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 (who is responsible? IFLA Guidelines ALIA Objects)
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?

Related health professions

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

Health sector employers/organisations (not libraries)

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

LIS educators & training providers

Professional association

Health Librarians (Practitioners)

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

How to qualify as a health librarian, update/improve our skills and knowledge, develop careers?

Looking for leadership

Stakeholders – what are their interests?
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

We must educate for the problems of a generation hence, not for the problems of today. ... libraries 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]
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

61% said they would support specialist CPD units

Key requirements:
- High quality
- Relevant to the workplace
- Affordable
  (And some preferred face-to-face delivery)

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)
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)
Q: Are you satisfied with the role that your health librarians play in your organisation now?

- A lot of the service’s success is about personal relationships & visibility
- If I had to die in a ditch [the library is] one service that I would do it for
- Without the librarian team, the [org’n] would have big problems – role is vital
- I'm not dissatisfied, but I don’t know how to measure the level of satisfaction.. from a business perspective you are a provider of a service and people come to you but how do you get to people?
- The library is more than just a library and therefore the librarian’s role is more than just a librarian.
- Librarians are too passive – I would like to see them more active and more proactive, less reactionary…more revolutionary.
Q: Are there challenges or opportunities for your org’n where your librarians could be involved in the future?

Education & research:

• huge scope for expanding ..need to get closer to our academic staff whether in an academic or clinical role to ‘sell’ our skills to them in a better way.. Need to get involved in big research proposals and projects

• supporting increased numbers of medical students

• incorporating the library into a new development – an education centre

• further involved in strategic planning; e-learning; research and data management; online training; keeping up-to-date with possible initiatives for the future and working closely with our IT and Education Development Unit.
Q: Are there challenges or opportunities for your org’n where your librarians could be involved in the future?

Bibliographic control at point-of-care (‘re-intermediation’)

- ehealth, and decision support, the library has a big role to play. Integration of eresources with clinical apps is needed.
- Managing clinical decision support software – the service behind the software so if a clinician wants more information, he/she can click on a link.
- Key word searches needs librarian input transcending clinical process - that’s where the real emergence of the clinical or professional librarian is needed. Performing a business analyst role from a librarian’s perspective, where access to resources needs to be - at this level of coding of health service events.
- Embedding protocols in clinicians work is what is needed. The Library should be the ones who know how people look for information and can embed protocols.
- getting information rapidly and then incorporating it data into the mix. On the fly with mobile devices.
Q: Are there challenges or opportunities for your org’n where your librarians could be involved in the future?

- Pastoral care, holistic care, palliative care, end of life, carer support, that sort of ‘softer’ end of health care, consumer expectations, consumer satisfaction, complaints … an area that we don’t have a lot of resources around
- ‘Warmware’.. good information skills and good IT skills – the interface between the IT people, the clinicians and health informaticians. They can interpret the two worlds
- Publishing - big fears amongst university administrators about the spiraling costs.. Would like to see pre-emptive strikes from librarians, not to accept the status quo, to challenge and push for new models of access to information
- Developing a corporate taxonomy for the organisation
- Greater support for clinical governance.
- ‘national procurement [initiatives] …packaging up of resources … better value for money’
Q: Does your organisation involve your librarians in strategic planning or organisation-wide, mission-critical committees?

Ranged from:

• Library’s strategic plan aligns with.. CEO’s plan
• Librarian is on the Strategic Information Management Steering Committee
• has responded to the organisation’s strategic plan and in the future, will ..be involved in the strategic planning process.
• Involvement in strategic planning for website development

To:

• Not sure that their involvement is required
• No, yes, sort of, we involve anyone who wants to put their hand up. Everyone is invited. In reality for the case of the library, no not really, but we would, it would depend on capacity of individuals. if people wanted to be involved then yes we would involve them.
• Not sure why not, but the library needs to become involved in such committees or be left behind…needs to demonstrate its value to the core business of the organisation and its value in contributing to the growth of the organisation.
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, ‘waiting for change to knock you over’ => need for adaptive competence
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), articulates to masters
4. 6 PD Days scheduled in various cities through 2015
5. supported the ROI value study ($9 for every $1 spent on health libraries)
6. implemented the first national census of the health library workforce – evidence base for workforce advocacy
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 accreditation standards – how libraries contribute to achieving these
• Updating our Guidelines for Health Libraries