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Librarians Without Borders: Building In-Country Research and Information Provision Capability

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Librarians Without Borders: Building In-Country Research and Information Provision Capability

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Global Commitment

Global commitment for the **Medical Library Association (MLA)** is not a series of talking points or an informative Website, but a program that reflects a deep commitment to internationalism and outreach. One of the keys to understanding **MLA's** global commitment is the association's international strategic statement which underscores the importance of partnerships and the need to build in-country capacity through qualified librarians, technology, and information access. This includes collection development by facilitating free and/or less costly access to a variety of scientific databases through in-country training programs.

- **MLA** believes that the key elements in improved health for all peoples are the ability of each nation to strengthen and build health sciences information capacity through qualified health sciences librarians, implementation of supporting technological infrastructure, and access to quality information.

- **MLA** supports capacity building programs at the association, section, chapter, and individual member areas.

- **MLA** believes that building capacity will be most effective and long-lasting when partnerships are created with groups sharing similar goals, particularly partnerships with international agencies where shared goals intersect with available expertise and infrastructure.[1]

As part of this strategy, the **MLA/Librarians Without Borders (LWB)** program was formally established in 2005 as **MLA's** organizational structure for its global outreach. One of the most successful programs is the grant-funded E-Library Training Initiative.

E-library Training Initiative

The **MLA/Librarians Without Borders (LWB)** e-library training initiative was established in 2007[2] and is funded in part by the generous support of the **Elsevier Foundation**. It provides access to quality health information training through distance education programs and the mobilization of volunteers for in-country training and workshops. Besides the **Elsevier Foundation**, **MLA** also partners with the **Health Inter-Network Access to Research Initiative (HINARI)** Access to Research in Health Programme, the **Information Training and Outreach Centre for Africa (ITOCA)**, and the **World Health Organization (WHO)** among others. **HINARI** is included in the **Research4Life** program that is a public-private partnership between **WHO**, the **Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)**, the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**, the **World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)**, and others with 190 science publishers facilitated by the **International Association of STM Publishers**. **MLA** has also worked with other partners to support this program including the **World Health Organization's** European, Western Pacific, and Southeast Asia and Eastern Mediterranean Regional Offices, the **Pan American Health Organization**, and the **Ministries of Health**, universities, medical schools, libraries, and hospitals in the countries and cities where the workshops were held. The partnership's goal is to reduce the gap in scientific knowledge between industrialized countries and the developing world by providing long-term training on the use of online resources through a variety of training modules.[3]

HINARI was established in 2002 with six publishers including **Blackwell**, **Elsevier Science**, the **Harcourt World STM Group**, **Wolters Kluwer International Health & Science**, **Springer Verlag**, and **John Wiley** that provided free or low cost online access to about 1,500 journals in biomedical and related social sciences to local, not-for-profit institutions in developing countries. **HINARI** has grown to more than 150 publishers offering more than 37,000 information resources.[4]

E-Library Training Coordinator, **Lenny Rhine**, has coordinated the e-library training initiative since its inception. He has taught almost 1,000 people in twenty-nine countries around the world including library staff members, researchers, university faculty, physicians and nurses, medical students, **Ministries of Health**, public health staff, pharmacists, med-

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PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: MLS from **Indiana University**; MBA from **University of Chicago**; started as a public librarian and public library director and consultant in the Chicago, IL area; worked at the **American Medical Association** in the library and then in other areas of the association; have worked at the **Medical Library Association** as Executive Director since 1992.

PHILOSOPHY: Stay flexible and don't be afraid to make intelligent changes or course corrections as you move forward, considering all the information available to you to achieve positive outcomes.

MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: My good fortune in working for **MLA** and its members and contributing to the profession for over 20 years.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: The library profession as a whole, including medical librarians, will continue to face a variety of challenges, and will face these by taking on new and evolving roles in information access and provision using the latest technologies and methodologies.

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ical records and IT staff, and veterinary and agricultural students in developing countries about **HINARI**, **Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture (AGORA)**, **Online Access to Research in the Environment (OARE)**, and **Access to Research Development and Innovation (ARDI)** resources, authorship skills, how to organize workshops to teach others how to access information or Train the Trainers courses, and other important information. **AGORA**, **OARE**, and **ARDI** are also part of **Research4Life** programs.

Fifty percent of the e-library training initiative involves the development and updating of training materials. There are over thirty training modules, tools, and presentations in the program. This material is updated regularly as the **HINARI**, **PubMed**, and publishers' platforms continually change. The first training module was an overview of Internet and basic computer skills, but for the past three years, this module has not been taught as the participants already have the necessary baseline skills. Current workshops include more advanced material on evidence-based practice and eBook resources plus authorship skills (e.g., how to read and publish a paper, copyright, and plagiarism), and reference management software.

"Train the Trainers" Course

The "Train the Trainers" course about important health and medical resources and databases, authorship skills, and other information was introduced in 2009. The goal of this course is to prepare **MLA** members and others as instructors for individuals from **HINARI** eligible countries. **MLA** offers this CE course free of charge to encourage members and others to become engaged in this activity, and to also advise them about obtaining funding through Fulbright Scholarships, university partnerships, and other means. The course has been taught at three **MLA** national meetings, two **International Congress of Medical Librarianship** meetings, and two **European Health Information and Librarians Association** meetings and also as a distance learning option. The **MLA/LWB** Website incorporates the **HINARI** and Train the Trainers courses as well as other resources for use by anyone.[5]

Some of the course participants' outcomes include presenting workshops in Ecuador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Liberia, Moldova, Tanzania, and Ukraine plus training for students or visitors at the **Antwerp School of Tropical Medicine**, **George Washington University**, **Johns Hopkins University**, **Tulane University**, **University of Florida**, **University of Southern California**, and other institutions. **MLA** members have also assisted in the development of modules (Evidence-based Practice Resources for **HINARI** Users, various Authorship Skills material), the translation of the Short Course into Spanish, and the creation several **HINARI** training videos.

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J. Michael Homan

BORN AND LIVED: Born in Portland, Oregon but raised in Enterprise located in Wallowa County in far northeastern Oregon near the Idaho border. I have lived in Portland, Chicago, Los Angeles, Santa Monica, Kalamazoo, Irvine, and Rochester.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Began as a **UCLA** Biomedical Library intern and later as an employee of the **Pacific Southwest Regional Medical Library** at **UCLA**. Following the **UCLA** post I managed specialized library services at **The Upjohn Company**, a large multinational pharmaceutical company now part of **Pfizer** in Kalamazoo. I returned to the Irvine campus of the **University of California** as the AUL for the Sciences and to participate in the planning, design, and construction of a large consolidated science library. Since 1994 I have been enterprise director of libraries at **Mayo Clinic** in Rochester.

IN MY SPARE TIME: Gardening, reading, travel, and music — particularly opera.

FAVORITE BOOKS: I like novels and short stories and just finished *Dear Life* by **Alice Munro** and *Zoli* by **Colum McCann**. Also like current events/politics and I'm currently reading **Charles Krauthammer's** *Things That Matter* and have a digital subscription to the *New York Times*.

PET PEEVES: Those without passion and opinions.

PHILOSOPHY: You can achieve a great deal if you don't mind who gets the credit.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: Continuing to contribute to the profession but happily retired and enjoying many opera and symphony performances, travel, and quality time with my Oregon family, and my friends in many places.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: There is intense competition among the multinational publishers of point-of-care clinical information systems. All want to be included in some indispensable way within the clinical and research workflows. Publishers will continue to jockey for key positions from which to assure ongoing licenses for their products as well as device independent access to their content. There will be further refinement of Web-scale discovery tools and development of specialized software for clinical environments to rapidly adjudicate the best internal and external information at the point of care from within EMR systems. Librarians have key roles to play in these developments including resource evaluation and the increasing need for mediated services and specialists (embedded librarians; informationists) to navigate and curate the increasingly complex and growing digital ecology of e-resources and data.

Beginning in 2012, the file downloads of **HINARI** training materials have been tracked. During 2012 and the first eight months of 2013, these downloads averaged 200,000 per year. The most downloaded files include several unanticipated titles. For example, the Arabic version of a MeSH training module, BabelMeSHmodule, was downloaded over 8,000 times in the first eight months of this year.

Overall Results

The e-library training initiative focuses on training workshops, the development and updating of training materials for use of **HINARI** materials, and creation of distance learning courses for **HINARI**, **AGORA**, and **OARE**. It gives participants sufficient knowledge of resources that are freely available via the Internet. Areas include consumer health/patient education materials (**MedlinePlus**), sources of eBooks, and evidence-based medicine resources. There has also been discussion of the possible development of a national digital archive for some areas.

The e-library training initiative also provides an overview of open access journals including Internet links to these resources, plus "free full text" search options in **PubMed** and **MYNCBI**. It highlights keys to searching in **HINARI/PubMed** and also health information on the Internet. The trainers also sometimes focus on underutilized evidence-based medicine and eBook resources and **PubMed** features. The courses include Health Information on the Internet, Evidence-Based Practice Resources for **HINARI** Users, and eBook resources for **HINARI** users.[6]

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For the past two years, all workshops have included a cross-program training module titled "**Research4Life** Programmes — Similarities and Differences." The **HINARI**, **AGORA**, and **OARE** Web interfaces are reviewed, as are the different databases and search tools. This is most useful for participants from universities where there is access to multiple **Research4Life** programs. By the end of 2014, all the programs will have the same search tool (SUMMON) and this will increase the similarities among the programs. Also, during the past year, the **HINARI** training staff has developed better tools to evaluate the impact of training besides the post-workshop surveys that are now used. This includes evaluating pre- and post-workshop usage of the **HINARI** resources and sending an "outputs" survey six months after a workshop is concluded.

Challenges

Some challenges for the e-library training program have been Internet and Wi-Fi access and the availability of laptops. The speed of Internet access has slowly but surely increased in many countries although bandwidth and minutes still can be expensive. For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the increase often is the result of access via cables strung to East and West Africa with less reliance on satellite links. Also, the eligible institutions have increased bandwidth as there is a better understanding of the potential of the Internet as a source of academic and research information.

Approximately three years ago, participants began bringing laptops to workshops. In most cases, the host institutions have also added Wi-Fi access. Consequently, participants can bookmark Internet links and save files directly to their laptops. Also, bibliographic management software such as Zotero or Mendeley can be downloaded directly onto these laptops.

Finally, a continuing challenge is to maintain funding for the program. We hope to continue to work with the **Elsevier Foundation** and several other partners to continue this very valuable program.

Conclusion

The **MLA/Librarians Without Borders** e-library training initiative has successfully worked for the past six years in partnership with a variety of other organizations to train health and health-related professionals, including librarians, to effectively access and use health-related databases. The program has also trained U.S. health sciences librarians to be trainers of their international colleagues. This global outreach project has not only renewed **MLA's** historic international commitment to assist people anywhere in the world, but in a practical sense has demonstrated a consistent ability to work with a diverse group of individuals and funding organizations to build in-country capacity for improved health of all participants. 🌿

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PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Coordinator of the **MLA**/LWB e-library training initiative since 2006. The project's principal activities are conducting workshops and the developing/updating training material for HINARI *(www.who.int/hinari/)* — a collaborative **WHO** and **Partner Publishers** project for access to 11,400 health e-journals, 18,500 eBooks, and 70 other institutions resources for institutions in low-income countries. Since 2007, I have conducted 51 workshops in 29 countries and developed more than 20 training modules. I also update the training material for the Research4Life and am the compiler of the "Essential Health Links" gateway that contains over 800 annotated links for health professionals in low-income countries *(www.healthnet.org/essential-links/)*. A **University of Florida** emeritus librarian, I have worked with libraries and health information professionals in low-income countries since 1990, concentrating on the delivery of electronic information, *(www.research4life.org/)* partner programs in agriculture research and environmental research.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: Maybe I should address where I think the Research4Life programs will be in five years. Currently, the Research4Life partner publishers are committed to the project through 2019. These publishes will need to renew their commitment for the activities to continue. The programs regularly add content as more publishers participate. The mix of countries and territories eligible for the R4L programs will continue to change as some will graduate while others may go up or down in category (free access vs. low cost access). The platform for all the programs also will continue to evolve as currently a new authentication system is being installed and the Summon search engine is being piloted. Each technological change should result in enhancements to accessing the resources. 🌿

Endnotes

1. **Medical Library Association** Librarians Without Borders. *http://www.mlanet.org/resources/global/* (Accessed on January 4, 2014).

2. **Medical Library Association** Librarians Without Borders E-Library Training Initiative. *http://www.mlanet.org/resources/global/lwb_elibrarytraining_workshops.html* (Accessed on January 4, 2014).

3. **Research4Life**. *http://www.research4life.org* (Accessed on December 31, 2013).

4. About **HINARI**. *http://www.who.int/hinari/about/en/* (Accessed on December 12, 2013).

5. **Medical Library Association** Librarians Without Borders CE Courses. HINARI (Programa de Acceso a la Investigación en Salud): Curso Corto, **HINARI** Access to Research in Health Programme: Train the Trainers Course, **HINARI** Access to Research in Health Programme: Short Course, *http://mla.mrooms.org/* (Accessed on January 4, 2014).

6. **HINARI** Training. *www.who.int/hinari/training* (Accessed on December 12, 2013).

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Speaking of which, one of the books reviewed in this issue is *Reinventing the Library for Online Education* by **Frederick Stielow**. See this issue, p.44.

Reinventing the library operation(s) is being explored everywhere we turn. The work that **Outsell** is doing to survey the information industry gives us a longitudinal snapshot of our end users. In this issue, we have a look at **Outsell's End-User Study of Faculty and Students**. Interesting that faculty are more loyal to print than expected and both faculty and students find digital textbooks more difficult to work with than with their print counterparts. See this fascinating summary, this issue, p.90.