

THE PITTSBURGH PULSE

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NEWSLETTER OF THE PITTSBURGH REGIONAL CHAPTER, MEDICAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, INC.

From the Chair...

I don't know how much time I've spent in my life hunting around for bits of life maintenance information. When did we last replace the hot water heater? Who fixed my basement when last it flooded? I don't always put that information in a convenient place or form, but I always wish I had when I'm ankle deep in water in the laundry room!

Organizations have similar information needs. Who does what, when it needs to be done, how it is done – these are not very glamorous topics, but when it's all up to date, the organization runs smoothly and the officers find their jobs more enjoyable. As we move into 2004, the Chapter is involved in several efforts to ensure our organization has its basic information up-to-date and in order.

This winter we are reviewing and updating the Bylaws and the Policies and Procedures. When we are done, the details of how our Chapter runs will be current and concise. As the time approaches to recruit new leaders, this effort will allow potential officers to realistically consider taking on an office, and make their jobs easier once they start their terms.

A heartfelt thank you to Linda Hartman, Amy Haugh, and Nancy Tannery for their help in revising the policies and procedures, and Alice Kuller for her work on the bylaws.

**Barbara Folb, Chair
Pittsburgh Chapter, MLA**

Inside this Issue

TechLine: Drowning in Data	2
Stethoscope	4
Libraries Receive IMLS Funds to Recruit Future Librarians.....	5

Completing Your AHIP Application Submitted by Linda Hartman Health Sciences Library System University of Pittsburgh

The last time we were together we completed the BIO form since it is needed for all the member levels. For this session we will go over the three forms needed for the provisional level. Remember, if you have not had at least five years of professional experience since your degree you need to apply for academy membership as a provisional. Before those of you with more years of service say "the following does not apply to me" take a look at the forms. As my mentor pointed out SRP-2 and SRP-3 provide a good format for yearly evaluations and professional development planning in general.

Form SRP-1 is the Summary of Self-Review and Plan for Professional Development. It is really a cover sheet for the other two forms. You can complete this one last since you need to have completed SRP-2 and SRP-3 first.

Form SRP-2 is the Self-Review of Essential Areas of Knowledge. There are three steps that need to be taken to complete this form. The first asks you to look at each essential area of knowledge and using the scale provided, determine its importance in your career. Next you need to assess your "level of current knowledge." Again, a scale and list of definitions is provided. The last step requires you to determine your three priorities for planning professional development. For more information on each essential area of knowledge see the MLA website <www.mlanet.org/academy/knowledge.html>.

Now it is time for another reward. Treat yourself to that favorite beverage or activity before moving forward.

Form SRP-3 is the Plan for Professional Development. As you will see, the steps taken here are valuable for all information professionals, whether or

Continued on Page 4...

TechLine: Drowning in Data – Where's the Lifeguard?

Submitted by David Brennan, Barbour Library, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

I'm feeling like Andy Rooney today – a bit curmudgeonly.

My problem is how to keep up with the torrent of information I have to wade through to do the job. My boss's project is records management, so I have to know about current trends and products for managing documents. The tech services folks are having a problem exporting records from OCLC, so I have to know about the state of the Connexion system and client software (which seems to change by the hour). Throw in some arcane MARC problems for good measure, and the public services team has a question about digital copyright. All this *before lunch!*

So – current awareness is on my mind.

As librarians, we've always been accustomed to providing current awareness for our *clients* but what about for ourselves? Years ago, it was possible to keep current with the majority of developments in a given field, or even two, since the bulk of them were covered in the major journals, all of which were in print. Some people still cling to that philosophy – “if

it's not in NEJM, it's not important,” or for medical librarians “if it's not in JMLA, it's not important.” :-)

Our current awareness needs are easily triple those of our clients.

We must be aware of not only (1) their subject specialties, but also (2) information sciences trends and resources, and (3) computer and technology trends and resources. So for a medical library, combine new drug interaction

information, new drug interaction databases, and new drug interaction databases that run on a PalmPilot, and that sums up the problem at hand. The problem is aggravated by the client who marches in with the search from last week, and oh by the way why didn't you search *some-site-that-I-know-about-and-you-don't.com?*

We like to appear to know everything and most of the time we can keep ahead of the curve, but it's getting harder. We really don't like to say “I don't know” or “I wasn't aware of that.” But with shrinking budgets, staff, and time... how can you keep up?



The simple answer is you can't stay on top of everything, so don't kill yourself trying.

The more complex answer is you have to be extremely selective when choosing the resources you deal with regularly. An epiphany is realizing it's impossible to know everything, and be aware of every new web site, and every news item, and every new whatever. To try to do so is to drown in information.

According to a study by the School of Information Management and Systems at the University of California at Berkeley <www.sims.berkeley.edu/research/projects/how-much-info-2003/>:

Print, film, magnetic, and optical storage media produced about 5 exabytes of new information in 2002. Ninety-two percent of the new information was stored on magnetic media, mostly in hard disks.

- *How big is five exabytes?* If digitized, the nineteen million books and other print collections in the Library of Congress would contain about ten terabytes of information; five exabytes of information is equivalent in size to the information contained in half a million new libraries the size of the Library of Congress print collections.

- *How much new information per person?* According to the Population Reference Bureau, the world population is 6.3 billion,

thus almost 800 MB of recorded information is produced per person each year. It would take about 30 feet of books to store the equivalent of 800 MB of information on paper.

Remember, that's *new* information, added to everything that has come before!

So you've put up with my rant so far, and probably want to know if I'm done (yes) and if I have any suggestions for dealing with the problem (also yes).

As a practical matter, we need to be aware of a few tools and techniques that can help with our daily flood:

Cut the flow of unnecessary information

If you can call spam information...sorry, last rant :-). Beef up your spam filter and you may free up some time right away.

For every listserv you subscribe to, do three things:

1. See if you really need to continue to subscribe – does this list really meet a current need?
2. Find out if there is a Web archive of postings, and add the archive URL to your favorites, while dropping the mail part of the subscription. Many lists are only useful when you need to solve a particular problem, so why deal with the postings all the time? Search the archive only when you need to see if your problem has been addressed.
3. No matter the list – unless it is very low volume like the Chapter list :-) – set your delivery to “digest” mode to limit the flow.

Let someone else do the work

Googling "*current awareness*" librarian turns up a plethora of sites for library and information sciences professionals. Make it a practice for a couple of months to take a few minutes each day to look over some sites. When you find sites appropriate to your needs, bookmark them and add reminders to your calendar to skim them once a month (or use the sites' notification tools if provided). Repeat the process once every six months to a year.

The hardest part is resisting the temptation to follow a lot of links. How easy it is to satisfy our curiosity and “dig deeper” on every site! The objective here is to skim, not to research. Don't forget print materials. Subscribe to some of the free trade journals, like *InfoWeek* or *ComputerWorld*, and again, just skim!

Think creatively about how to organize your current awareness materials

If you run across something pertinent to a specific user, why not add it to a comment field in a patron record, and run a report at the end of the month that e-mails it to them? Outlook is another good place to add notes, either attached to a specific contact or in the general notes area. Documents can also be stored in Outlook folders. Or set up a quick and dirty Excel sheet or Access database to store notes or reminders. You can use practically any application to store comments or notes.

Political baggage aside, I'll close with a bit of unintended wisdom from Donald Rumsfeld, who I think was channeling Yogi Berra:

“Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we don't know we don't know. And if one looks throughout the history of our country and other free countries, it is the latter category that tend to be the difficult ones.”



[Donald H. Rumsfeld, Department of Defense news briefing, February 12, 2002]

Perhaps if we concentrate on the “known unknowns” and not worry so much about the “unknown unknowns,” we'd have an easier time dealing with information overload.

Stethoscoop

Submitted by **Cindy Robertson, Heritage Valley Health System**

◆ The Brady Library of the Health Sciences was awarded a grant from the Department of Commerce/Workforce Economic Development Network of PA for basic computer skills training, IT training, and communication skills training. **ROB NEUMEYER**, coordinator of Pittsburgh Mercy Health System Libraries and Archives, directed the training effort, 90% of which was held in the newly constructed library computer training lab. Nearly 900 Mercy associates were trained in the areas of literature searching, Microsoft Office applications, SQL, service excellence/communications training, and cultural diversity. This project was a nice collaboration between training companies and library staff. The overwhelming positive responses put a “spotlight” on the library and served as an added enhancement to the many services the library provides to the Pittsburgh Mercy Health System.

◆ **DAVID NOLFI** health sciences librarian, partnered with **MARTHA PETERSEN**, MPH, CHES, PA-C, associate professor in the Rangos School of Health Sciences at Duquesne University to present a poster at the QuintEssential Conference in Philadelphia on October 27, 2003. Entitled “Integrating Librarians, Faculty and Technology to

FOUR EASY WAYS TO GET YOUR INFORMATION INTO NEXT ISSUE'S STETHOSCOOP

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Be sure to include your name, business address, and telephone number with the news you are submitting

Support Student Research: The Special Case of the Physician Assistant,” the poster focused on how librarians and faculty can work together to improve student outcomes.

- ◆ Congratulations to **MARK VRABEL**, of the Oncology Nursing Society, for achieving AHIP Member status and to **NANCY SPEARS**, of the UPMC Rehabilitation Institute, for achieving AHIP Distinguished Member status.
- ◆ May 2004 be a year of simplicity, tranquility, and peace shared with those most dear to us.

Completing Your AHIP Application (continued)

not applying for academy membership. Keeping in mind the three items marked “areas for attention” on form SRP-2, list three to five objectives you would like to accomplish in regards to your professional development. Then state what activities are needed to complete these objectives. Next determine the resources needed. Finally, how will you know you have succeeded?

Complete Form SRP-1.

Congratulations, you are now ready to submit your application for provisional membership into the Academy of Health Information Professionals!

Make sure you have put your name on each form (and any accompanying materials) as well as sign each form.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions. I would also be happy to look over your application materials before submission to HQ.

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Editor's Note: this article is the last in a three part series. The first two parts appeared in the July and October 2003 issues of the Pulse.

Libraries Receive IMLS Funds to Recruit Future Librarians

Submitted by Mary Langman, MLA National

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) recently announced 27 awards totaling nearly \$10 million in grants to recruit the next generation of information science professionals. Almost \$1.5 million of these grant monies has been awarded to further health science librarianship.

“Educating the Next Generation of Academic Library Professionals,” a dynamic program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Information and Library Science, will recruit and support five doctoral students to learn about and address academic research issues. MLA President-elect Joanne Gard Marshall, dean and professor of the school, will serve as program director.

One of the five doctoral candidates will be a health sciences information student and will work with President Patricia Thibodeau, associate dean for library services at the Duke University Medical Center Library and MLA Past-President Carol Jenkins, library director, Health Sciences Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

The Eskind Biomedical Library at Vanderbilt University in cooperation with the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Information Sciences received a grant to fund up to fifteen graduate students to participate in the model internship program, “Health Sciences Librarian Pre-Professional Integrated Learning,” which aims to bridge the distance between library staff and health care professionals. Nunzia Bettinsoli Giuse, library director, Eskind Biomedical Library is the project director.

Martha Bedard, associate dean and director of Texas A&M’s Medical Sciences Library, will serve as project director for “An Innovative Partnership to Recruit and Educate Health Information Professionals for the 21st Century,” a recruitment and teaching model to recruit ten diverse undergraduates into health sciences librarianship. Her library will run the program in partnership with the University of North Texas School of Library and Information Sciences

Through a grant funded for the Recruitment and Education of University Librarians in Sciences and Health Sciences program, the faculty and academic

practitioners at the University of Iowa Libraries will provide nine students in the sciences and health sciences librarianship with quality education followed by an assistantship in one of three major university library systems.

MLA enthusiastically supports IMLS’s initiative, “Recruiting and Educating Librarians for the 21st Century,” a competitive grant program promoting the recruitment and education of librarians. Based on 1990 census data, more than 50% of librarians will reach retirement age between 2005 and 2019, creating a need for more than 50,000 new librarians.

New medical librarians are also critically needed. MLA reports that the percentage of its members under age 40 has dropped from 51% in 1983 to 20.7 percent in 2001, while at the same time, the demand for medical librarians has increased. In recent years, MLA has undertaken several new initiatives to address the problem such as providing scholarships and continuing education opportunities, creating a mentoring program, establishing recruitment committees and task forces, and publishing English and Spanish career materials.

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