
Creating the health librarian professional workforce for the future

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Outline

- The problem – what are we trying to solve?
- The approach – find the data i.e. research-based evidence
- Achievements to date – building blocks for the future
- Next steps

First define the problem

In contrast to other health professions, we had

1. No education pathway for health librarianship as a professional specialisation
2. No scope of practice
3. No nationally legislated registration system (licence to practice)
4. No compulsory Continuing Professional Development
5. No national statistical data about our profession

Without nationally recognised qualifications, registration, certification and ongoing CPD, health librarians risked being marginalised to the clerical or administration streams, invisibility in the health professional workforce, obsolescence.

A research-based approach

HLA's Research Project 2009-11: *Future Requirements for Health Librarianship Workforce and Education*

Research aims:

1. To determine the future requirements for health librarians in the health professional workforce in Australia
2. To develop a structured, modular, competency-based education framework to meet these requirements:
 - a specialist post-graduate qualification
 - a continuing professional development structure

Stakeholders – what are their interests?

What programs or course 'offerings' do practitioners need?



Responsible for : standards of professional practice, & recognition of LIS courses; need training, certification & QA mechanisms

How to update/improve our skills and knowledge, develop careers?

What is the contribution of librarians in multidisciplinary health teams (scope of practice)

Looking for leadership

Need the health professional workforce for the future – what mix of roles is needed?

Research design

Exploratory, consultative and collaborative

Phase 1: environmental scan – change drivers in the Australian health system

Phase 2: international literature review – new/ emerging/ expanding roles for health librarians

Phase 3: data collection

- 2 online surveys
 - Individual health librarians [162 valid responses]
 - Health library managers [51 valid responses]
- Semi-structured interviews with 20 employers

Findings

Final report and recommendations => outcomes to date

Phase 3: surveys and interviews

Triangulated design: we asked librarians, library managers, & employers about:

- Demographics, workforce composition, salaries and budgets
- Professional knowledge, responsibilities, and competencies required now & in future
- Education and professional development – preferred methods of delivery, support for and barriers
- Health librarians' value in organisations

Adapted competencies from MLA framework

COMPETENCIES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS

The Educational Policy Statement of the Medical Library Association



We must educate for the problems of a generation hence, not for the problems of today ... librarians must be imbued with the psychological ability to handle change and to live with ambiguity. Without this they will be performing tomorrow's tasks with yesterday's concepts.

—Estelle Brodman, 1979 [1]

Competency areas – now and future

1. Understand the health sciences and health care **environment** and the policies, issues and trends that impact on that environment
2. Understand the principles and practices related to **providing information services** to meet user needs. ↑
3. Understand the management of health **information resources** in a broad **range of formats**. ↑
4. Know and understand the application of leadership, finance, communication, and **management** theory and techniques.
5. Understand and use **technology and systems** to manage all forms of information. ↑
6. Understand curricular design and instruction, and have the ability to **teach** ways to access, organise and use information. ↑
7. Understand scientific **research methods** and have the ability to critically examine and filter research literature from many related disciplines
8. Maintain currency of **professional knowledge** and practice.

Predicted to increase next 3-5 yrs ↑

Professional knowledge, responsibility, competencies

Highest rated competency areas now:

C2: Providing information services to meet user needs (80%)

C3: Managing health information resources in a broad range of formats (70%)

C5: Understanding and using technology and systems to manage information (67%)

Predicted to increase next 3-5 yrs ↑

C2, C3 and C5

+C6: Understanding curricular design and instruction, and having the ability to **teach**

How do these translate into new, emerging, expanding roles for the future health librarian?

Managers' support for Continuing Professional Development

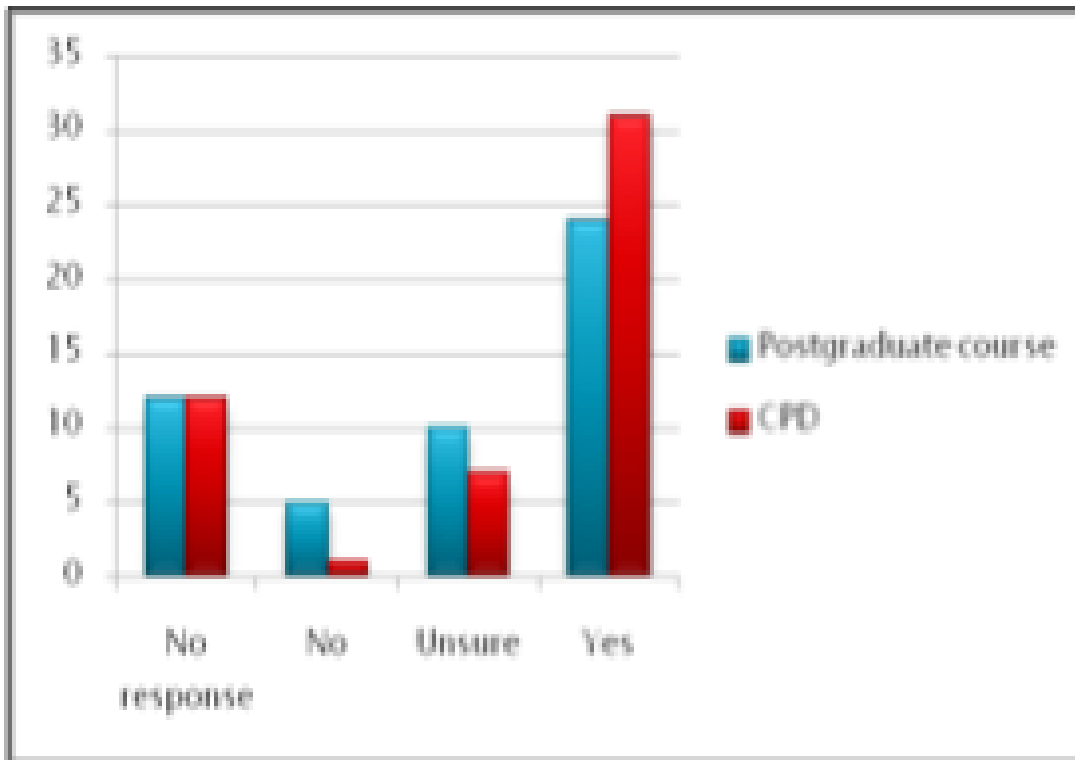


Figure 20: Support for specialist postgraduate and CPD units in health librarianship: Library manager respondents

61% said they would support specialist CPD units

Key requirements:

- ✓ Quality
- ✓ Relevance to the workplace
- ✓ Affordability

Barriers:

- Time
- Distance (especially for regional/remote)
- Cost

Interviews with employers

- Triangulated research design
- Important stakeholder group – need to plan their workforce
- we asked administrators
 - what was important for them to achieve in their jobs? their ‘mission-critical’ goals
 - how librarians contributed now and future?
 - what skills and qualities will librarians require?
- Focused on competencies of librarians (not ‘roles’ or functions of the library)



Roles in hospitals – MLA's *Vital Pathways for hospital librarians*

Hospital administrators' **'mission-critical'** goals related to clinical care, management of operations, education, innovation and research, and customer service

*From saving hospitals thousands of dollars per year to saving patients' lives, hospital librarians fulfil **many mission-critical roles** in today's hospital....expert searcher, educator, community outreach provider, promoter of EBM, information disseminator, effective user of information technology, website manager, patient safety, information provider, and supporter of innovation and research. (Holst et al 2009)*

Findings employer interviews: summary

- Opportunities and expectations for health librarians to play more proactive and strategic roles in their organisations
- in the rapidly changing health environment, many new, emerging, expanding roles in education and training, academic research, clinical support, informatics, mobile technologies
- Need to be more directly aligned with strategic goals
- Critical domains: clinical support, education and training, scientific research
- Dynamic environment, risk facing professional stagnation => need for adaptive competence – don't wait for change to knock you over

HLA's achievements – building blocks

- 1 established the health librarian certified professional structure, ALIA's first competency-based specialization within the CPD Scheme
- 2 mapped the 8 HLA competency areas to current education and training courses (maintained on our HLA website), and identified gaps for future commissioning
- 3 created an online competency-based Health Librarianship Essentials course (with QUT)
- 4 supported the ROI value study (\$9 for every \$1 spent on health libraries)
- 5 implemented the first national census of the health library workforce

Next steps

- Filling the gaps in course offerings, based on competencies => post-grad quals
- Census reports and advocacy
- Mapping scopes of practice with other health information professionals
- Engaging with consumers as a new client group – what (new) competencies are needed?
- National Safety & Quality health service standards accreditation – how libraries contribute to achieving the standards
- Updating our *Guidelines for Health Libraries*