**Title of research:**

An investigation into the barriers to and priorities for research development in health

Librarianship.

**Objectives:**

* To identify key barriers to and priorities for research development in health librarianship
* To administrate a national electronic survey to health librarians and information specialists in England, Scotland and Wales.

**Please give a brief justification of your proposed research project:**

The question this study aims to answer is: What are the barriers to and priorities for research development in health librarianship? This question has been given minimal levels of consideration in the professional literature to date and is a question of importance for a number of reasons. There is now a growing literature base that recognises the need for librarians to engage more with research (Powell, Baker et al. 2002; Juznic and Urbanija 2003; Koufogiannakis and Slater 2004; Koufogiannakis and Crumley 2006). Within the current context of health librarianship strategies are needed to engage with this more fully and in order to effectively address the associated issues that relate to improved decision making skills, evidence based practice, and the improvement of patient care. This is particularly pertinent in light of the recent Hill Report (Hill 2008, p35) which specifically recommends that “research to measure the impact of the application of best available evidence in decision making should continue to be pursued vigorously and routinely by health librarians, in partnership with researchers’.

Much of the work health librarians are involved with is directly linked to evidence based health practice, and evidence based medicine and research forms a substantial aspect of this (Eldredge 2000; Hill 2008). Whilst there is a demand on health professionals to justify and base their practice on robust research based evidence, there is little evidence that health librarians are engaging with this in relation to their own professional practice. Largely, their involvement with evidence based practice is linked directly to health practice rather than the practice of librarianship. The lack of evidence based practice in librarianship jeopardises the credibility of health librarians in their involvement with evidence based health practice and it is widely reported that increased engagement with evidence based librarianship amongst the profession is becoming increasingly important. For health librarians to credibly support evidence based health practice / medicine it is arguable that the profession should be able to demonstrate evidence based practice in relation to its own professional practice (Eldredge 2000; Booth and Brice 2003; Grant 2003). This is particularly relevant since the end purpose of health librarianship is directly linked to the improvement of patient care (Hill 2008). For health librarians to take a truly evidence based approach to their professional practice, increased engagement with research activities is necessary. At present however, there is little evidence that health librarians are engaging with research in relation to their own professional practice (Booth 2002; Booth and Brice 2003). Whilst some small pockets of active engagement exist, largely this remains a specialist interest area rather than something that is taken on board profession-wide (Booth 2002). Reluctance to conduct research in relation to health librarianship (rather than health practice) within the profession is widely documented (Booth 2002; Booth 2003). However, with the exception of a generic study (McNicol and Nankivell 2003) which aimed to survey librarians from all subject disciplines and which had poor coverage of health librarians, the reasons behind this have not as yet been fully investigated.

The study by McNicol and Nankivell (2003) identified the LIS research agenda to be poorly organised and lacking in direction. It is expected that in carrying out this study a deeper understanding of the reluctance amongst health librarians to engage in research and other related issues they perceive create barriers to their engagement with research activity will be gained. The study will also aim to investigate what they feel are the priorities for research development to aid this current situation. It is anticipated that from the data collected, a clearer and deeper understanding of the issues can be acquired. This will inform the development of a framework which will provide clarity and direction for the profession. Furthermore, it will make recommendations as to how best research development can be taken forward in the profession based on sound evidence derived from the population to which it concerns. The use of a large scale electronic web based survey method will help to acquire a valid data set which is expected to make a substantial and effective contribution to answering the research question. The results and recommendations will be widely disseminated through a variety of appropriate channels.

References

Booth, A. (2002). "Mirage or reality." Health information and libraries journal 19(2): 56-58.

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Booth, A. and A. Brice (2003). "Clear-cut?: facilitating health librarians to use information research in practice." Health information and libraries journal 20(S1): 45-52.

Eldredge, J. D. (2000). "Evidence-based librarianship: an overview." Bulletin of the Medical Library Association 88(4): 289-302.

Grant, M. L. (2003). "Journal clubs for continued professional development." Health information and libraries journal 20(1): 72-78.

Hill, P. (2008). Report of a national review of NHS library services in England: from knowledge to health in the 21st century. Newcastle, Institute of Health and Society.

Juznic, P. and J. Urbanija (2003). "Developing research skills in library and information studies." Library Management 274(6/7): 324-331.

Koufogiannakis, D. and E. Crumley (2006). "Research in librarianship: issues to consider." Library Hi Tech 24(3): 324-340.

Koufogiannakis, D. and L. Slater (2004). "A content analysis of librarianship research." Journal of Information Science 30(3): 227-239.

McNicol, S. and C. Nankivell (2003). The LIS research landscape: a review and prognosis, Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals.

Powell, R. R., L. M. Baker, et al. (2002). "Library and information science practitioners and research." Library and Information Science Research 24(1): 49-72.

**Please outline the proposed sample group, including any specific criteria:**

The sample group will aim to include representation from eight identified areas of health librarianship:

Senior strategic health librarians

Clinical librarians

Health library service managers

Senior information strategy managers

Academic health librarians

Independent health librarians

Research librarians

Academics

The qualifying criteria required for inclusion in the survey will be health librarians and information specialists working in the above context areas, and who hold a professional LIS qualification (ie. degree level or above).

**Describe how the proposed sample group will be formulated:**

The study will aim to cover a wide sample group formulated from individuals working in the context areas identified above. Potential participants will be identified from LIS related JISCmail groups, professional directories, university LIS departments, special interest and professional groups, and cascades through senior managers and group Chairs.

**Indicate clearly what the involvement of the sample group will be in the research process:**

The involvement of the sample group in the study will extend to the completion of an electronic survey which will be sent via email.

**Specify how the consent of participants will be obtained. Please include within this a description of any information with which you intend to provide the subjects:**

Consent will be gained from respondents immediately before participants complete the survey. An invitation email will be sent out to potential participants containing details about the study and a link to the survey. Consent will be obtained from respondents through the inclusion of a statement of consent which will be embedded at the beginning of the survey before the respondent commences with completion of their response. Upon accessing the survey link, respondents will be directed to read the statement of consent and offered the option to consent to their involvement in the study or not. Provided the participant opts to consent to their participation, the survey will then open for them to complete. From the time of sending out the invitation to participate and link to the survey, potential respondents will be given six weeks in which to complete the survey (with a reminder being sent out at three weeks), if they decide to do so after having read the statement of consent.

**Indicate any potential risks to subjects and how you propose to minimise these:**

Participation in this survey presents no potential risks to the participants. Participants and their organisations will not be named in subsequent write ups and material submitted for publication.

**Describe the procedures you intend to follow in order to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the subjects:**

The email addresses from which responses will be sent will be automatically removed by the survey software used (SurveyMonkey). The identity of respondents will therefore not be known to the researchers at the survey return stage. Participants and their organisations will not be named in subsequent write ups and material submitted for publication.

**RESEARCH CONSENT FORM**

Title of study

An investigation into the barriers to and priorities for research development in health librarianship

**Please read and complete this form carefully. If you are willing to participate in this study, ring the appropriate responses and sign and date the declaration at the end. If you do not understand anything and would like more information, please ask.**

I have had the research satisfactorily explained to me in written form by the researcher.
**YES / NO**

I understand that the research will involve:

* The completion of an electronic survey on the topic of research development issues in health librarianship.

**YES / NO**

I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time without having to give an explanation.
**YES / NO**

I understand that all information about me will be treated in strict confidence and that I will not be named in any written work arising from this study
**YES / NO**

I understand that any data collected will be used solely for research purposes and will be erased on completion of your research.
**YES / NO**

I understand that the data will only be discussed within the research team

**YES / NO**

I understand that survey participants and their respective organisations will not be named in subsequent write ups and material submitted for publication

**YES / NO**

I freely give my consent to participate in this research study and have been given a copy of this form for my own information.

**Signature: ………………………………………………………**

**Name (capital letters)…………………………………………..**

**Date: ……………………………………………………………**

**Contact details: (include address, email and telephone number)
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Thank you for your interest in the study.