
Future Proofing the Health Library and Information Profession Through Research: the CILIP Agenda

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Abstract

This paper describes the work undertaken by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) to address the concerns of the health library and information community and in particular to address the concerns of this group for support in becoming a more research-active profession. CILIP appointed a Health Executive Advisory Group to address these issues and its report, "Future Proofing the Profession", and its recommendations in relation to research, are considered in this paper, alongside the recommendations relating to research made by an earlier CILIP Policy Advisory Group on the Knowledge Economy. CILIP's response to the report including the establishment of a HEAG Implementation Group is also described and the work of CILIP and its special interest groups in addressing the research issues of the HEAG report are outlined.

Acknowledgement

This paper derives from the work of two CILIP Advisory Groups – the Knowledge Economy Advisory Group, chaired by Nigel Oxbrow of TFPL, and the Health Executive Advisory Group, chaired by Dr Judith Palmer at Oxford University - and also on the work of the HEAG Implementation Group, chaired by the author. The author is grateful to all those who contributed to these groups and particularly to Guy Daines, Head of Policy and Governance at CILIP, who supported all three groups.

The author would also like to acknowledge the leadership of Dr Bob McKee, Chief Executive of CILIP and Dr Eric Davies, Group Councillor for the Library and Information Research Group and Chair of the CILIP Policy Development Committee, who have led the work on CILIP research policy developments.

Introduction

CILIP is the leading professional body for the library and information community in the UK, established in 2002 from the unification of the Library Association and the Institute of Information Scientists. To keep abreast of changes in the wider information environment and to inform its own policy development, CILIP has commissioned reports from advisory groups drawn from the most experienced information professionals in the relevant sectors. Reports have been commissioned on the roles of library and information professionals in social inclusion, regionalism, national information policy, the knowledge economy and most recently, the health sector. Each Advisory Group produced a report about the challenges and opportunities relating to its assigned topic with recommendations to CILIP about how it should position itself and support its members in relation to these issues. Two of these groups identified research as a key issue for CILIP to address in order to future proof the profession.

The Knowledge Economy Advisory Group and Research Recommendations

In 2001, the Library Association, one of the two predecessor bodies to CILIP, established a policy advisory group to consider its role in the knowledge economy. When CILIP came into being in 2002, the group became an executive advisory group to CILIP (KEAG) and presented its findings later that year. The group recognised that CILIP had the opportunity to play a leadership role in the knowledge economy including a key role in developing national, organisational, individual and professional competitiveness. Active participation in research was seen by KEAG as essential

CILIP has a tremendous opportunity to take a leadership role in promoting research and development in support of the development of the knowledge economy and the competitiveness of 'UK plc'. The strategic partnerships that could be formed with other professional bodies and research funders can shape the research and development agenda and can lead to a more dynamic and creative knowledge workforce in the UK. CILIP can thus influence the future for its own members in the knowledge economy, but it must also ensure

that its members are well placed to exploit this research evidence to inform their own practice and take advantage of the opportunities that the knowledge economy provides

(CILIP in the Knowledge Economy, 2002)

Of the thirty KEAG recommendations, seven pertained to research and suggested that CILIP should:

- lead the development of an active research and development culture
- argue for a co-ordinated research agenda and national research funding framework
- broker and co-ordinate research partnerships
- fund R&D relevant to its own areas of professional interest
- promote an evidence-based knowledge environment through the dissemination of research findings
- develop skills of its membership in R&D
- establish a task force to produce its own research statement

Parallel CILIP Research Developments

The KEAG recommendations on research coincided with the commissioning by CILIP of a study from the Centre for Information Research at the University of Central England on *The LIS Research Landscape* (McNicol and Nankivell, 2003). This report identified some of the challenges for LIS research including:

- a research agenda that lacks direction
- decreased funding opportunities for LIS research
- lack of research in the workplace library sector
- lack of blue sky research.

In a speech to Library and Information Research Group at the Umbrella conference in 2003, the Chief Executive of CILIP, Bob McKee, gave his own clear and comprehensive review of strategic developments in LIS research over the past ten years and quoted the justification for research in our sector which was cited in the CIRT report:

- to increase our knowledge and understanding
- to provide evidence to underpin and inform policy making and decision making

- to advance professional practice and underpin service development.

Dr McKee recognised that both the KEAG and the CIRT reports identified a key role for CILIP in LIS research and pointed out that there was total synergy between the role identified by the information practitioners who were in KEAG and that identified by the academics in CIRT. He concluded his speech with a strong endorsement of this role:

There is a clear agenda and a clear role for CILIP within that agenda. And LIRG has a very important role to play in this because of LIRG's mission to link together research and practice. We need to work hard to encourage CILIP members to join LIRG as a CILIP Special Interest Group, just as we need to encourage our colleagues across the profession to develop a culture of "research in practice".

(McKee, 2003)

The Health Executive Advisory Group and Research Recommendations

At the time the KEAG report was being released, another CILIP Advisory Group, the Health Executive Advisory Group (HEAG) was being established by CILIP. HEAG was chaired by Dr Judith Palmer, Keeper of Scientific Books, Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford University, who had considerable experience in the academic and NHS library communities. She was assisted by a core group drawn from the NHS and CILIP who held invitation seminars to gather evidence from colleagues in the health sector. The terms of reference for HEAG were:

to identify and explore the key agendas and challenges that LIS faces within healthcare; to consider the relevance of developments within LIS healthcare to the LIS profession more generally; and to advise CILIP on its role and activities within the healthcare sector

(Future Proofing the Profession, 2004)

There were two underpinning premises to HEAG's recommendations to CILIP. The first was that horizon scanning or future proofing is the key to survival for professional groups. The second was that "health is an exemplar for the profession as a whole" (Palmer, 2004).

HEAG's report included a comprehensive review of policy developments in the health sector and the impact on the roles of the library and information professionals working in this sector. It identified a number of areas where lessons could be transferred from the health library community to the wider LIS membership and where CILIP could improve its effectiveness in supporting its members in the health sector. There were 10 recommendations covering continuing professional development, leadership and career management, advocacy, research and the need for CILIP to use its own special interest group, the Health Libraries Group (HLG), more effectively (Future Proofing the Profession, 2004).

The HEAG report also included a focus on research and recommended:

that CILIP should take a lead in the development of a clear research strategy for LIS by developing a framework and identifying where research and development is needed. Beyond this it is important to identify where research is being done currently and by whom and finally to disseminate research outcomes to practitioners and thus facilitate access to good practice. CILIP might better support a research based profession by enabling easier access to research tools such as LISA.

HEAG felt that in a sector where there had been a paradigm shift to evidence-based practice, the LIS profession also needed "to examine the evidence base of its own professional practice". HEAG recommended that research skills become a major element in CPD and that members be encouraged to be constantly aware of the knowledge base that underpins their professional practice. The HEAG report noted that health LIS professionals were leading the entire LIS community in evidence-based information practice and the knowledge they had developed could be shared more widely within the CILIP community.

Progress in Implementing the Research Recommendations

Besides the recommendations for CILIP in relation to research, both the KEAG and HEAG reports identified key research questions for the library and information profession. These covered appropriate qualifications structures, information architectures, knowledge management, information roles, and generally echoed those promoted in the national LIS research strategy published by the Library and Information Commission in 1998 (Prospects, 1998). Indeed many of the recommendations relating to co-ordination of research and research and evidence-based information skills development also reinforce the Prospects Strategy which was the last national library-specific research strategy produced in the UK.

Mindful of some criticism that the recommendations from previous advisory groups had not been fully implemented, CILIP established an Implementation Group in 2004 to advise CILIP on the implementation of the recommendations of the *Future Proofing the Profession Report*. The Implementation Group focussed on the four main recommendations of the HEAG report, namely:

- what CILIP should be doing for the health library community in the areas of research and horizon scanning for issues with a potential impact on health libraries
- how to take forward advocacy at all levels but particularly at a senior level in the NHS and Department of Health
- how to support leadership, career management and continuing professional development for health librarians in all sectors
- what is the nature of the relationship between Health Libraries Group and CILIP in matters of relevant policy development.

The Implementation Group, which included representatives from various CILIP committees and from the National Library for Health, produced a paper for CILIP Council in June 2005 which described the work already initiated by CILIP in the areas covered by the HEAG recommendations but also prioritised and costed

the work which remained uninitiated.
(<http://www.cilip.org.uk/aboutcilip/howcilipworks/structure/council/meetings/mtgs2005/openforum300605.htm>).

In the case of the research recommendation in *Future Proofing the Profession*, there was much progress to report:

- the Library and Information Research Group (LIRG), led by its Group councillor, Eric Davies, had already started work on a costed research strategy for CILIP
- Free access to LISA had already been made available to members via CILIP website
- LIRG was already working with HLG on research skills courses
- LIRG was already working on a special health issue of *Library and Information Research* to promote health information research
- The new Framework of Qualifications was already addressing the need for research and critical appraisal skills.

The HEAG Implementation Group made the following recommendations regarding research:

- That CILIP Council support the coherent research strategy being developed by LIRG and fund its implementation
- That funding be found in the 2006 budget to develop a research portal on the CILIP website that will support evidence-based practice, using the National Library of Health (NLH) research portal as a model
- That LIRG and HLG explore a range of options to further develop and enhance research skills in the health library and information community and to report back to the Policy Development Committee.

Throughout the summer, the HEAG Implementation Group continued to meet to cost its proposals to Council. The recommendations of the Implementation Group took account of the work being done already, activities that could be embedded in other aspects of CILIP work e.g. the Framework of Qualifications, and partnership opportunities with the National Library for Health.

The CILIP Research Policy and Strategy

As mentioned above, a parallel activity during the Spring of 2005 was the development of the CILIP Research Strategy and Research Policy by LIRG, led by Dr Eric Davies. The document is in two parts – a policy and a strategy to fulfil that policy. The policy supports the view in the KEAG and HEAG reports that a vibrant profession needs research and development to further professional excellence:

Such endeavour needs to capitalise on the outcomes of research and development if it is to remain relevant and appropriate; and this is even more apparent in the current climate of dynamic change. CILIP believes that the hallmark of a true profession is its open desire and ability to capitalise on research and development and embrace change with enthusiasm and vigour.

(A CILIP Policy for Information and Library Research and A CILIP Strategy for Information and Library Research, 2005)

The policy states that CILIP has a role in:

- acting as an authoritative voice on R&D
- influencing the broad R&D agenda
- identifying the scope for, and promoting appropriate R&D
- maintaining a dialogue with relevant stakeholders whether as initiators, supporters or users of R&D
- disseminating information regarding R&D activity
- promoting the take-up of relevant R&D outcomes
- ensuring an adequate skills base for undertaking and applying R&D
- nurturing a professional culture that embraces R&D and encouraging reflective practice generally
- ensuring the free flow of information that stimulates R&D
- upholding the right of individuals to pursue R&D in any lawful area
- creating an appropriate ethical foundation for undertaking R&D
- sustaining a climate in which the integrity of R&D results is maintained and maintainable.

The strategy part of the document identified short, medium and long term activities to implement the policy which focused on:

- positioning CILIP at the centre of discussions on R&D through appropriate dialogues with key stakeholders
- acting as a central point for assembling information on key research questions
- assessing and expanding available dissemination methods including websites
- assessing research skill needs and continuing research training
- sustaining a sound ethical framework for the conduct of research and development
- exploring the broader issues relating to R&D.

The draft policy and strategy was presented to CILIP Council in June 2005 and costed elements included a Research Foundation seminar and a scoping study for a research skills audit and training needs analysis. This strategy was endorsed by CILIP Council but with similar comments to those made about the HEAG recommendations i.e. that should LIRG wish to make costed proposals for implementation of the strategy, these would need to be considered alongside other business proposals in the 2006 budget deliberations.

LIRG is now actively promoting this new strategy through a series of workshops and events in order to encourage practitioners to see "research – and learning from others - as a vital part of our job". (Fisher, 2006)

The Way Forward

At the time of writing, the CILIP HEAG Implementation Group has produced a costed and prioritised list of proposals which is being submitted to CILIP Executive Board in April 2006 and includes the research portal proposal. Proposals for implementation of the Research Strategy will be made by LIRG. Whether CILIP can fund all these research related proposals remains to be seen. However, there are many other activities which can be taken forward within the current resource allocations. The collaboration between LIRG and HLG on research skills seminars is just one example of what can be and is being achieved within

CILIP's own membership. The continued promotion of research-based and reflective practice by the Chief Executive and the Presidential team and the embedding of these in the new Framework of Qualifications, has encouraged a wider acceptance of the importance of research in professional practice. Moreover, the contribution by CILIP to research council consultations, such as the recent AHRC consultation, seems to have raised the profile of LIS research, as there is an AHRC commissioned project looking into the interactions between academic researchers and information and archive practitioners. This research is being conducted by Juliet Eve and colleagues at the Social Informatics Research Unit at the University of Brighton. (Eve, 2006)

In terms of developments in health information research, there are also significant opportunities. Interest has been expressed in bringing together the research active people from health library networks and bodies such as the Health Libraries Group, the Library and Knowledge Development Network in the NHS, the Canadian Health Libraries Association, the European Association of Health Information and Libraries and the Medical Library Association, to name but a few. The Medical Library Association has a well developed research strategy (<http://www.mlanet.org/research>) and research section and has informally expressed interest in collaborative horizon scanning and conferences. There is already an active international evidence-based information practice network and biannual conference series in which members from the UK health library and information profession have and will continue to play leading roles (<http://conferences.alia.org.au/eb12005/index.html>). The recent CILIP/FACET publication, *Evidence-based Information Practice*, edited by Andrew Booth and Anne Brice, which is reviewed in this issue of LIR, is helping the expertise from the health information community to be shared with the entire library sector. (Booth and Brice, 2004)

Finally, whilst the CILIP HEAG Implementation Group was meant to cease with the publication of its report, CILIP felt that there were

significant policy and advocacy issues raised in the HEAG report which still needed to be addressed including expanding the role of libraries in health research and scholarly communication and the group was encouraged to continue its work.

These issues were also on the agenda of another Health Strategy Group which had been established by the Society for College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) in 2004. Its remit was to engage at a senior level with the NHS, government departments and other appropriate bodies and advise SCONUL on policy development in relation to health libraries, particularly on co-operation between health libraries in the HE and other health sectors. The group was initially chaired by Judy Palmer of the University of Oxford (who had also chaired the original CILIP HEAG) and subsequently chaired by the author who was at the same time the Chair of the CILIP HEAG Implementation Group.

It soon became evident to both CILIP and SCONUL Executive Boards that there was considerable overlap in the membership and mission of these two groups. This was referred to the SCONUL/CILIP Steering Group which had been formed in 2005 to take forward the actions proposed in the Joint Memorandum of Understanding. (Joint Declaration, 2005). The Steering Group recommended that the two health focussed groups be merged into a new group under its overall direction, called the SCONUL/CILIP Health Strategy Group with revised membership and terms of reference. This joint Group is now under the chairmanship of Ian Snowley from the University of London, formerly with the Department of Health and the Royal Society of Medicine.

A major item for the new group includes national cross-sectoral collaboration in e-licensing, and that is why representatives from the NHS/HE Forum and the National Library for Health are members. The group will also be advising CILIP and SCONUL on relevant health policy developments and will prepare responses for its parent bodies to consultation documents. Strategic issues relating to the role of libraries

in supporting health research, the research needs of health information professionals, and the skills required for both supporting and conducting research will be considered by the Group at its first meeting in April 2006. Advocacy in relation to the national research funders including the Department of Health will be a key activity.

Conclusion

Many of the concerns expressed on behalf of the health library community in *Future Proofing the Profession* are being taken forward by CILIP in its core and group programmes. The Health Libraries Group of CILIP has now taken on policy development in health arena and is working closely with other health library groups and the National Library for Health on career planning and CPD for the community. Research advocacy is also being taken forward by CILIP and LIRG and by the new CILIP/SCONUL Health Strategy Group. The challenge for CILIP and for the health library community will be in sustaining this momentum in developing the culture of research-based practice and in identifying resources with which to support health information research.

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