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Addressing the MLA Research Agenda Questions: Where Are We Now?

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December 2012
Recruiting for a Systematic Review Project
An announcement by the Committee that appears in the December 21 (2) 2012 issue of the MLA Focus electronic newsletter solicits volunteers to join one of 15 teams conducting systematic reviews on each of the top-ranked research questions.

Spring 2013
Teams Formed
Leaders selected and teams formed based on experience and willingness.

Thank you to the systematic review project’s Team Leaders!
1. Laure Perrier
2. Priscilla Stephenson
3. Margaret Foster
4. Mary Lou Klem
5. Aileen McCrillis
6. PF Anderson
7. Lindsay Acock Glynn
8. Brenda Linares
9. Margaret Henderson
10. Anne Maddox
11. Myrian Grondin
12. Kaitryn Campbell
13. Assako N. Holyoke
14. Linda Slater
15. Catherine Boden

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The MLA Research Agenda

1. There are still a number of relevant questions from the 2008 research agenda, but to me this is most critical: “What is the quantifiable value in the presence of a librarian? What information resources, improves patient outcomes, increases research dollars, improves student outcomes (e.g., better board scores), or increases hospital intelligence (e.g., if the top hospitals have access to hospital librarians/libraries)?”
2. Is there a significant difference in patient outcomes (or research output or educational outcomes) between institutions with and without libraries?
3. What is the added value libraries bring to education, research, and patient care in the health sciences and healthcare field? Even if it is not possible to quantify benefits, documenting qualitative research results rigorously enough to stand up to scrutiny of administrators and researchers would be of great value.
4. Low health literacy can result in medication errors, noncompliance of treatment regimens, poor health outcomes, and even death. What is the role of the medical librarian with care-providers, community organizations, public libraries, and members of the public to improve health literacy among entire communities?
5. What are the information needs of practicing physicians and other health care workers? The 1985 Cochrane reviews a still-held interest was published work done in 1985. The information environment has changed dramatically. We need to update that study in light of new educational strategies, resources, technology and social networks.
6. The explosion of information, expanding of technology (especially mobile technology), and complexity of healthcare environment present medical librarians and medical librarians’ organizations and challenges. To keep up with the opportunities and challenges, what kinds of skills and information structure do medical librarians need to know (or acquire) so as to be strong partners or contributors of continuing effectiveness to the changing environment?
7. Does what we do matter? Longer form: Do the resources we provide—materials, reference services, and educational offerings—make a difference to our customers: small libraries, shorter length of stay, improved educational outcomes, increase research dollars, improve research result?
8. How do we provide information support in a clinical world that functions based on electronic medical records systems and other similar informatics platforms and tools? What is the library’s role, if any, in providing hospital education with respect to information applications like electronic medical records systems?
9. On health sciences libraries and librarians have any measurable (statistically significant) positive impact on consumer health, the outcomes of medical care, the productivity of biomedical researchers and the knowledge obtained by graduates of biomedical and health sciences training programs, and at what total cost?
10. Have the best bibliographically document library interventions impact on the bottom line (e.g., money saved, shorter length of stay, ROI for expensive electronic resources, support training programs/Magnet status, funded research support, etc.)?
11. As a profession, how do we measure our impact in our environment—be it clinical or academic—(i.e. in such a way that real numbers are better understood by our institutions)?
12. Does the systematic literature review methodology professional medical librarians have a long term impact on the information seeking behaviors of health care professionals?
13. What are the most effective instructional methods for teaching information/knowledge management/CERP within health sciences curricula?
14. In medical schools where librarians are included in the curriculum, do the students have a greater degree of information literacy than students in schools where librarians are not part of the curriculum?
15. What skills and knowledge must librarians possess in order to be able to design tools to help researchers visualize, mine, and otherwise manage large and complex data gathered during both quantitative and qualitative research?