

## Medical Librarianship At The College of Librarianship, Wales 1988/1989

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**Abstrak:** Penulis laporan ini menceritakan pengalamannya mengikuti Kursus Sarjana Perpustakaan di College of Librarianship, Wales pada sesi 1988/89. Pengalaman dan latihan amali di dua buah perpustakaan pergigian di London juga dihuraikan.

**Abstract:** The author describes the contents and events of a one-year study leave while pursuing the Medical Library course at the College of Librarianship, Wales, during the 1988/89 academic session. Her impressions of two major dental libraries in London are also recorded.

The College of Librarianship Wales (CLW), Aberystwyth, as it was then known, is one of the few library schools which offers medical librarianship as a full-time specialised programme of guided study for the Masters Degree in Librarianship (M. Lib.). The objective of this programme is to study the medical and health care community with special reference to information needs and behaviour, and to identify and analyse the specific problems with health care library and information services. The programme comprises 3 modules, and candidates are assessed by course work and written examinations. The programme is completed and complemented by the preparation and presentation of a dissertation.

For the 1988/1989 academic session, there were four candidates in the medical librarianship programme. Besides myself, the others were from Sierra Leone, Malawi and Papua New Guinea. The weekly tutorials provided excellent opportunities to discuss and share views and common problems that we faced in our respective country and library set-up.

Visits to a number of major medical libraries were made in order to get a first hand observation of how libraries are run in the United Kingdom and the types of services they provide to their users. These include the libraries of the British Medical Association, the Royal Society of Medicine, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine and the Charing Cross and Westminster Medical School (one of the several medical schools of the University of London).

In pursuit of the main objective of my study leave, which is to study the special library and information needs of the dental professional community, arrangements were made for my attachment with two dental libraries - the Institute of Dental Surgery (IDS) and the British Dental Association (BDA) libraries. A total of five weeks were spent working in these libraries. This provided the opportunity not only to participate in the library processes, but also to examine their book-stocks, services and readership.

The Institute of Dental Surgery Library is a post-graduate dental school library, serving the staff and students of the Institute as well as the staff of the Eastman Dental Hospital. Like most academic libraries, services offered include loans, user education, reference enquiries and literature searches. As a research-orientated academic institution, the library attempts to provide prompt access to current periodical medical literature with on-line searching, CD-ROM databases and in-house computerised indexes of materials received by the Library. It is observed that the Medline on CD-ROM is very popular with users as it serves the need for current speedy retrieval of information minus the exorbitant cost of on-line searching.

The British Dental Association is a voluntary association comprised of dentists eligible to practise in the United Kingdom. The BDA Library has the largest dental collection in the country and possibly the best outside the United States. The policy of the library is to acquire every

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worthwhile book on dentistry written in English, including books for the lay reader, and children's books as well as books on topics related to dentistry such as anaesthesia and surgery, and texts on basic sciences such as anatomy and physiology.

Unlike the IDS, the majority of whose members come in to use the library personally, the BDS is largely a postal library since most of its users are not able to visit the library during office hours. Members write or telephone with their requests, and the materials are sent by post. It is also noted that the range of enquiries received by the BDS is more varied than those received by most dental school libraries. As well as clinical enquiries, subjects such as practice management, ethics, surgery design, peer review and dental history are also asked. The general public also call in to check about their dental ancestors from the archival collection maintained by the library.

An unique service provided by the BDS to its members are subject packages on different clinical and non-clinical subjects and contain reprints and photocopies of articles. These subject packages are very popular with readers. They are intended to supplement the book stock, and are

lent out in the same way as books. Their function is to provide background and up to date information on a subject, and are intended for people just starting their research. These subject packages are constantly updated and reviewed. Records of the contents of each package also serve as useful selective subject bibliographies.

Although the BDS has allocated generous funding for the purchase of books and journals, it is still very reluctant to invest in computers for library work. Except for the availability of on-line searching, there are no computers in the library for either house-keeping or in-house indexing. Much is still done manually.

## CONCLUSION

The one year study leave has been most rewarding, both professionally and academically. It was an eye-opener for me since it is the first time that I was exposed to a foreign library and academic environment. It is good to know that our library standards and services are comparable to many British libraries, although there is still a lot that we can learn from the bigger established libraries.