
Guest Editorial

Health library and information services, particularly those in the NHS, have seen more sectoral change than most other areas of the public sector – the countless NHS reorganisations and new policy directives; the emergence of new information bodies such as Institute for Innovation Improvement and the National Library for Health and the demise of other bodies like the NHS Modernisation Agency and the NHS University; rapidly changing technologies, both clinical and information. Throughout all of these changes, health librarians have shown that they are made of strong stuff – not only able to cope with change but to learn from it and contribute to it with innovative services and resources. They have shown tremendous leadership within the overall library and information community in embracing new learning, new skills to support evidence-based practice in their user communities but more significantly they have embraced evidence-based approaches to their own professional practice. This issue is dedicated to this health library and information community and features a wide range of reports, articles and reviews.

The first section features three papers which are not research articles *per se* but which set the scene for those interested in health library and information research. The first reviews recent CILIP endeavours to address issues of concern to health librarians and specifically their concerns about research. It was written to show that health librarians have identified a clear platform of research related activity for CILIP and that CILIP has responded with a renewed vigour in its focus on research. The paper also highlights early work being undertaken to co-ordinate the policy and research work of separate health library communities. The second paper takes this forward with an excellent review of the work of the NHS/HE Forum – its remit and activities in relation to e-licensing. Ayris and Teague give us a very clear

understanding of the challenges facing cross-sectoral collaboration and also raise interesting research questions about national library procurement and scholarly communication. The third paper by Richard Osborn is a shorter contribution which contributes to our understanding of the changing environment for health libraries in the NHS by describing the development of a strategic framework for London health libraries. This describes the planning context in relation to research support provided by NHS libraries in London.

The next section has two peer reviewed papers which demonstrate the contribution of qualitative research methodology in health information research and which address two very different but major issues about value and impact in the health library profession – what is the impact of the use of new technology on information service provision and what is the impact of new outreach roles for health librarians. The Harrison and Jones article addresses the use of the message board in providing mouth cancer patients with the information they need. Urquhart and her colleagues address the impact of clinical librarianship.

The third section features articles on research – either systematic reviews or in house research projects. UK health library and information professionals are world leaders in the evidence-based information practice community. It is no wonder that two of these leaders – Anne Brice and Andrew Booth are featured authors in this special issue. Their article discusses barriers and other issues encountered when undertaking research as a practitioner, and illustrates these with an example of a systematic review of qualitative research in the area of critical appraisal skills. The article by Koufogiannakis, Booth, and Brettle describes the creation of a checklist to assist library practitioners in taking a critical approach to reading and applying findings from education interventions to their own practice. This identifies the issues which arise from undertaking research, informed by experiences when conducting a qualitative systematic review.

The other articles in this section are good examples of primary health research. The Banwell and Capel paper describes ongoing doctoral research into the social networking of information among active older people in a rural community. This project uses a social ethnographic approach grounded in information and social network theory. The McGrath paper also employs qualitative methodologies in an investigation of approaches to information literacy training at a major research-led university. Bertulis and Lord describe a user needs study at the world's largest nursing professional organisation.

Finally, we include a bumper crop of four book reviews in this special issue including a review of *Evidence-based practice for information professionals* edited by Booth and Brice (London, Facet, 2004). The books reviewed will all be of use to those interested in adopting an evidence-based approach to their practice.

In conclusion, we are delighted to have been able to produce this special 'health' issue of LIR. Whilst the reports and articles suggest a re-invigorated health LIS research culture, we are mindful that there is still much to be done to embed evidence-based information practice, focus advocacy for research funding, market the new research strategy for CILIP, and co-ordinate research training, defining the research agenda and policy development across the health library community.

Margaret Haines and Jean Yeoh

The Editorial Board is very grateful to Margaret and Jean for their work in producing this issue, and to Joanne Ellis, also at King's College London, for a prodigious amount of text formatting.

Beady-eyed readers will have noticed a vacancy for one of the LIR editors. This is because Lizzie Gadd has decided, sadly, to resign in order to have more time for her day job. While congratulating her on her promotion, we are very sorry to lose her expertise and wise counsel. Lizzie was sole editor for several years, then co-editor following the birth of her daughter. We hope she will continue to contribute to LIRG in other ways! I am personally very grateful for her professional guidance and friendship.

Stella Thebridge