The Research Imperative

MLA
Research Imperative

The Research Policy Statement
of the Medical Library Association

Executive Summary

For information about progress on MLA research action items go to:

www.mlanet.org/research/policy/

The Research Imperative

In The Research Imperative: The Research Policy Statement of the Medical Library Association, the Medical Library Association (MLA) reaffirms its commitment to assure the vital presence and continued growth of both individuals and the profession of information research. Building on the association's 1995 research policy, [1] The Research Imperative challenges MLA to advance a culture where "analysis and application of a health information research knowledgebase" is commonplace—where health information practitioners, just like their health care practitioner colleagues, use the best available evidence when making a decision.

As the foundation of the profession, research is a key ingredient for professional growth. Librarians conducting research gain knowledge for successful practice and build collaborations with colleagues in and out of the profession. The Research Imperative identifies the challenges and opportunities for librarians to engage in evidence-based practice in the current environment. Roles and responsibilities are outlined for MLA and its key stakeholders in order to develop the culture where applying and creating research-based evidence are the norm rather than the exception among health information professionals.

Domains of Research

The domains of health information research include:

- community dimensions of information practice
- effective information dissemination and delivery strategies
- health information structure, acquisition, and use
- information behaviors including human–technology interaction
- information contexts and meaning
- information policy and standards
- information technologies and their transformational nature
- knowledge translation
- leadership and organizational change
- marketing, communications, and advocacy
- systems thinking
- teaching and learning

Research Skills Set

Basic Skills

- ability to work collaboratively as a peer with multiple groups of people involved in research or its application
- ability to identify and define important questions or issues that need to be addressed
- knowledge of quantitative and qualitative methodologies and which is best for a given situation or question
- knowledge of common statistical techniques and their application and interpretation

Advanced Skills

- ability to understand statistical interpretation of research and assess whether the statistics support conclusions
- ability to summarize research findings accurately, clearly, and succinctly for professional communication
- ability to evaluate research findings for validity and usefulness
- knowledge of the best methods for applying research findings to answer important questions

Specialized Skills

- ability to design, carry out, and apply research studies including institutional review board approvals, participant recruitment, data collection and analyses, report writing, and publication
- ability to obtain funding and resources for internal and external research projects

Roles of Stakeholders

Individual librarians and informaticians

- design personal learning programs that include improving research skills and skills in critically appraising published research

- take advantage of training, funding, and other research support services

- apply research results to library and information service practice, to the development of information policy, and to other information issues

- seek out potential research collaborators in their institutions, other libraries, graduate schools of library and information science, and other organizations

- devote professional time to conducting research, to facilitating health information research by others, and/or to participating in institutional quality or research initiatives

- disseminate results of critical analyses of research evidence, reports of applying research to practice, information about research in progress, and new research findings

- have a working knowledge of MLA's research policy statement and research priorities

- recognize and encourage the research activity of colleagues

US National Library of Medicine (NLM)

- continue its integration of MLA's research vision and priorities into NLM and National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM) programs

- support research skills development among health sciences librarians through NN/LM programs and courses

- provide funding opportunities for a full range of applied research and outcomes studies

Graduate schools of library and information science

- inculcate evidence-based library and information practice (EBLIP) values and skills into all educational programs including formal coursework, continuing education, and internships

- actively engage faculty in EBLIP research projects, emphasizing collaborative studies with practicing health sciences librarians

Employers

- create and sustain learning organizations that enable and reward the application of research principles and contributions to the knowledgebase

- provide opportunities for continuous learning and collaborative research within and outside the institution and multiple channels for reporting research findings

- develop mentoring programs in evidence-based practice for current staff as well as new professionals and graduate interns

Other associations and organizations

- advocate for quality information policies and practices

- contribute perspectives that enrich MLA's research vision and research priorities

- maintain open communication and support collaborative activities with MLA and its individual members to achieve common goals

Summary Recommendations for Action

MLA will…

- promote the importance of research to the MLA membership and to other health information professionals, associations, funding agencies, and partners in order to improve health outcomes

- promote The Research Imperative policy statement and its priorities to the membership and to other associations, funding agencies, and partners

- recognize, reflect, and advance health sciences information research through its organizational structure

- provide and promote education and training to support health sciences information research

- disseminate health sciences information research through publications, MLA's Center for Research and Education (CORE) digital repository, and other means

- continue to annually assess the progress made toward enhancing the research knowledge and skills of its members and the achievement of its research agenda

Reference

1. Dalrymple PW, Bastille JD, Bradley J, Dee CR, Humphreys BL, Marshall JG, Weller AC, Webb RE. Using scientific evidence to improve information practice. Chicago, IL: Medical Library Association, 1995.