

**SCAMeL Professional Development Librarian Exchange
Participant's Report on visit to HAM-TMC Library
Houston, Texas
September 3-4, 2009**

Visiting Librarian:

John Fullinwider, MLS
Manager, Research Support and Education Services
UT Southwestern Medical Center Library

Host Site Coordinator:

Lisa Berry, MALS, AHIP
Associate Director for Information Services
HAM-TMC Library

Objectives:

1. To meet with my counterpart in the host library.
2. To share ideas concerning the provision of reference services.
3. To share ideas concerning the promotion and evaluation of library classes.
4. To learn more about the clinical informationist initiative of the host library
5. To learn more about consumer health information services of the host library,
6. To learn more about the medical informatics program in the School of Health Information Sciences at the UT Health Sciences Center in Houston.

These objectives address issues I face in my daily work and in strategic planning for these library services.

Schedule, Meetings & Notes:

Notes for each of my meetings and discussions follow.

September 3:

8 a.m. – 12 noon: Driving.

12: 30 – 1:00 p.m.: Made way to TMC area; contacted Lisa Berry about first meeting and directions to UT School of Health Information Sciences, 7000 Fannin Street, Suite 600.

1: 15 – 3:00 p.m.: Met with James P. Turley, PhD, RN, Associate Professor and Robert W. Vogler, Associate Professor.

I met with Dr. Turley and Dr. Vogler for about 45 minutes, discussing generally the purpose of my visit, their history with the UT and the Health Information Sciences program, and some possible connections between health sciences librarianship and health informatics. Vogler had to leave for a previously scheduled appointment, and Turley and I went to his office another 45 minutes or so.

In Turley's view, librarians are not actually health informatics practitioners. The school is ten years old. "We visited several library schools prior to opening the UT School of HIS," he said, "and we quickly found that not only were we not doing the same thing. We were not often on the same planet." Librarians are still in a phase of that he calls *the location of information*, "Where is this bit of data, and how do I find it?" And librarians for the most part are limited in the kinds of locations they seek out – published literature indexed by MeSH or other controlled vocabularies. On this point, he states that bits of data are everywhere. He is not asking, *where is it?* He wants to instead to know, *what kind of question can I ask this dataset?* And even, *what kind of question can this dataset ask me?* He is interested in large datasets, such as NCBI Taxonomy, that use BLAST (basic local alignment search tool) and related searching programs. The practice of informatics proceeds on a higher level of abstraction than typical library work, but also goes deeper (data-mining) into huge datasets like GenBank (NIH's "collection of all publicly available DNA sequences"). He suggested several texts: *Towards the Semantic Web: Ontology-Driven Knowledge Management* by John Davies, *Introduction to the Taxometric Method* by John Ruscio, *Guide to Health Informatics* by Enrico Coiera, and *The Social Life of Information* by John Seely Brown.

3:00 – 4:00 p.m.: Met with Adela Justice, Consumer Health Librarian, HAM-TMC Library.

Ms. Justice's work involves taking consumer health information out of the library and into the Houston community in various ways. She teaches classes and makes presentations, but she also set up an information kiosk project. This initially involved pamphlet-type kiosks, with consumer health brochures in English, Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, and Chinese. The kiosks were placed at 4 points around the city – public libraries and community centers. The second generation kiosk was a touch-screen monitor in a case with a printer. The third generation kiosk is a desktop PC, with internet access, and a stand-alone printer; she is looking for grant funding to set up more of these. Currently, there are three – in a clinic, a Chinese community center, and a Vietnamese civic center. Justice also teaches Medline Plus, PubMed, NIH Senior Health; she describes attendance in her classes as "iffy." Classes scheduled for late evening, after 4 p.m., are better attended; on weekends, "no one shows up." She is the Go Local coordinator, and this takes about half her time.

4:00 – 5:00 p.m.: Met with Lisa Berry, Associate Director, Information Services, HAM-TMC Library.

Ms. Berry's job is fairly close to mine, supervising about the same number of people, "information services" being analogous to "research support and education services." Her latest project is the development of a Writing Center, the primary purpose of which is to "get work ready for publication." She plans to hire a PhD with experience in medical/scientific writing, and if resources permit "3 or 4 staff members." The idea is to help researchers, nursing and medical students, and others affiliated with TMC, in all phases of composition and publication. The center would offer editing assistance, but also related help (e.g., how to increase an article's citation rates by choosing high impact journals for publication).

5:30 – 8:00 p.m.: Dinner with Justice, Berry, Shannon Basher (librarian), and Richard Guinn (part-time librarian).

September 4:

9:00 – 9:30 a.m.: Informal coffee with Information Services staff.

9:30 – 10:30 a.m.: Met with Sheila Green, Partnership and Marketing Coordinator, HAM-TMC Library (formerly the library's clinical informationist).

I had spoken and corresponded with Ms. Green previously, when we were launching a pilot “clinical informationist” program at UT Southwestern. She was most helpful with evaluating the service and with brief teaching ideas (1-minute librarian). We further discussed the writing center proposal; it is based in part on the center at NIH. Following my visit, Ms. Green sent the full text of a report we discussed.

10:30 – 11:30 a.m.: Met with Michelle Malizia, Associate Director, NNLM South Central Region.

Ms. Malizia directs the NNLM SCR office. We had a wide-ranging discussion, focusing in part on consumer health information as one of the highest future growth areas for health sciences librarians, especially providing information various levels of patient literacy..

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.: Met with Mary Jackson, TMC Outreach Coordinator.

Mary Jackson is the outreach and orientation librarian to the approximately 75,000 people involved in the library's 42 institutional sponsors. She created the library's tutorials page. Classes at the library are often taught by off-campus professionals; there is a charge for participants, though discounts are offered. The instructors are contracted through New Horizons. Ms. Jackson provided me with samples of course materials, outlines, sign-in pages, etc., and an object lesson in taking the library out of the building!

12:30 – 2:00 p.m.: Toured medical center area; Rice University

2:00 – 7:00 p.m.: Return to Dallas (with extra hour for rush hour through suburbs north of Houston!).

[Notes for my second day are a bit shorter, due to a couple of lost hand-written pages.]

Lessons Learned:

My objectives for the trip were all satisfied. The discussions were challenging both professionally and intellectually. It was good to talk with librarians struggling with seismic shifts in the profession. As I mentioned to Mary Jackson, we probably won't recognize the job in ten years. But all the issues we discussed will be essential elements of it: delivering more challenging and innovative information products; reaching out to the community, particularly consumers; designing effective cost-of-service and revenue models; providing medical

information at point of care; offering more comprehensive services to researchers (e.g., the writing center).

Suggestions for Improvement:

I was skeptical of the value of this program when I first looked into it, but the trip was all positive. The informal exchanges and discussions were worth more to me than most professional development sessions I've endured down through the years. There is a lot to be said for simple getting out of one's office or cubicle and taking, as James Turley put it, "a cognitive walk through someone else's mind." I would keep the exchange as it is, with a minimum of bureaucracy. The re-imbusement procedures and reporting requirements are not burdensome.

I would be happy to participate as a host, or to make another visit in the future.

Thanks to all:

I appreciate the time that everyone spent with me – and your candor, your expertise. (Apologies to all for any inaccuracies in my notes.)

John Fullinwider
October 27, 2009