

MHSLA

Michigan Health Sciences Libraries Association Newsletter

Winter 2021

No. 117

Message from the President Juliet Mullenmeister, MILS, AHIP

The Curse of Interesting Times

What does it mean to operate as a professional in the midst of a pandemic? In the midst of a worldwide predicament that stresses every aspect of public health, social justice, medical misinformation, bias, politics, medical research and the inadequacy of medical access? It has brought to light many of the cracks that already existed and has shone a light on failings and weaknesses, social, political and institutional. We are physically separated, and we are all struggling with our team operations in this new environment to provide services, instruction and collection access. Let alone the very real financial consequences that have led to furloughs and job losses. Some of us are working on site; Some of us are completely remote. We have participated in many virtual projects to link students and practitioners to information, and we are doing our level best to provide the same services and materials as we would do in person. Librarians have rapidly created resources linking new research to make it available to physicians, nurses, and allied staff to help care for patients when nothing was known about best practices, and we continue to do so.

But amid all of the sorrow and chaos, there are some amazing things that have happened. As of my writing this, two vaccines have been approved for EUA use. Two more are expected very soon. There has been unprecedented international cooperation and funding to fuel the development and approval of these vaccines. I stand in awe, and frankly, it makes me well up with emotion when I think about the scale of it all. In addition, an enormous community of medical practitioners, public health communicators, and other research personnel have gone into the fray on their own time to battle the volume of COVID and vaccine misinformation that continues to proliferate. Many celebrities and other media personalities have also agreed to help facilitate sound medical information about keeping safe from COVID to the public as well as encouraging people to get vaccinated.

But as we have seen play out at the national level with our professional and political organizations, all of these social and health justice issues do not happen in a void. The same matters of bias and access are happening within hospitals and academic institutions alike. And none of it is new. We may have a more profound awareness due to recent events, but it has long been a facet of both the education and practice of medicine. The current issue with pulse oximeters potentially not accurately reading people with different skin tones mimics the fact that not that long ago, women were precluded from participating in clinical trials - the result of both these issues making diagnosing, dosing, effectiveness,

and side effects a real problem in clinical practice for large groups of our population. All because no one thought about potential ramifications, and the powers that be assuming that there was a standard against which all efficacy could be judged.

The same networks that have allowed more of us to witness these events and partake in real-time communication about them are the same ones that also allow the proliferation of misinformation. I have seen colleagues in other states share and post inflammatory materials, sadly often from medical “quick news” sources that are designed to have controversial headlines, without also explaining the relevance. I am not doubting their intention to share information, but as we have seen in the political landscape, people tend to run with a headline that aligns with personal bias, or stokes their fear and it does not explain the impact of real numbers in context. I ask that we be mindful, more than ever, of our role in communicating factual, unsensationalized content that is respectful of the audience, and that we are careful to not negate legitimate concerns.

Some recent resources that might be of interest on these topics:

Our own Liz Lorbeer facilitated a conference presentation on aligned topics for ["Where We have Been and Where We are Going" Charleston Conference Lively Lunch 2020](#)

Some useful resources mentioned in conference presentation:

- <https://countway.harvard.edu/news/black-lives-matter-antiracism-health-suggested-resources>
- <https://libereurope.eu/article/covid19-survey-research-libraries-europe/>

Also an interesting presentation that might be of interest, given social justice issues in the current environment. [Addressing the Challenges of COVID-19 in Black and Latinx Communities \(USF video conference presentation\)](#)

Nancy Bulgarelli, MSLS and Director of OUWB Medical Library reports

The Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine Medical Library recently bid a fond farewell to two of its library faculty members: Keith Engwall and Stephanie Swanberg.

Keith Engwall, Assistant Professor and Web and Emerging Technologies Librarian, left at the end of December. Keith started in July 2012 as a member of our inaugural Medical Library team tasked with building our technology infrastructure; rebuilding, redesigning, and maintaining our library website; and serving as a technology ambassador between the Medical Library, OU Libraries, and OUWB while sharing reference, instruction, and library liaison duties. For the past eight years, the Medical Library has relied on his experience and expertise to improve its online presence and ensure continual, seamless access to library resources and services while meeting the increasing needs of OUWB. Please join us in wishing him all the best!

Stephanie Swanberg, Associate Professor and Information Literacy and eLearning Librarian, left at the end January to take a position at the Michigan School of Psychology Moustakas Johnson Library. Stephanie was one of the founding faculty members at OUWB, starting on June 15, 2011, just one month before we welcomed our inaugural class. She was instrumental in establishing the Medical Library – its spaces, collections, services, and teaching program. She served as liaison to many courses and clerkships, participated in the personal librarian program, taught in the curriculum, provided reference services to the

OUBW community, mentored Embark students, established the community outreach partnership with the Auburn Hills Public Library, organized and ran the annual Organ and Bone Marrow Donor Drive, and much, much more. She received numerous awards and recognitions including the OUBW Faculty Recognition Award for Excellence in Service and the President's Award from the Medical Library Association for her work on the Education Task Force. She will be missed for her sunny personality, ready smile, and collaborative nature. We wish her only the best in her new position!

Patti Wesenick from McLaren Bay Region retired January 2021. Patti is still working a couple days a week as she transfers into that "retired" lifestyle. All of at McLaren wish her well.

With all of our meetings go electronic it has been quite fun to see people in their home or office environments that you normally wouldn't see. During our committee meetings we got to meet one of Stephanie Swanberg's cats. At McLaren it is not an official department meeting until a certain dog makes his cameo appearance. Then there is the VP who forgot to turn off the mute and got to give their presentation twice because no one heard it the first time. I hope you have found a few things to chuckle about as we head into spring and hopefully get a chance to spread our wings once again.

If you would like to submit information for the next newsletter please feel free to send it to me at gardnerdiane@hotmail.com with the subject line **MHSLA newsletter**.