

5-2013

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

Marie T. Ascher

*New York Medical College*, [marie\\_ascher@nymc.edu](mailto:marie_ascher@nymc.edu)

Heather Holmes

Jonathan Eldredge

Follow this and additional works at: [https://touro scholar.touro.edu/nymc\\_fac\\_posters](https://touro scholar.touro.edu/nymc_fac_posters)



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Ascher, M.T., Holmes, H.N., and Eldredge, J.D. (2013, May). Addressing the MLA research agenda questions: where are we now? Poster presented at the meeting of the Medical Library Association, Boston, MA.

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty at Touro Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in NYMC Faculty Posters by an authorized administrator of Touro Scholar. For more information, please contact [touro.scholar@touro.edu](mailto:touro.scholar@touro.edu).



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

Marie T. Ascher, AHIP, Associate Director, User Services, Health Sciences Library, New York Medical College [marie\\_ascher@nymc.edu](mailto:marie_ascher@nymc.edu)

Heather N. Holmes, AHIP, Clinical Informationist, Medical Library, Summa Health System [HolmesH@summahealth.org](mailto:HolmesH@summahealth.org)

Jonathan D. Eldredge, AHIP, Associate Professor, Health Sciences Library and Informatics Center, University of New Mexico [JEldredge@salud.unm.edu](mailto:JEldredge@salud.unm.edu)

MLA Research Section, Research Agenda Committee

## Systematic Review Project

## Appraising the Best Available Evidence

### Guiding principles and guidelines of the project:

- Teams work autonomously and set their own meeting schedules.
- Define and refine questions.
- Form subgroups as needed.
- Search strategies are to be peer-reviewed and fully documented.
- Follow PRISMA guidelines.
- Identify best studies and gaps in the knowledge base.
- “Restrain any impulse toward perfectionism.”

### Expected Outcomes:

- Publishable manuscripts of use to health sciences librarian colleagues and researchers.
- A central register of high-quality articles in health sciences librarianship.
- Expected project completion: July 2014.

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 Alcock Glynn
8. Brenda Linares
9. Margaret Henderson
10. Anne Madden
11. Myrian Grondin
12. Kaitryn Campbell
13. Assako N. Holyoke
14. Linda Slater
15. Catherine Boden

### December 2012 Recruiting for a Systematic Review Project

An announcement by the Committee that appears in the December 21 (?) 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.

204 volunteers

- 66% US,
- 18% Canada,
- 13% Europe.

Spring 2013  
Teams Formed

Leaders selected and teams formed based on experience and willingness.

### 2011 Second Delphi Study

The Committee conducts a second Delphi study to identify and rank research questions during 2011. The Committee asks 581 MLA leaders about their most important research question. The subsequent 140 research questions are then sent to 298 authors of published research articles in the top health sciences library journals. The 108 researchers participating in the Delphi method select their top 35 research questions. The same MLA leaders who generated questions in the first round then winnow these 35 questions down to 15 top-ranked research questions. This second Delphi study appears in the July 2012 issue of *Journal of the Medical Library Association*.

### 2007

The MLA research policy, *The Research Imperative*, recommends that the MLA Research Section create a mechanism to identify research priorities. The Research Agenda Committee is formed:

### 2008 First Delphi Study

During 2008 the Committee conducts its first Delphi study to identify and rank the top research questions. The Committee polls both MLA leaders and members of the Research Section and identify 62 research questions that are distilled down to 12 top-ranked questions. The Delphi study results appear in the July 2009 issue of the *Journal of the Medical Library Association*.

#### Defining the Medical Library Association research agenda: methodology and final results from a consensus process

Jonathan D. Eldredge, MLS, PhD, AHIP; Martha R. Harris, MLS, MA, AHIP; Marie T. Ascher, MS, AHIP

See end of article for author affiliations. DOI: 10.3163/1536-6005.97.3.006

**Objective:** Using a group consensus methodology, the research sought to generate a list of the twelve to fifteen most important and answerable research questions in health sciences librarianship as part of a broader effort to implement the new Medical Library Association (MLA) research policy.

**Methods:** The delphi method was used. The committee distributed a brief survey to all estimated 827 MLA leaders and 237 MLA Research Section members, requesting they submit what they considered to be the most important and answerable research questions facing the profession. The submitted questions were then subjected to 2 rounds of voting to produce a short list of top-ranked questions.

**Results:** The survey produced 62 questions from 54 MLA leaders and MLA Research Section members, who responded from an estimated potential population of 1,064 targeted colleagues. These questions were considered by the process participants to be the most important and answerable research questions facing the profession. Through 2 rounds of voting, these 62 questions were reduced to the final 12 highest priority questions.

**Conclusion:** The modified delphi method accomplished its desired survey and consensus goals. Future survey and consensus processes will be revised to generate more initial questions and to distill a larger number of ranked, prioritized research questions.

#### BACKGROUND

A research agenda assists a professional organization such as the Medical Library Association (MLA) in focusing its limited resources on investigating those research topics likely to be most valued by its members. For example, a research agenda might guide the organization's efforts to advocate for funding research on those topics by external agencies.

#### Highlights

- The delphi method produced twelve top-ranked research questions to inform the Medical Library Association's current research agenda.
- The modified delphi method exhibited great versatility.

#### BRIEF COMMUNICATIONS

##### The new Medical Library Association research agenda: final results from a three-phase Delphi study

Jonathan D. Eldredge, PhD, AHIP; Marie T. Ascher, MS, AHIP; Heather N. Holmes, MLS, AHIP; Martha R. Harris, MA, MLS, AHIP

See end of article for author affiliations. DOI: 10.3163/1536-6005.100.3.012

#### BACKGROUND

The Medical Library Association's (MLA's) 2007 research policy statement [1] charged the MLA Research Section with defining the MLA research agenda on a recurring basis [2]. In 2008, the MLA Research Section's Research Agenda Committee used a group consensus technique known as the Delphi method that involved both researchers and leaders to articulate MLA's twelve highest priority research questions. The MLA Board adopted those twelve questions as the 2008 MLA research agenda. A subsequent article reporting those top twelve questions includes detailed description of the committee's research methodology [3].

Following several months of deliberation and in consultation with the MLA Board of Directors, the MLA Research Section's Executive Committee directed the Research Agenda Committee to conduct a new study during 2011, implementing the adaptations recommended in the previous report [4], while up-

holders and all members of the MLA Research Section into a single study population, the authors decided against including all Research Section members during 2011, because Research Section membership might reflect support for the research endeavor or a desire to learn more about research rather than actual research experience. Those Research Section members with research experience would be difficult to identify easily.

A year after the 2008 study, the authors coincidentally learned of a concurrent 2008 Delphi method process that a team of Swedish researchers implemented for defining the research agenda for all Swedish librarians [5]. The authors otherwise know of no other Delphi method studies on defining a research agenda in librarianship, although, as indicated in the 2008 study report [3], this method has been used by other professions to define their research agendas.

#### METHOD

##### Phase 1

The authors defined MLA leaders as individuals who were elected or appointed to offices at the national, section, or chapter levels as appointed to MLA national or chapter committees. The University of New Mexico Institutional Review Board approved the study (HRPO #11-127) on April 7, 2011. Using a comprehensive list of 581 such individuals with email addresses supplied by MLA headquarters, the authors invited the leaders to complete a brief survey via SurveyMonkey on April 27, 2011. Two

## 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 evidence that the presence of a librarian, not just 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/librarians)?"
2. Is there a significant difference in patient outcomes (or research output or educational outcomes) between institutions with and without librarians?
3. What is the added value libraries bring to education, research, and patient care in the health sciences and health care fields? Even if it is not possible to quantify benefits, documenting qualitative research results rigorous enough to stand the scrutiny of administrators and researchers would be of great value.
4. Low health literacy can result in medication errors, noncompliance of treatment regimes, poor health outcomes and even death. What is the role of the medical librarian with health care providers, community organizations, local 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 Covell article is still heavily cited but was published way back 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 libraries opportunities and challenges. To live up with the opportunities and challenges, what kinds of skill sets or information structure do medical librarians or medical libraries are required to have 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 - save lives, shorten length of stay, improved educational outcomes, increase research dollars, improve research results?
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 preclinical education with respect to informatics applications like electronic medical records systems?
9. Do health sciences libraries and librarians have any measureable (statistically significant) positive impacts 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. How best to objectively document library/librarian impact on the 'bottom line' (time, 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—in such a way that it influences the decision makers in our institutions? [I "stole" this from the previous study, but I think that it is still the most important question facing us.]
12. Does the intervention/instruction/assistance of a professional medical librarian have a long term impact on the information seeking behaviors of health care professionals?
13. What are the most effective instructional methods for teaching informatics/knowledge management/EBP 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?