2014

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

Carla J. Funk
*Medical Library Association, mlaedo@mlahq.org*

J. Michael Homan
*Mayo Clinic Libraries, homan@mayo.edu*

Lenny Rhine
*Medical Library Association, rhinel@ufl.edu*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg](http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg)

Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg)

Recommended Citation


DOI: [https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6693](https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6693)

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.
Librarians Without Borders: Building In-Country Research and Information Provision Capability

by Carla J. Funk (Executive Director, Medical Library Association; MLA International Affairs Officer) <mlaedo@mlahq.org>
and J. Michael Homan (Director, Mayo Clinic Libraries; Chair, MLA Librarians Without Borders Advisory Committee) <homan@mayo.edu>
and Lenny Rhine (E-library Training Coordinator, Medical Library Association Librarians Without Borders E-Library Training Initiative) <rhinel@ufl.edu>

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 to a variety of scientific databases through in-country training programs.

- 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.

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 and is funded in part by the Elsevier Foundation.

In-country training programs and the mobilization of volunteers for in-country training and workshops. Besides the Elsevier Foundation, MLA also partners with the Health InterNetwork 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 were 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.

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.

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-
Users, various members have also assisted in the MLA, 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.

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.

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.

continued on page 18
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.

Lenny Rhine, Ph.D.

COORDINATOR, MLA/ Librarians Without Borders E-Library Training Initiative
Medical Library Association
<rhinel@ufl.edu> • www.mlanet.org

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 publishers 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

Rumors

Speaking of which, one of the books reviewed in this issue is Reimventing the Library for Online Education by Frederick Stiefow. 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. Interestingly 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.

continued on page 22