

## **EMBEDDING STANDARDS FOR MEDICAL AND HEALTH LIBRARIES IN THE PHILIPPINES: IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

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### **Abstract**

*Medical Librarianship is a service profession and is one of the most diverse non-traditional career paths available. It is an integral part of the health care team with direct impact on health and patient care quality. The focus of medical librarians is to put emphasis on the use of evidence based research and practice since most of them are applied where health information is needed. The standards for medical librarianship were already a subject of interest before 1950's. The purpose of this study is to monitor the preparedness of medical and health libraries in the Philippines prior to the approval of the standards by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC). Specifically, it sought to answer the following: (1) What types of medical and health libraries are following the 2007 standards; (2) Determine the current practices of medical and health libraries/librarians in reference to the 2013 revised standards; (3) How prepared are these libraries in reference to the 2013 revised library standards; and (4) Identify and evaluate the challenges and opportunities encountered by medical and health libraries/librarians. This study utilized the descriptive research design conducted to thirty-seven (37) Medical and Health Librarians Association of the Philippines (MAHLAP) member libraries using purposive sampling in anticipation of the approval of the draft "Philippine National Standards for Special Libraries". The results*

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*showed that majority of the libraries are special academic libraries that are moderately prepared prior to the approval of the 2013 revised standards for Special Libraries. This study identified the eight (8) challenges libraries have encountered.*

**Keywords:** medical and health libraries, library standards, library challenges, library evaluation

## **Introduction**

Medical librarianship is a service profession and is one of the most diverse non-traditional career paths available, because it subsumes such a broad range of disciplines and types of work within those disciplines. Medical librarianship can translate into a public-library consumer health specialization, a position in any number of government agencies, work in an academic setting, international outreach, and non-profit and association opportunities. Medical librarians help health occupation workers to provide quality care to patients by helping them to find the right information and to provide information access to health care industries. They are an integral part of the health care team with direct impact on health and patient care quality by assisting physicians, allied health professionals, and other members in the health care sector to stay updated in the latest developments in specialty care. The focus of medical librarians is to put emphasis on the use of evidence based research and practice since they are employed where health information is needed. Employment settings include colleges, universities, hospitals, academic health centers, clinics, professional schools, consumer health libraries, research centers, foundations, biotechnology centers, insurance companies, medical equipment manufacturers, pharmaceutical companies, publishers and local government agencies (Bandy et al., 2008). Evaluation and standards are complementary since it serves as a yardstick for the process. Standards do not attempt to dictate a single manner in which services must be provided throughout a system. Rather, they provide a standard for the amount and nature of services and staffing that must be available for the system as a whole (Obille, 2007). It is important and necessary to have sets of standards to serve as guides toward the realization of ideals of the librarians and information professionals, and specifically since libraries in the country belongs in a complex technological world today. Bringing order to chaos and achieving collaboration both depend on shared understanding of standards. Library service has long depended on shared standards. (Arcelo, 2003).

The Medical and Health Librarians Association of the Philippines (MAHLAP) was officially created in 1987 as a national association for Philippine medical and health librarians. Its objectives are to: (a) encourage and promote the collection, organization and dissemination of medical and health information and library services; (b) encourage and cultivate library cooperation; (c) enhance the professional welfare of its members; and (d) uphold dignity and ethics of medical and health libraries

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and librarians. As part of the discussions made during the 25th founding anniversary of MAHLAP in 2012, the then incumbent Board of Directors and Officers have started the proposed mission and vision with the aim to guide the organization to achieve further its objectives. The approval of the mission and vision should be endorsed by the MAHLAP Board of Directors on its next General Assembly on 2016. The proposed vision is to become the leading association that would be able to guide medical/health libraries and librarians in the Philippines obtain their goal of excellence in the provision of health information services. The proposed mission is to contribute and support the development of medical/health libraries and librarians in the Philippines to enable them to meet the challenges in the delivery of health information and services in accordance to local and global standards.

The Medical Library Association (MLA) *Standards for Hospital Libraries* have undergone two revisions since 2002. It was revised in 2005 and 2007. The *Standards for Hospital Libraries* served “as a guide for hospital administrators, librarians, and accrediting bodies to ensure that hospitals have the resources and services to effectively meet their needs for knowledge-based information (KBI)” (Bandy et al., 2008). The revisions made in 2005 and 2007 reflect the changes in the medical and health care field. One significant entry of the 2005 version was the addition of a standard related to technological development. The Hospital Internet Access Task Force of the National Network of Libraries of Medicine was the main proponent of this additional standard. In 2007, the IT resources were added to support the library’s mission of providing knowledge-based information resources and services. The standards for medical librarianship were already talked of the town before 1950’s (Annan, 1998). The Medical Library Association issued an editorial in its April 1946 issue discussing the importance of having a unified code of standards for medical librarians (Standards for medical librarianship, 1946). The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) has Guidelines for Australian Special Libraries which includes management, staffing, financing, resource management and access, services, and work environment (ALIA, 2010). The European Association for Health Information and Libraries (EAHIL) does have a code of ethics for EAHIL members. In the Philippines, there are pending standards for special libraries revised in 2013 (Nera, Ramos, & Ananoria, 2013). The original standards published in 2007 needs to be updated to meet the demands of the current workflow and to keep up with the trends in the practice of librarianship.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to monitor the preparedness of medical and health libraries in the Philippines prior the approval of the standards by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC). Specifically, it sought to answer the following: (1) What types of medical and health libraries are following the 2007 standards; (2) Determine the current practices of medical and health libraries/librarians in reference to the 2013 revised standards; (3) How prepared are these libraries in reference to the 2013 revised library standards; and (4) Identify and evaluate the challenges and opportunities encountered by medical and health libraries/librarians.

## Methodology

This study utilized the descriptive research design. According to Cristobal, Jr. (2013) the descriptive type research endeavors to describe systematically, factually, accurately and objectively a situation, problem or phenomenon. The data are summarized to reveal overall patterns and to make them easily manageable. Through this research design, this study determined the types of libraries; its preparedness, current practices and the challenges and opportunities encountered by medical and health libraries/librarians. As of 2014, there are forty-five (45) MAHLAP member libraries. This study was only conducted to thirty-seven (37) MAHLAP member libraries using purposive sampling in anticipation of the approval of the proposed draft to “Philippine National Standards for Special Libraries”. Only thirty-two (32) or 86 percent of 37 respondents replied and answered the survey forms. Questionnaires and guided interviews were considered as the most appropriate data-gathering instrument for this research study. Statistical tools used for the quantitative analysis of this study were frequency, percentage and ranking and the Likert Scale. These tools were utilized to determine the preparedness, current practices, types of medical libraries and challenges and opportunities encountered by the librarians.

## Results

### Objectives / Administration of Libraries

The final draft matrix on *Standards for Philippine Libraries* prepared by the Board for Librarians (BFL) and the PRC indicated the following types of libraries in the Philippines: school library and media centers, academic libraries, special libraries and public libraries. Medical and health libraries are considered to be in the special library category. Special libraries were established and supported by private and government agencies, corporations, research institutions, international organizations. These libraries aim to collect, manage, preserve and provide information access to knowledge resources dealing in special subjects and focused information services to its clientele.

Majority of the libraries are special academic libraries (75%), special government libraries (16%), research libraries (3%) and corporate libraries (6%). These libraries are located in the different parts of the Philippines: 62% at the National Capital Region, 19% in Luzon, 3% in Visayas and 16% in Mindanao. Eighty-four percent (84%) of these libraries have a written mission and vision while 16% do not have a mission and vision statement. The 16% of the libraries that do not have a mission and vision statement have indicated plans of creating one but will need the support of their institutions or organization to make it official. 100% of medical and health libraries in the Philippines are managed by full-time librarians. For purpose of conformity, the standards should also identify the standard librarian-client ratio in reference to the types of libraries (Table 1):

Table 1

### *Libraries vs Librarian-Client Ratio*

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Special academic and school libraries (Ratio prescribed by the Board for Librarians Standard for Academic and School Libraries)	1 licensed librarian per 500 students Additional librarian for every increase of 1000 students 1 paraprofessional to assist the librarian
Special government libraries (Personnel requirements identified by government institutions or this is based from number of librarians on Full Time Equivalents or FTEs)	1 full time librarian for every 500 FTEs 1 paraprofessional to assist the librarian
Research library	1 full time librarian for every 50 FTEs 1 paraprofessional to assist the librarian
Corporate libraries	1 full time librarian for every 100 FTEs 1 paraprofessional to assist the librarian

### Human Resources

As to the number of library staff employed, 31% of the libraries hired three to four (3 to 4) staff, 53% (1 to 2 staff) and 16% (3 to 4 staff). The libraries have 100% professional or licensed librarians.

### Collection Management and Organization

The collection of the libraries regardless of format should reflect the information needs of the community and shall be made available to them and other stakeholders. Therefore, it is recommended that the collection development policy should be well written and updated. Ninety-four percent (94%) of the libraries indicated have a collection development policy and collects materials such as books, periodicals and non-print collection.

Table 2

#### *Libraries with Collection Development Policy (CDP)*

		<b>Percentage (%)</b>
YES	30	94.00
NO	2	6.00
Total	32	100

Collection maintenance practices are integrated in the collection development policy and should address issues that is relevant to inventory, care of the collection, online database subscription renewal, evaluation, preservation, disaster risk management, intellectual property and copyright, resource

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sharing, document delivery service, inter-library loan and weeding. Table 3 shows the percentage of libraries that have collection maintenance practices. One hundred percent (100%) of the respondent libraries confirmed that they have circulation services followed by OPAC, digital, and non-print materials. Marketing and photocopying area also part of their readers services. Infotext and email blast were other reader services rendered by respondent libraries.

Table 3

*Collection Maintenance Practices*

	%	Rank
Circulation services	100	1
Digital	84.37	5
Non-print material	84.37	5
Document delivery	81.25	8
OPAC	96.87	2
Information literacy training	53.12	10
Marketing	84.37	5
Photocopying	84.37	5
Scanning	50	11
Printing	71.87	9
Others		
Infotext	84.37	5
Email Blast	12.5	12

Physical Facilities

The draft standards stated that the librarian should be consulted in planning the location, design and other specific physical details of the library. The library building should conform to the provisions of Presidential Decree 1096 otherwise known as the National Building Code of the Philippines and pertinent laws related to occupational safety and health. There must be compliance to ventilation, light, furniture, space and the location of the library which should be conveniently accessible to the staff and the library clientele. Safety and security measures should also be present. Based from the respondents answers (Table 4), 88% of librarians are involved in the planning the location and design of their library while 13% are not involved. Majority (72%) of the librarians do not know if their library building conforms to the National Building code of the Philippines. However, 25% believed that they conformed. Eighty-one percent (81%) confirmed that their library is accessible to staff and the library clientele. Libraries were asked if they have a collection storage area, staff work station, separate office

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for the head librarian, and discussion rooms. One hundred percent (100%) of the libraries are well ventilated but only 31 % affirmed that the ventilation is in accordance with the standards set by the National Building Code of the Philippines. 12% of the libraries have a special storage or climate controlled room for sensitive materials such as tapes, films, discs, equipment, etc. while 88% or majority of libraries do not have this facility. 100% of the libraries have public computer terminals. 59% of those libraries have provided access to printers and 31% to scanners. Thirty-four percent (34%) have appropriate library furniture and equipment to serve their clientele. Eighty-one percent (81%) have security measures in place that includes CCTV cameras (41%) and security guards (47%). Some libraries still have control desk with librarians (59%) that also assist in overseeing safety measures.

Table 4

*Physical Facilities, Adequate Space and Security Measures*

	N	%
<b>Physical Facilities</b>		
Involve in planning & design	28	88
Conforms to National Bldg.code	8	25
Library easily accessible	26	81.25
<b>Adequate space</b>		
Collection storage	13	40.62
Work station of the staff	30	93.75
Head librarian's office	23	71.87
Discussion rooms	15	46.87
Well ventilated	32	100
Follows standard of Nat'l Bldg.code	10	32.25
Climate controlled room	4	12.5
Public computer terminals	32	100
With printers	19	59.37
Access to scanner	10	31.25
Library furniture & equipment	11	34.37
Security measures	26	81.25
CCTV Camera	13	40.62
Security guards	15	46.87
Control desk with librarian	19	59.38

Information Technology Services

The library should utilize information and communication technologies (ICT) to improve its resources and services. The scenario is for all libraries to have an integrated library system compliant to

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international standards on communication formats (MARC 21, Dublin Core, NIZO, etc.) and there is a joint coordination between libraries and the IT department. Results showed that eighty-four percent (84%) of the libraries have an integrated library system, 97% have internet connection, 78% have sufficient computers for their library clientele and 62% have digitization projects. Most libraries (82%) provide access to documents that are from government funded researches and grants. 100% of the libraries maintain and practice the intellectual property rights. Ninety-one percent (91%) coordinated the management of its equipment and databases with the IT department.

### Budget

The head librarian should be responsible for the preparation and management of the finances of the library. It is ideal that the library should have sufficient budget that is adequate to sustain and improve resources and services. 84% of libraries have librarians that are responsible for budget planning. Sixty-two percent (62%) answered that they do not have sufficient budget to sustain and improve library resources.

### Collaboration

The collaboration among libraries includes activities that will maximize resources and services. It also includes the practice of networking among libraries and librarians such as membership to local and international organizations and professional associations. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of these libraries are members of a consortium that practice resource sharing. Seven of these consortiums are covered by agreements. The following consortiums were mentioned by the respondents: Aurora Boulevard Consortium (ABC), Librarylink, PAARLNet, NOCEI, SciNet, NutriNet, DOH Libraries Network, South Manila Education Consortium (SMEC), Inter Institutional Consortium of Libraries, the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP), HERDIN Neon, and the Academic Libraries Book Acquisition Systems Association, Inc. (ALBASA).

The level of preparedness of the respondent libraries (Table 5) on the following areas: objectives, administration, services, physical facilities, IT-based services, budget and collaboration was interpreted as Moderately Prepared (MP). The areas covering human resources and collection management got the verbal interpretation of Low Prepared (LP). Generally, in terms of preparedness prior to the approval of the revised special libraries standards, it was interpreted as Moderately Prepared (MP) with an average weighted mean of 3.21.

Table 5

### *Level of Preparedness to 2013 Library Standards*

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Areas	WM	V. I.
Objectives	3.49	MP
Administration	3.42	MP
Human Resources	2.48	LP
Collection Management	2.50	LP
Services	3.36	MP
Physical Facilities	3.31	MP
IT-Based Services	3.48	MP
Budget	3.45	MP
Collaboration	3.46	MP
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.21</b>	<b>MP</b>

### Challenges encountered by Medical and Health Libraries/Librarians

A library is a valuable institution for academic purposes as long as pen has been put to paper. However, the library and its role in academic research are no doubt going through a clear transformation in this 21st century. Libraries have long been endless sources of information for students. However, the face of libraries is dynamically changing as content is moving towards a digital platform and internet access is becoming more of a human necessity than a privilege. The present innovative and creative ways for libraries to remain relevant to students and researchers also carries its fair share of challenges. Based from the respondent's answers to this study, some of the challenges encountered by medical and health librarians / libraries are:

1. *Lack of support from the management for libraries to have its own mission/ vision statement.* Majority of the libraries in the Philippines follow the vision/mission statement set up by their schools, institutions and organizations. Not all libraries have a separate vision/mission statements that would identify the library uniquely within the organization and to provide the librarians/libraries a more appropriate sense of direction that should focus on advancing the goals of the organization it serves and prioritizes the fulfilment of staff/clientele information needs.
2. *Inadequate number of licensed librarian in terms of librarian-client ratio.* The library should have a sufficient number and variety of personnel in order to develop, organize and maintain the collections and provide adequate information and reference services necessary to meet user's needs. Understaffed libraries have the tendency to be more complacent that not only affects the quality of service but also have lower staff morale.
3. *Lack of knowledge and training in information literacy.* Technology continues to drive much of the futuristic thinking within academic libraries. The library should utilize available Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to improve resources and services. Librarians need to be empowered by the new skills and information before

going to empower their patrons. So there must not be a gap between librarian's professional/technological knowledge and their society's informational need.

4. *Lack of special storage/climate controlled room for sensitive materials and special collections.* Librarians/libraries need to provide, develop and maintain institutional repositories to preserve the intellectual heritage of the parent organization. Lack of these facilities may eventually affect the organization or institution's archival collection.
5. *Inadequate management of knowledge and skills to develop digitization projects for digital collections.* As digital collections mature, concerns grow about the general lack of long-term planning for their preservation. Inadequate knowledge of librarians/libraries leads for not establishing architecture, policy, or standards for creating, accessing, and preserving digital content.
6. *Shortage of computers and computer skills among librarians.* The library should have internet connections with optimum speed, performance, and bandwidth for quick access to web-based resources and services. Preferably, a dedicated connection for the library shall be provided. There shall be enough computers to serve the daily average number of library users.
7. *Insufficient budget/lack of financial support from the government and /or management.* The head librarian should be responsible for preparing and managing the library finances. Libraries should have sufficient budget that would be adequate to sustain and improve resources and services. However, because of budget cuts in government managed libraries, and other special libraries, the quality of providing updated, adequate and relevant information is deteriorating including the improvement of the library physical facility.
8. *Not all consortiums are covered with Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).* The library should also engage in proactive local and international collaborative activities to maximize its resources and services but it is also subjected to the existing policies of institutions, government rules and regulations. The signing of the MOA will not only legalize the partnership but also provides a timeline for resource planning and implementation.

## Conclusions

This study utilized the revised standards of 2013 to monitor and prepare medical and health libraries in the Philippines in anticipation that these standards shall be approved by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC). Medical and health libraries must therefore follow and comply with the standards set up and approved in the Philippine National Standards for Special Libraries. A more in-depth research could be done after the approval and implementation of the said standards.

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were formulated:

1. The special academic type of libraries is still following the 2007 standards. Majority also of

these libraries have a written vision/mission statement, a collection development policy and managed by full time librarians that are involved in planning the location and design of the library.

2. Majority of libraries surveyed are in compliance with the defined standards for readers and technical services, accessible to the staff and library clientele and well ventilated. Only a few affirmed that the ventilation is in accordance with the standards set by the National Building Code of the Philippines.
3. Majority of the libraries have security measures in place, utilized information and communication technologies (ICT) to improve its resources and services, with integrated library system, internet connection, and sufficient computers.
4. One hundred percent (100%) of librarians assigned in medical and health libraries uphold the intellectual property rights.
5. Majority of the libraries are well-coordinated in the management of its equipment and databases and work with its organization/institution IT personnel/department.
6. The level of preparedness of Philippine medical and health libraries in compliance to the draft standards vis-à-vis the areas identified (objectives, administration, human resources, collection management, services, physical facilities, information technology, budget and collaboration) were interpreted as Moderately Prepared (MP) with a weighted average mean of 3.21.
7. There are less licensed librarians, insufficient budget, low digitization projects, inadequate collection, the lack of special storage/climate room for sensitive materials, a need for information literacy training, shortage of needed library equipment (printers, scanners) and informal agreements for consortium.
8. Medical and health libraries/librarians identified eight (8) challenges they have encountered in the practice of their profession and the impediments to achieve excellence in library services.
9. If medical and health libraries/librarians strictly follow the prescribed standards, then it will reflect in the daily operations of the library. These standards will measure the over-all performance of the library, from human resource to physical facilities, collection development among others. Positive results will show if the standards are properly applied.

### **Recommendations**

1. The medical and health libraries must comply with the standards set for Special Libraries in the Philippines as soon as it is formally approved.
2. The medical and health libraries should have a clear mission/vision statement that defines its unique purpose and service in the organization or institution it serves.
3. There should be more support and funds for training and procurement in information technology (IT) and digitization for better resources and services.
4. The government/organizations with libraries should be aware with the need to support the

improvement of their libraries in the areas of human resources, administration, collection development, physical facilities, etc.

5. The ratio of libraries vs librarian-client ratio should be in compliance with the number of library users in accordance to the proposed standards in order to deliver a more satisfactory service and to meet the needs of the users.
6. Libraries should have more licensed librarians that are efficient to manage the libraries and its support staff.
7. Future researchers may conduct a similar study with a larger sample size and other independent variables that are not covered in the present study.

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### Appendix

Likert Scale for preparedness:

Numerical	Descriptive Value	V.I.
3.51-4.00	Highly Prepared	HP
2.51-3.50	Moderately Prepared	MP
1.51-2.50	Low Prepared	LP
1.00-1.50	Unprepared	UP

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