Evidence-Based Librarianship: An Opportunity for Research Collaboration

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【Abstract】

Objective:

To encourage health sciences librarians in Taiwan to submit structured abstracts in English that summarize their library-related research projects to the periodical Hypothesis. These abstracts are intended to raise awareness about relevant Taiwanese research primarily among health sciences librarians in the US. This awareness might result in US librarians citing Taiwanese library science journals more frequently and lead to greater US-Taiwan research collaboration in the future.

Method:

Narrative essay. Presents elements of a standard structured abstract and a sample structured abstract based upon one of the primary author's recent publications.

Result:

Pending Goal will be to increase awareness about relevant health sciences library science research in Taiwan among health sciences librarians in the US. Increased awareness of library-related research in Taiwan potentially will improve systematic reviews for all health sciences librarians.

Conclusion:

Increased awareness and collaboration might lead to more effective library practice in both countries. This increased awareness also can contribute to the Evidence-Based Librarianship (EBL) goal of conducting thorough systematic reviews (Mulrow & Cook, 1998) of all research, regardless of national origin of the authors.

A Call for Research Collaboration

Health sciences librarians in Taiwan are invited to submit English-language structured abstracts of their research projects to the US publication Hypothesis. These contributions should increase awareness of Taiwanese research publications in the US and possibly increase citation rankings of Taiwanese library science journals (Fang, 1989). The Medical Library Association's Research Section in the US publishes *Hypothesis* three times a year to keep its members informed about research issues concerning health sciences libraries. *Hypothesis* covers all aspects of health sciences librarianship research. It also includes original research reports from health sciences librarians. Recently, the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health (CINAHL) agreed to index *Hypothesis*, thereby increasing awareness of its contents. *JLIS* readers can access *Hypothesis* at its website address of http:// gain.mercer.edu/ mla/research/hypothesis.html

There are so few health sciences librarians, relatively speaking, compared to other health sciences professions; our numbers also are small compared to other types of librarians (Eldredge, 1997). Even fewer health sciences librarians are actively involved in research projects (Haiqi, 1995). Increased international collaboration that would enable health sciences librarians to pool their research results seems to be a strategy likely to overcome some of the disadvantages of this small population of researchers. In addition, a basic tenet of Evidence-Based Librarianship (EBL) points to the need to search widely and creatively to compile sufficient evidence from systematic reviews in order to make sound decisions.

Evidence-Based Librarianship (EBL) adapts the core characteristics from the Evidence-Based Medicine (EBM) movement in healthcare. EBL incorporates both the decision making framework and many of the methods applied by EBM to improve library practices (Eldredge, 1997). EBL employs the best available evidence based upon library science research to arrive at sound decisions about solving practical problems in librarianship. Cheng Huanwen (1996) might have anticipated EBL when he wrote "LIS is not a pure discipline but an applied one...(p. 40) ." Unique circumstances in librarianship lead to intentional variations from the standard EBM approaches. The EBL process consists of the following steps: (1) formulate a clearly-defined, answerable question that addresses an important issue in librarianship; (2) search the published and unpublished literature, plus other authoritative resources for evidence relevant to the posed question; (3) Evaluate the validity and relevance of the evidence; (4) assess the relative value of expected benefits and costs of any proposed action plan; (5) Evaluate the effectiveness of the action plan (Eldredge, 1999).

The primary author studied at the Chinese

University of Hong Kong and taught English in Taipei during the 1970s. He later studied library science in the US and the United Kingdom, and has visited libraries in Europe. The author has observed that while there are superficial differences between libraries around the world, health sciences libraries share many of the same challenges regardless of location. The newly created "International Research Reviews" column in *Hypothesis* will offer a place for health sciences librarians from outside the US to share their research results with their US colleagues. Neither the Associate Editor, Editor, nor Editorial Board of *Hypothesis* promise to publish all submissions, however. This column will feature structured abstracts of research conducted outside the US. Current evidence suggests that structured abstracts are more effective in quickly communicating research results when compared to traditional abstracts (Hartley, Sydes & Blurton, 1996; Taddio et. al., 1994).

Due to space constraints, not all submitted structured abstracts will be published. Structured abstracts will be evaluated for publication in *Hypothesis* according to the following criteria: (1) relevance of the reported research to US librarians; (2) higher levels of evidence to the research, which will be explained in Table 1 below; (3) originally published outside the US in a journal with contents not readily accessible to US health sciences librarians; (4) compliance with the conventions of presenting structured abstracts as explained in two sources (Ad Hoc Working Group for Critical Appraisal of the Medical Literature, 1987; Haynes RB et al., 1990) and commonly practiced by major English-language clinical medicine journals such as *JAMA*; *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Although preference will be given to submissions based upon research reports previously published in peer reviewed library science journals, as noted above in number 3, Associate Editor Jonathan Eldredge will consider structured abstracts of reports not yet published in a journal. The Associate Editor will edit submissions as needed for clarity and conciseness. A generic example of a modified bibliographic citation and structured abstract appears below, followed by a sample involving a recent research report published by the primary author.

Generic Elements of Modified Bibliographic Citation and Structured Abstract

- Descriptive title of the research project
- ABSTRACT (limit of 300 words length)
- Objective
- Method
- Results
- Conclusion

(Additional elements to the abstract that comply with guidelines for writing abstracts referenced above might be added if relevant to report)

- Keywords (optional)
- First six names of authors (investigators)
- Name of translator of abstract into English lan · guage (if other than the author)
- Name of authors' (investigators') library and parent institution
- Source Journal Title (including ISSN)
- Year, month
- Volume, number

- Pages
  (if report has not been published to date, information about the organization sponsoring the research)
- Complete mailing address of author to contact for additional information
- Email address of author to contact
- Reprints of article or full report available from author? (yes or no)
- Willing to share raw data? (yes or no)

Sample Modified Bibliographic Citation and Structured Abstract

The vital few meet the trivial many: unexpected use patterns in a monograph collection

Objective:

To test three related hypotheses about monographs circulation at academic health sciences libraries: (1) Juran's "Vital Few" Principle, sometimes incorrectly referred to as the "Pareto Principle"; (2) most (>30%) new monographs will not circulate within four years; and (3) Trueswell's 20/80 rule concerning intensity of monographs circulation.

Method:

Retrospective cohort study at a major academic health sciences library in November 1997 on monographs acquired during 1993, utilizing an online review file.

Results:

Unexpectedly, most (84%) monographs had circulated at least once in the four years following acquisition. Combining circulation and in-house usage data revealed that 90.7% of the monographs acquired in 1993 had been used at least once. Small percentages of these monographs produced disproportionately high circulation levels.

Conclusion:

Monographs circulation rates confirm Juran's "Vital Few" Principle. Most monographs circulated at least once in contrast to results reported by the Pittsburgh Study or other studies reported by Hardesty and Fenske. The results to not comply with Trueswell's 20/80 ratio rule. Further research needs to investigate the effects of low students to books ratios and problem-based learning (PBL) curricula upon monographs utilization.

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Reprints available from author

Willing to share data

JLIS readers who have research studies to suggest for inclusion in this new column are strongly encouraged to contact the primary author at the email address of jeldredge@ salud.unm.edu or the postal address of: Health Sciences Center Library, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131-5686 USA.

Table 1 Evidence-Based Librarianship: Levels to EBL Evidence

1. Systematic reviews of multiple rigorous research studies
2. Systematic reviews of multiple, but less rigorous research studies such as case studies or qualitative research
3. Randomized controlled trials (RCTs)
4. Case-controlled trials
5. Cohort studies
6. Surveys
7. Case studies
8. Decision analysis
9. Qualitative research such as focus groups, ethnographic observations, historic approaches, etc.

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