

“Better health through better information:” health literacy and the changing role of health sciences librarianship

The changing roles of health sciences librarians was the subject of a special issue of this journal in 2004[1].

Fast forward twelve (12) years.

Our interests and concerns have shifted. This special issue reflects our changing times.

In 2006, our focus was on health sciences librarianship – emerging roles, academic library centrality, PDA librarians, health informatics, clinical research informatics, educational informationalist models, nursing and clinical medical librarians, health professional education, STM publishing and working with vendors.

Today when we think about health sciences librarianship, scope and scale are markedly different than they were in 2006.

Today, the Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries (AAHSL) is concerned about supporting academic health sciences libraries and directors in advancing the patient care, research, education and community service missions of academic health centers through visionary executive leadership and expertise in health information, scholarly communication and knowledge management[2]. AAHSL’s slogan “Better health through better information” drives this home, as does its strategic plan[3].

Today the buzz is about the changing landscape of health sciences libraries. An April 2016 symposium affirms the centrality of this issue. Sponsored by the National Network of Libraries of Medicine Middle Atlantic Region (NN/LM MAR), AAHSL and the National Network of Libraries of Medicine Southeastern/Atlantic Region (NN/LM SE/A), the one-day symposium is titled: “Teaching & Learning in New Library Spaces: The Changing Landscape of Health Sciences Libraries”[4].

Today AAHSL is concerned about enhancing the role of NIH in getting safe treatments, devices and cures to patients. They are concerned about Elsevier’s updated sharing and hosting policies. They are weighing in on FY2015 House Democratic Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill that addresses public access to federally funded research, and to urge you to maintain this language as the bill moves toward enactment through comprehensive appropriations legislation. Providing quality information for improved health remains front and center[5].

Reference Services Review’s special issue provides an opportunity for readers to “catch up” with what is happening in health sciences librarianship.

Ad hoc reviewers

This special issue would not have been possible without the assistance of colleagues who are specialists in this exciting field. These colleagues joined our editorial team[6] to facilitate the peer review process:

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Guest editor

We are delighted to acknowledge the excellent efforts of Theresa Arndt, guest editor for this health literacy issue. Theresa, who previously edited the special *RSR* issue on “reference services in the post-Google age” (38:1, 2010), has a background in medical librarianship as well as expertise in administration, collection management and reference and information literacy, which serves her well in her current position as Associate Director for Library Resources and Administration at Dickinson College. Theresa’s interest in health literacy and her continuing connections to colleagues in the profession has enabled her to bring together a great roster of writers whose articles have relevance to librarians beyond that field.

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Notes

1. For the Table of Contents, available at: www.emeraldinsight.com/toc/rsr/32/1 (accessed 14 April 2016).
2. Available at: www.aahsl.org/ (accessed 10 April 2016).
3. Available at: www.aahsl.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=145 (accessed 10 April 2016).
4. Available at: http://guides.nnlm.gov/mar_space2016 (accessed 10 April 2016).
5. Available at: www.aahsl.org/advocacyinitiatives (accessed 10 April 2016).
6. Available at: http://emeraldgroupublishing.com/products/journals/editorial_team.htm?id=rsr (accessed 14 April 2016).