care: A Review of the Literature, Journal of Hospital Librarianship*, 3(2), p.29.). But, until JCAHO adopts some library standards, hospitals won't be creating new libraries, purchasing new materials with abandon or hiring new librarians. And they'll always be eyeing the library and its staff with the view that a lot of money could be saved by getting rid of them. They'd be doing the same thing with the directors of nursing services if they didn't have standards to support them.

So, what can MHSLA do given our limited personpower and resources? Let's put some pressure on MLA to address this issue in a more concrete way, to incorporate it into their strategic plan. Let's get MLA to represent their dues-paying members rather than the nonexistent informationists. The Connecticut State Medical Society adopted the Standards for Medical Libraries resulting in added staffing, space and funding. Let's communicate with those folks in Connecticut to generate ideas on how to get moving in this direction here in Michigan.



From left to right: Ferris Library for Information, Technology and Education (FLITE) Dean Dr. Richard Cochran, Ferris Archivist and Special Collections Librarian Melinda McMartin, Ferris President Dr. David L. Eisler, MHSLA President Arlene Weismantel, and Ferris Optometry Librarian and MHSLA Archivist Maureen Watson.

Ferris State University Accepts the MHSLA Archives

By Arlene Weismantel

On Friday, November 4, 2005, a ceremony was held at the Ferris Library for Information, Technology and Education (FLITE) commemorating the acceptance of MHSLA's archives into the Ferris collection. Ferris President Dr. David L. Eisler, FLITE Dean Dr. Richard Cochran, Ferris Archivist Melinda McMartin, MHSLA President Arlene Weismantel and MHSLA Archivist Maureen Watson were present and

approved the agreement. MHSLA members should contact Maureen at Maureen_Watson@ferris.edu if they want to take a look at any of MHSLA's historical papers.

Conference Scholarship Winners Share their Experiences

Bonnie Fortin, Jill Turner, and Jessica Rush won scholarships to the 2005 MHSLA conference. Bonnie and Jill were selected for the student scholarships, and Jessica, a Ferris State University librarian, was

awarded the member scholarship. Here are their impressions of the Conference:

Bonnie A. Fortin

The slow ascent up the mountain in a chair lift melded scenery and observer, making them one with nature. Rebecca Lessard's display of her various birds of prey set the mood for a relaxing, yet informative conference. Whether gazing across the mountainside, surrounded by the pumpkin orange, golden rod yellow and the molten hot red of the brilliant sunset, or wandering through the village of picturesque cottages, the relaxing setting belied the professional nature of the 2005 MSHLA conference.

The presenters addressed a broad array of medical health library issues. Jean Chabut gave an interesting history and synopsis of current Michigan health issues. Craig Mulder gave an amusing presentation demonstrating an interactive computer/operator dialogue in which the computer participates in accomplishing daily tasks and contacting resource personnel. Vince Cornellier, Ph.D presented a provocative viewpoint of the library user and librarian relationship: many underlying issues may be involved in their seemingly simply interaction and he encouraged sensitivity to library user's needs.

The bear hunt in Sleeping Bear Dunes was another captivating outdoor experience, the immensity of the bear dunes, and the pulsating ebb and flow of the encircling waves, closed the conference's last evening on a spectacular note. I enjoyed meeting so many of you - thank you for your warm welcome. The Munson hosts did a wonderful job of accommodating my handicapped mother. I especially thank Valeria Long for her patience.

Jessica Rush

As a child, I always dreamed of going away to camp; Girl Scouts, Blue Birds anything that would take me up North. Well, two weeks ago, as a recipient of a scholarship, I finally had the opportunity to attend camp up North, Camp MSHLA! Nestled at the base of Crystal Mountain, this conference/camp took place in one of the prettiest areas Western Michigan has to offer. Opulent, varied meals; stimulating conversations; a thought-provoking continuing education class; and other educational sessions; all combined to offer a fast-paced, information-packed 3 days.

On Wednesday, we were treated to the expertise and knowledge of Stephen Abram, a leading international librarian and current President of



the Canadian Library Association. Pushing us to think in terms of the New Millennials and their graphic-based worlds, he challenged us to reassess how we deliver information and to remember that technology in all its forms, is really just another "tool"

in the toolkit of librarianship. Overwhelmed with technological options as we all are, it was refreshing to recall that one of our primary responsibilities is to re-create the information experience by asking ourselves what it is we

hope to accomplish, what our patrons or clients hope to achieve and how we will use the newest technologies to accomplish all. The speed of his thoughts, the depth of his understanding of the newest technologies made for a stimulating and information-rich class. I came away with much to think about, research and possibly strive to implement.

Wednesday evening we were treated to a sunset dinner atop the mountain with a raptor program from Wings of Wonder and founder/presenter, Rebecca Lessard. Rebecca and her raptors offered a glimpse of the hard work they do to restore raptors to the wild.

As she talked about the personalities of the raptors on display I couldn't help but think how similar they are to humans..., at least in some respects! Even among raptors, females weigh more than males!

Thursday was packed with additional sessions; I attended Innovations in Personal Information Management presented by Craig Mulder, had he seen my office? Public Health Issues in Michigan, we have a long way to go yet, and a GMR update. We are indeed fortunate to have access to the many programs and services of the National Library of Medicine. Our bus tour of the Sleeping Bear Dunes and the stop at Gwen Frostic's print gallery will entice me to visit both of these high points again and very soon!

Friday, the real treat for me was the keynote address from Dr. Cornellier. Both entertaining and stimulating, I fleetingly considered adding "Knowledge Facilitator" to my business card, but does this mean that I would have to add a couch to my office?

The entire time at Camp MHSLA was an opportunity to relax, recreate, and relate to peers, mentors and strategists in this world of

information management. Thank you all for giving me this opportunity to "go to camp," I never had this much fun as a nurse!

Jill Turner

This year's conference was everything that I knew it would be. I had high expectations after my attendance last year, and this year's conference surpassed them all. What could be better than dining atop a mountain or receiving a guided tour of Sleeping Bear Dunes (one of the most beautiful places in the country, in my opinion)? Yet, it was not just Wednesday's Opening Reception or the Thursday Special Event or one special breakout session that made this conference an outstanding experience. As a student, it is difficult to get a "real world" view of librarianship. Attending the conference has given me the opportunity to experience librarianship outside of the classroom. I have gotten to hear about the real challenges that the health science librarians of Michigan face and what is being done or can be done to meet those challenges. Through attendance at the business meeting, I have seen what MHSLA does, the plans for the future, and areas where I could get involved. I have gotten the opportunity to meet many of the MHSLA members and observe the true passion that you have for this profession. Finally, I had the opportunity to attend instructional sessions without being expected to take a quiz or a final at the end! Attendance at this conference has also given me the chance to re-gain my focus. I can now plow through these next three months of school with a clearer view of what I am working towards. In conclusion, I would like to thank MHSLA for your generosity in providing me with this wonderful opportunity.

Internet Librarian Conference

By Alexia Estabrook

Mid-fall 2005 found me in Monterey, California – the home of James Steinbeck and, for the next four days, librarians from all across the country. The reason for the gathering was the 9th Annual Internet Librarian Conference, hosted by Information Today, Inc. I was able to attend the conference and a pre-conference workshop due to a generous grant. This project was funded in part with federal funds from the National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, under Contract No. NO1-LM-1-3513.

The Internet Librarian conference is “the ONLY conference for information professionals who are using, developing, and embracing Internet, Intranet, and Web-based strategies in their roles as information architects and navigators, Webmasters and Web managers, content evaluators and developers, taxonomists, searchers, community builders, information providers, trainers, guides, and more.” (<http://www.infotoday.com/il2006/>). Librarians and information professionals from all types of libraries come together to learn, collaborate, network and converse about all things Internet and library related. Regardless of what type of library we hail from, be it corporate, medical, public, academic or school, we all have

something in common – the love of all things Web.

The theme of the Internet Librarian 2005 conference was Shifting Worlds. “It has been 10 years since the last major technological sea change when the Web rocked our world. Not just the information world, but also those worlds at the very roots of our lives – the places and spaces where we work, learn and play. All indications point to very dramatic and dynamic changes in the coming year.” (<http://www.infotoday.com/il2005/>). I can attest to that – by the end of the conference my world had shifted. Rarely had I ever come back from a



conference feeling as optimistic and enthusiastic as I had from this one.

My funding from the GMR allowed me to attend a pre-conference workshop. I chose the Web Manager’s Academy. This workshop was taught by Frank Cervone from Northwestern University, Jeff Wisniewski from the University of Pittsburgh, Marshall Breeding from Vanderbilt University and Darlene Fichter from the University of Saskatchewan. The workshop

began with a discussion of the disconnects between libraries and their “Next Gen” users. Before we can improve products and access to our libraries we must understand who our users are and how they want to access our information. Though the instructors focused mostly on their area of expertise – the academic library – I found the discussion relevant. Our job in the medical library, especially those in the hospitals, is more difficult in that our users are not as homogenous as the academic library. Our patrons run the gamut from young students who grew up with the Web to older physicians with little or no computer experience. I believe this is a topic that deserves fuller discussion among medical librarians. The rest of the workshop was devoted to “Next Gen” Web services, including Live Reference Chat, syndicated library news, dynamic organizational portals, device independent delivery and virtual services.

Each day the conference opened with a keynote speaker or speakers. The opening keynote was given by Lee Rainie from the Pew Internet and American Life Project (<http://www.pewinternet.org/index.asp>). He discussed some of the latest findings of the Pew Internet Project and the subjects the Project is considering in the future. His speech was thought provoking as always, especially for librarians who work in consumer health. More and more Web users go to the Internet to find health information with little or no knowledge of what is relevant or authoritative. In addition, the digital divide between older / younger, urban / rural, and broad / narrow band offers additional challenges for librarians as a whole and medical librarians in particular.

Elizabeth Lawley, who can be found blogging at <http://mamamusings.net>, was the keynote speaker for the second day of the conference. She spoke on social computing and the information professional and focused on

building trusted communities online. I couldn't help but reflect on MEDLIB-L, one of my favorite professional online communities! With the coming evolution of the Internet to Web 2.0 I hope the library community embraces all the new avenues of social computing to maintain and grow our trusted community.

The keynote speakers for the last day of the conference were Rich Wiggins and Roy Tennant. They offered us a lively debate on Google Print. Rich viewed Google as a smart corporation and their foray into digitization has caused the library community to “think big”. Roy Tennant wondered aloud if Google was the “Devil or merely evil”? He proposed that blind wholesale digitization caused older, free material to win over newer, not free material. Adam Smith, a project manager from Google was a surprise participant at the end of the speeches. He was hit with a lot of hard questions from the audience and did his best to answer though “no comment” was a popular response.

The closing keynote speech was given on the afternoon of the third day of the conference. Stephen Abram, from SirsiDynix, spoke about libraries competing with Google, and positioning libraries for the 21st century. His advice was ten-fold: know our market, know our customers better than Google does, be aware of where our users are, search for the target user, support our culture, position libraries where we excel, be wireless, get visual, integrate with our community, and take a risk by sacrificing our fear of success. This last point really hit home for me. How many times have hospital librarians said, “I'd love to do that but if it were a success I have no time to add that service”? Perhaps we need to look at our current services and evaluate against the current needs of our customers. Maybe it isn't that we need to do more but to do different things.

Stephen Abrams can be found blogging at <http://stephenslighthouse.sirsi.com/>.

If the official theme of the conference was Shifting Worlds, the unofficial theme was collaboration. Information Today, Inc. created a Conference Wiki where conference attendees could post about anything from the best place to stay to restaurants to thoughts on the conference itself. In addition, there were scores of official and unofficial conference bloggers, most posting in real time thanks to wifi access in the conference center however sporadic it may have been. A search in Technorati of the tags IL05, IL2005, and Internet Librarian 2005 will show you the breadth and depth of library bloggers and their thoughts. In addition to sessions on blogs, wikis, RSS, blogging ethics, federated searching web services and portals (and these were just the sessions I attended; there were many more) there were the returning favorites of “Thirty search tips in 40 minutes”, “Web Wizard’s Cool Tools”, and “Search Engine Update”.

I returned home from this conference with more ideas than I’ll ever have time to implement in my lifetime. Since the conference, Web 2.0 has developed even further with the advent of Plogs and Mashups. The Internet is developing at such a fast pace that we librarians barely have enough time to assimilate the current technologies before the new technologies arrive. That is the main reason I enjoy the Internet Librarian conferences (Besides the fact that it is held in Monterey, California). Not only am I kept abreast of current Web technologies, but I’m also learning about how they have been implemented in all types of libraries. I highly recommend this conference for any librarian.

VA Offers Online Resource to the Community to Manage Health

*By Sherry Moravy-Penchansky
Health System Specialist
VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System*

The name of the game at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VHA) these days is person-centered care, and one way VHA is helping patients get involved in managing their health is a great new online tool called “My Health_eVet” (MHV).

MHV, located at <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>, is an internal gateway to health benefits and services. It provides access to trusted health information, links to Federal and VA benefits information and resources, a secure electronic Personal Health Journal users can access from anywhere in the country via the Internet, and an online VA prescription refill service. In the future, MHV registrants will be able to view VA appointments, co-pay balances for their VA services, key portions of their medical records and much more!

While the site is geared toward a veteran audience, anyone can register to access safe and valuable health information resources and to self-enter information into personal health journals and logs. It’s easy and users can access it via the Internet wherever they are!

The Personal Health Journal lets users manage and track personal health information. They can keep track of emergency contact information, health care provider names, addresses and phone numbers, treatment locations, and health insurance information.

Users can print personal information on a handy, pre-formatted wallet card for convenient reference which also has open spaces where they can list allergies and other critical medical conditions.

In the Military Health Section, veterans can record important events from their military service, exposures they may have experienced, and assignments related to their health history.

Medications, Over-the-Counter Drugs, Herbals and Supplements can be recorded in a special section. Users can keep track of the name, starting and ending date, prescription number and dosages.

Users can keep track of their Allergies by date, severity, reaction, diagnosis, and comments; their Tests by test name, date of test, location test was performed, provider's name, results, and any comments; their Medical Events such as illnesses, accidents or other events by logging their date, treatment prescribed or comments regarding the event; and Immunizations by the date received, method used, and any reactions they might have.

One of the most helpful features is the self-entered Health eLogs where users track information of many types including: blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, temperature, weight, heart rate and pain.

Great features planned for release in 2006 include: graphing in journals to make it easier to visualize health measurements; Rx refill functionality will be upgraded to include the name of the medication; veteran patients will be able to request key portions fo their VA

health record including labs, meds, discharge summaries, patient reminders; veterans will be able to view their VA appointments and VA co-pay balances online; Veterans will be able to give access to some or all of their health information to others (doctors, family, veteran advocates). Other interesting features such as secure doctor/patient messaging, moderated discussions on the Web, and Web-based training and education programs are currently in the works.

Check out <http://www.myhealth.va.gov> and pass the information along to your colleagues, friends, family members and patients. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Sherry Moravy-Penchansky, VISN 11 My HealtheVet Point of Contact, VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System, Ann Arbor, MI at 734-769-7100, ext. 5407. Sherry also has brochures available for you to use and share.

MHSLA NEWS

MHSLA News, ISSN 1543-0359, is published three times each year by the Michigan Health Sciences Libraries Association, <http://www.mhsla.org>.

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