

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Clinical medical librarianship

We read with interest the article titled "The Evolving Role of Clinical Medical Librarians" in the July 1989 issue [1]. The responsibilities described by the authors have been a part of the Clinical Medical Librarianship program at the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) School of Medicine from its inception, and have been well documented in the literature [2-5]. Before the term "end user" entered the popular vocabulary of librarianship, the CMLs at UMKC developed an in-house computerized bibliographic database for students and physicians. Teaching students and physicians to search the database was a routine responsibility of the first CMLs.

Computer literacy is now a prevalent condition among our students and faculty; most arrive with some knowledge and often with their own computers. We have discovered many self-taught end users. Vendors market directly to health care professionals, who seem quite capable of following the directions provided by bibliographic systems and can draw on their own subject vocabularies to formulate search strategies. Certainly we serve as "consultants" and continue to provide searches for clients who either do not have the time or the inclination to do their own.

Considering our long tradition of user education, clinical involvement, and research support, we agree that these are important components of CML programs. However, we are curious about the "enhancement" issue. We have found that CML services can be extended to any number of departments and can include wide ranges of activities. We have also found that increased funding does not necessarily follow the "enhancement" of services. It is possible for

CMLs to assume excessive responsibilities for which there may be no professional or financial reward. In the academic setting, librarians are often expected to conduct research, publish, and participate in committee work. CMLs must have time to pursue these goals if they are to survive. The one crucial component that seems to have been overlooked is supervisory/administrative responsibility. This component is probably the one that removes a position from a cul-de-sac and puts it on a career path. In closing, we note that all three authors of the article have the word "director" in their titles, and none includes the title "Clinical Medical Librarian."

Jeanne M. Sarkis, R.N., M.L.S.  
Clinical Medical Librarian

Ruth M. Shipley, M.S., M.S.L.I.S.  
Clinical Medical Librarian

University of Missouri-Kansas City  
Health Sciences Library  
Kansas City, Missouri 64108

### References

1. HALSTED DD, WARD DH, NEELEY DM. The evolving role of clinical medical librarians. *Bull Med Libr Assoc* 1989 Jul;77(3):299-301.
2. ALGERMISSEN V. Biomedical librarians in a patient care setting at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine. *Bull Med Libr Assoc* 1974 Oct;62(4):354-8.
3. ALGERMISSEN V. UMKC Medical Library: new services for a non-traditional school. *Show-Me Libr* 1976 Jun; 27(9):17-9.
4. FUNK ME. An SDILINE profile oriented to patient care. *Bull Med Libr Assoc* 1978 Apr;66(2):223-7.
5. SARKIS J, HAMBURGER S. The impact of the clinical medical librarian on medical education. *J Med Educ* 1981 Oct;56(10):860-2.

### The *Bulletin* and citation patterns

In reference to your editorial in the April issue, "The *Bulletin*—a Special Interest Journal?" [1], I don't consider the *Bulletin* to be a special interest journal, but then I've been reading it for fifteen years. Any journal in any discipline has a difficulty with its title possibly not appealing to potential readers. Perhaps we need to write more in the "broad field of librarianship" and to cite the *Bulletin* to bring it to others' attention. I believe that Fang's article examining citing patterns of the *Bulletin* [2] unfortunately proves that we do tend to write for ourselves, to ourselves, and cite ourselves, but we shouldn't feel alone in this.

My coauthors and I have been working on a study of citing patterns among authors of health professions education journals. Our preliminary results were presented at the American Educational Research Association conference last year [3]. Additional data are now being analyzed. The article by Fang has a built-in bias. The most frequently cited is always the journal itself. In our study, the next most likely is other journals in the subject discipline being discussed. By choosing to examine a single journal, the overwhelming ranking of the *Bulletin* is only to be expected, and misleading.

Jean E. Crampon, M.S.L.S.  
Head Librarian

Hancock Library of Biology  
and Oceanography  
University of Southern California  
University Park  
Los Angeles, California 90089-0372

### References

1. PIZER IH. The *Bulletin*—a special interest journal? *Bull Med Libr Assoc* 1989 Apr;77(2):223-4.