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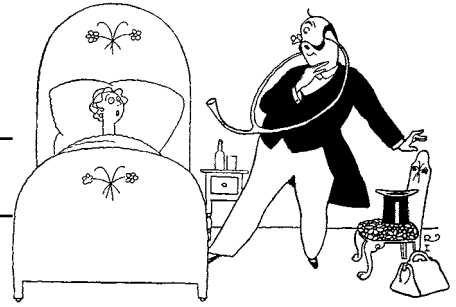
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Health Association Libraries: The Spackle Needed for Member Societies

by **Mary A. Hyde** (Senior Director, Resource Center, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists) <mhyde@acog.org>



Introduction

Since 1952 there has been a special interest group or section within the **Medical Library Association (MLA)** that represents medical society libraries and librarians. The section is now known as the **Health Association Libraries Section (HALS)**. Health association libraries provide library services to staff and many provide services to their members as well. We often fill in for those who don't have access to the library services that they may need. Over time we have learned that to continue to exist we need to adapt our services to fit the shifting priorities and needs of our parent organizations.

The **Health Association Libraries Section** and its predecessors have conducted periodic surveys since 1980. The surveys have focused on basic data about clientele, collections, staff, services, funding, and stability. The surveys have captured why many of these special libraries have succeeded in tough financial times.

Library Environment and Services

As in the past, **HALS** recently conducted a survey of its members and other medical societies for information on status, services, staffing, and technology. This survey showed that many of our members still provide traditional library services such as reference, searches, document delivery, current awareness, user instruction, research, and fact-checking.

HALS members offer services to organization staff, but less frequently provide services to members, nonmember health professionals, and the public. Many libraries have also supported their organizations in non-traditional ways. Some of these non-traditional services are providing or organizing archives, publications support, advocacy, records management, Website development, and consumer health.

One Health Association Library's Environment and Services

The consolidated results from the 2011 **HALS** survey were published in the October 2013 *Journal of the Medical Library Association*.¹ The following is one illustration of what a typical (or not) association library does for its staff and members.

The **American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists** was founded in 1951 and now has more than 57,000 members. The Resource Center, the College's library was established in 1969. The Resource Center at the **American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists** has become an integral part of the College. The Resource Center is located in the lower level of The College's headquarters. The Resource Center includes several collections. The Resource Center has over 12,000 books, 450 serial titles, and 400 reference files in all areas of women's health. We have 8 staff,

5 professional librarians and 3 library technicians. The Resource Center has the largest number of staff of the association libraries and may be on par with the **American Academy of Pediatrics** as far as collection size.

The Reading Room of the Resource Center contains current editions of publications including journals and other serials. The Resource Center stacks contain journals that go back to 1869, books that go back to 1951 with the founding of the College, and the publications archives. The History Reading Room contains books that are about the history of medicine, women's health, obstetrics and gynecology, and medical schools, as well as biographical information of those who have been instrumental in women's health. The history stacks contain publications that physicians used at the time they were practicing. Our oldest document is from 1552. Also in the history stacks are the College's organizational archives and audiovisual collection. The Burnhill Collection of birth control publications is also housed in the history stacks. The History Museum is the visual history of the specialty and includes a collection of forceps and a collection of vibrators.

Traditional Library Services

Current Awareness — The Resource Center provides a current awareness service to staff and members of articles that may be of interest to them in the development of College publications or in their practice. At this time we are utilizing The Old Reader to manage our journal and news feeds. The Old Reader is similar to the old Google Reader.

Document Delivery — The Resource Center has an Interlibrary Loan Department that provides articles, books, and other documents to staff of the College. We have had to expand this service to include many of our members who have been left without access to library services in the healthcare institutions where they work. Although this member benefit is not known by most members, it is something we provide when asked.

Fact Checking — The Resource Center provides fact-checking for our Communications department to respond to reporter questions.

Online Searches — The Resource Center provides online searches for staff. We have provided evidence based medicine searches to staff that develop the Practice Bulletins for the College for many years. We also provide searches to Committees for other College publications. The Resource Center provides members with searches upon request.

Reference Service — The Resource Center provides reference services to staff, members, consumers, and other non-members of the

College. Our main function is to provide assistance to staff in their development of College practice guidelines (i.e., Practice Bulletins, Committee Opinions, Guideline Books) and other publications (i.e., Patient Education Pamphlets, Your Pregnancy and Birth, Professional Liability and Risk Management). We provide reference service to members who have questions about College guidelines that they need for their practices. We provide guidelines to consumers and other non-members to help answer their questions when it pertains to an obstetric or gynecologic issue.

Research — The Resource Center also researches information for staff, whether it is for a forthcoming publication or if they have received a request from a member. The Resource Center attends committee meetings on the development of guidelines so that when a search is necessary the Resource Center can perform one then or when it is requested after the meeting.

User Instruction — The Resource Center trains staff on using the library and provides a tour of our collections. We don't use a traditional classification system, because our collections are very subject specific. Having user instruction is essential for staff to use the Resource Center effectively.

Non-Traditional Library Services

Advocacy — The Resource Center advocates for the College by exhibiting at meetings. We are the lead exhibitor at our Annual Clinical Meeting. We organize and display the materials that the College produces and we answer many of the questions that members and other participants may have about the College and its activities. We have often exhibited at the annual **MLA** meetings as well.

Archives — The College has maintained an organizational and publications archives for many years. We hope that our publications archive includes at least one copy of every document we have ever published. Many patrons who request information from the organizational archives seem to confuse us with the archives that can be found at many universities, which contain the papers of their faculty and staff. Ours however, is organizational by nature and contains minutes, programs, directories, and audiovisual materials.

Consumer Health — The Resource Center provides information to consumers on women's health issues. Staff will also send lists of physicians if a consumer needs a physician referral.

Historical Collection — The Resource Center's historical collection is a very important

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ant part of the collection. Our history information is not only about the books physicians used at the time they were practicing, but it also contains information about the history of medicine, history of obstetrics and gynecology, biographical or historical information on famous obstetricians, gynecologists, and other famous figures, as well as the histories of some medical schools.

Museum — The History Museum is the visual history of obstetrics and gynecology. You can find a display on forceps, destructive instruments, pelvimeters, sounds, pessaries, kegel meters, vibrators, models, IUDs (including the Dalkon shield), birth control pills (from the very complex to the very simple), condoms, and medicines of many types.

Publications Support — Resource Center staff provide publication assistance to College staff by verifying the references that are used in our publications. Often we find that a reference has been replaced by something newer or is rather questionable and should not be used. We provide alternatives if necessary. Staff attend committee meetings and often are asked for input as to what kind of questions we get from members and consumers that would be relevant for guideline development.

Website — The Resource Center maintains its section of the College Website and often provides information to other staff about a broken link or the need to update a page. We provide the “coding” for the documents to Web services staff to use to provide access to the documents on the Web page.

Conclusion

Many health association libraries are an integral part of their organizations. They provide traditional and non-traditional services not only to the organizational staff, but to members and non-members as well. The **Medical Library Association’s Health Association Libraries Section** provides members with feedback on how other societies may be handling a specific need within their organization. We like to help each other evolve and grow as librarians and libraries. Without each other we would not be able to learn adaptive techniques, fulfill the needs of our organization, and thrive. 🌱

Endnote:

1. **Dunikowski L. G., Embrey A. C., Hawkes W. G., Riedlinger J. E., Taliaferro M. G., Van Hine P. M.** “The Health Association Libraries Section survey: finding clues to changing roles. *J Med Lib Assoc* 2013; 101:318-22.

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Mary A. Hyde

BORN AND LIVED: I was born in and grew up in Cleveland Ohio. I attended the **University of Dayton** for my undergraduate degree and the **Clarion University of Pennsylvania** for my Masters of Science in Library Science.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: I first started my medical library career at the **Winchester Medical Center** in Winchester, VA in 1990. I started the library at the **Association of American Medical Colleges** in 1992. I have been with the **American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists** since 1996. I started as the reference librarian and became the director in 2002. I have been involved in local library societies and **HALS** for many years. I have served as president, chair, chair-elect, secretary, and treasurer. I am currently the Chair of **HALS**.

FAMILY: I have been married to my husband, **William** for almost 23 years. We have two daughters. **Caroline** is 19 and a freshman at **Beloit College** in Beloit, WI. **Catherine** is 15 and a freshman at **St. Maria Goretti High School** in Hagerstown, MD. We live in Lovettsville, VA.

IN MY SPARE TIME: In my spare time I enjoy reading, crocheting, walking my dog, and baking.

FAVORITE BOOKS: Any mystery that doesn’t talk about women’s health.

PET PEEVES: Asking me what my pet peeves are.

PHILOSOPHY: Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree. — **Martin Luther**

MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Becoming the Director of the **Resource Center**.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: Adding more services for our members to use the **Resource Center** electronically.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: Continued evolvement of the profession. We won’t lose the books because they are important. But we will have to expand our electronic access to books as well as journals. Many of us may be remote or become telelibraries/librarians. 🌱



Rumors from page 18

This leads me to mention that the November issue of *ATG* (the **Charleston Conference** issue) will be guest edited by **Charles Lyons** from **SUNY-Buffalo**. **Charles** says that the general plan is to have articles focusing on: library eBooks as e-textbooks, innovative textbooks on reserve, open textbook publishing, working with commercial textbook publishers, and university bookstores. I have recently been fascinated by all the e-textbook innovation and news. Apparently there is a move to have the purchase price of e-textbooks added to the overall course fee. See the latest article in *Information Today* by none other than **Chuck Hamaker**! “EBooks on Fire: Controversies Surrounding eBooks in Libraries.”

<http://www.infotoday.com/searcher/dec11/Hamaker.shtml>

Moving right along — the **Addlestone Library** is over eight years old and we are renovating. The **South Carolina Historical Society** in the Fireproof building on Meeting Street (across from the Mills House Hotel) is moving many of their rare manuscripts to our Special Collections Department. All shelves are being compacted to make room for additional seating and storage. This means that the Technical Services Department (my department) will have to move from the second floor to the first floor for four plus months (April-August, 2014)! What fun it has been to plan, plan, plan and relocate, relocate, relocate, right at the end of the 13/14 fiscal year! However, it will all be over by the time you come to Charleston for the **34th Charleston Conference**.

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