

MONOGRAPHIC SECTION

The role of libraries
during the COVID-19 pandemic

Edited by

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Responding to the pandemic: medical libraries and COVID-19

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The last half year has been a demanding one for all of us in many ways. How have medical libraries fared during the pandemic and the lockdown? Have they been able to continue their work, by which means? Have they even contributed to the fight against the virus, supporting clinicians, or researchers? In this issue we have gathered a few papers describing the impact of the pandemic on medical libraries, and the responses of the libraries to the new circumstances. The issue was compiled on the hoof and without the usual long-term preparation, so we cannot claim to have covered all relevant aspects. But even so a number of articles describing practice in various libraries, a few papers taking national or international viewpoints, and one looking at the patterns of scholarly communication, have come together which we hope, colleagues will find useful.

Ray Phillips opens the issue with an interview with Ian Roberts, the head of the WHO's libraries. While the world looked to the WHO for guidance, scientists and decision-makers at the organization relied on the organization's library for the evidence.

Four papers describe the response of individual medical libraries to the situation, from two countries with different strategies to handle the pandemic. Amanda Damasceno de Souza, Anna Carolina Leite Cota, and Mariana Ribeiro Fernandes report from Minas Gerais University Hospital in Brazil, Jacob Harnesk and Marie-Louise Eriksson from Karlstad University in Sweden, Karina Sjögren from Umeå University, also in Sweden, and Ingrid Andersson Helena Grahm and Anja Vikingson from the medical libraries at three different university hospitals in the Stockholm area. What lessons have been learnt? This is the question that Clare Edwards, Lucy Reid and Sue Lacey Bryant try to answer, writing from the viewpoint of a national information service for healthcare, Health Education England. And, finally, we look beyond libraries, and to scholarly publishing: what has changed under the pressure of the pandemic? Annarita Barbaro, Federica Napolitani Cheyne, and Maria Cristina Barbaro from the Istituto Superiore di Sanità (National Institute of Health) in Rome share their observations with us.

And at last we get a glimpse from at how a makers' space handle the pandemic in Britain, Michael Boyd summons their adventure.

Our thanks go to all authors who have submitted papers at short notice, and despite the pressures of work and pandemic!