Australian Employers’ Perspectives on Future Roles and Skills Requirements for Health Librarians

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ALIA/HLA Workforce and Education Research Project

- Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)
- Health Libraries Australia (HLA)
ALIA/HLA Workforce and Education Research Project

- Future skills for health librarians

- Education framework
  - postgraduate qualification
  - structured modular CPD
Project Leader and Principal Researcher

Ann Ritchie

Gill Hallam
ALIA/HLA Workforce and Education Research Project

Research to date:

- environmental scan and literature review
- online survey of Australian health librarians
- online survey of health library managers
- interviews with health librarian employers
• No pathway for specialisation

• No registration

• No compulsory CPD
The Australian Healthcare System

• National compulsory registration for some professions (but not librarians)

• Advances in e-health
Why interview our employers?

- ‘Mission-critical goals’
- Librarians’ contribution to the organisation
- What roles and skills will librarians require in the future
- Relevance to the anticipated directions of the organisation
Methods - Interviews

• Develop the interview schedule
  – Vital Pathways; the Hospital Libraries Project

  – The Value of the Hospital Library Study
Methods - Interviews

• Identify a convenience sample of interview subjects (15)
• Reflect the range of employment contexts for health librarians
• Interview the subjects – approximately 1 hour – face to face or by telephone
• Write up the notes
Methods – content analysis

- Content analysis: identifying patterns, themes or biases
- Codes = units of analysis
- Qualitative analysis – interconnectedness and key themes
- Three raters coded the data independently
- Principal researcher collated the coding
Methods – coding scheme

Coding scheme developed using:

- environmental scan and literature review
- MLA’s 7 Competencies for Lifelong Learning and Professional Success
- Vital Pathways Project and The Value of the Hospital Library Study
Coding the Data

Suzanne Lewis  Catherine Clark

Ann Ritchie
Inter-rater agreement

• consistency in content analysis
• some differences in perspective, eg.
  – “developing a corporate taxonomy for the organisation” [METADATA] or [KNOWMAN]
Mission-critical goals

- clinical care
- management of operations
- education
- innovation and research
- customer service
Contributions to the organisation

• 1.3 “Do your librarians assist you in achieving any of [your] goals?”

• 2.1 “What do you consider are the main ways that health librarians contribute to your organisation now?”

• 2.3 “Are there one or two specific things your librarians offer that are especially useful to this organisation?”

• 2.4 “Are there challenges or opportunities for your organisation where your librarians could be involved in the future?”
MLA 1: Understand the health care environment

- librarians need to understand their organisation’s role in the broader health environment
- capacity to contribute more to mission-critical committees
- find the balance between day to day operations and strategic planning
MLA 2: Leadership, Finance, Communication, Management …

• Focus on marketing, public relations, interpersonal skills
  – “A lot of the service’s success is about personal relationships and visibility”

• Facility management
  – “I think the physical space has an important role … as a place where people can go and have a bit of time out and do some reading..”
Meeting User Needs

- “their searching skills are critical”
- librarians save busy clinicians’ time
- Roles will increase and transform – integrating, analysing, synthesising information
- “If its just about accessing information, everyone will know how to do that, my five-year-old grabs my iPhone to find information”
MLA 4: Managing resources

• Includes vendor negotiation; selection, purchasing, licensing; copyright; cataloguing; archiving; taxonomies
• “national procurement [initiatives] … packaging up of resources … better value for money”
• “challenge and push for new models of access to information”
MLA 5: Using technology

- e-learning, e-health, clinical decision support tools and EMR, website development, Web 2.0 technology
- “warmware”, the interface, “they can interpret the two worlds”
- “on the fly with mobile devices”
MLA 6: Curricular design and instruction

- Curriculum design, educational needs assessment, user education, evaluation of learning outcomes, e-learning, orientation
- Opportunities for the future in e-learning
MLA 7: Understanding scientific research methods

• Expertise at the literature review stage of research projects
• “a new structure to move librarians out of the service/support roles and into academic pathways”
• Research skills, academic writing skills, bibliometrics
Degree of satisfaction

- “if I had to die in a ditch [the library is] one service that I would do it for”
- “Well I’m not dissatisfied, but I don’t know how to measure the level of satisfaction”
- More active and proactive, less reactionary
- More revolutionary
Future roles and skills

- “pushing out to survive”
- health librarians and managers – ‘more of the same’
- employers – “repackaging traditional … skills”, “extending skill sets”
- MLA’s competency framework validated
Limitations of the research

Possible bias:

• advocacy for the future of health librarianship in Australia
• interviewers knew their subjects
• multiple interviewers
• sample size and scope
• inter-rater reliability in data coding
Conclusion

• opportunities and expectations for health librarians to play a more active and strategic role in their organisations

• education and training, research, clinical support, mobile technologies

• health librarians’ scope of practice must be clearly defined
Where to from here?

- develop education and training pathways for health librarians in Australia
- final report of the project was tabled at the ALIA board of directors meeting in May
- recommendations accepted
- working party to be established ASAP