

# *Journal of the Medical Library Association*

## Author Guidelines

[Download](#) (PDF)

- [Journal of the Medical Library Association \(JMLA\) Scope and Background](#)
- [JMLA Submission Categories and Format Guidelines](#)
  - [Research Papers](#)
  - [Other JMLA Submission Categories](#)
- [Writing Guidelines and Editorial Style](#)
  - [Reference style](#)
  - [Supplemental material](#)
  - [Data retention](#)
  - [Acknowledgments](#)
  - [Illustrations](#)
  - [Submission Process](#)
  - [Peer-Review Evaluation](#)
  - [Copyright and Disclosure Agreement](#)
- [Proofs](#)
- [References](#)
- [Contacts](#)

## *Journal of the Medical Library Association (JMLA) Scope and Background*

The *Journal of the Medical Library Association (JMLA)* is an international, peer-reviewed specialty journal that aims to advance the practice and research knowledgebase of health sciences librarianship. The *JMLA* welcomes the submission of any original manuscript that seeks to improve the practice of health sciences librarianship, to improve provision of information in health or biological sciences, or to articulate important developments and history of the profession and related fields. The *JMLA* also welcomes manuscripts that extend the knowledgebase through research in the organization, delivery, use, and impact of information on health care, biomedical research, and health professionals' education.

Manuscripts are reviewed for possible publication with the understanding that they have not been published, submitted, or accepted for publication elsewhere. General availability or mass distribution in an online format is considered publication. Presentation of a paper at a conference or inclusion of a preliminary report in published proceedings is not considered to be prior publication, provided that the submitted manuscript is substantially more complete than an initial report and any duplicative material is kept to a minimum. Specific cases should be referred to the editor.

Material published in the quarterly print journal also appears online on the Medical Library Association website and through the National Library of Medicine's (NLM's) PMC digital archive. Preprints of articles published in the *JMLA* are available, to MLA members only, on the *JMLA* website two months prior to the print publication.

## ***JMLA* Submission Categories and Format Guidelines**

If authors are not certain about the most appropriate category for their manuscripts, they are urged to contact the editor for assistance.

### **Research Papers**

*Note:* For all research papers, the introduction should be concise without subheadings; provide just enough background information so that readers understand the purpose of your study. There is no separate literature review section. Avoid redundancy between the text and information shown in figures and tables; instead, talk about the values in the figures and tables. Conclusions should be a part of the discussion, but there are no separate conclusions or summary sections.

**Papers** use research designs that allow the results to be generalized to a larger population. They present results that can be considered definitive. Papers are peer-reviewed.

Examples:

- randomized controlled trials
- case-control studies
- systematic reviews and meta-analyses

Paper Submission Requirements:

- Structured abstract (Objective, Methods, Results, Conclusions): no more than 300 words
- Manuscript format: Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion
- Manuscript length: no more than 5,000 words
- Figures and tables: no more than 6 in print
- Keywords: 3–10 keywords representing the main content of the article
- Font: double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 point

**Surveys and Studies** report on interesting and important findings that are suggestive rather than definitive and may produce non-generalizable results. Surveys and studies are peer-reviewed.

Examples:

- surveys with a reasonable response rate
- intervention studies with no control group or other limitations
- scoping reviews
- qualitative research that follows rigorous methodology

### Survey and Studies Submission Requirements:

- Structured abstract (Objective, Methods, Results, Conclusions): no more than 300 words
- Manuscript format: Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion
- Manuscript length: 3,000–4,000 words
- Figures and tables: no more than 6 in print
- Keywords: 3–10 keywords representing the main content of the article
- Font: double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 point

**Research Communications** report on a narrower topic or a topic presented at a national or regional meeting or conference. Research communications are peer-reviewed.

### Examples:

- preliminary findings
- feasibility studies
- tests of concept

### Research Communication Submission Requirements:

- Structured abstract (Objective, Methods, Results, Conclusions): no more than 250 words
- Manuscript format: Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion
- Manuscript length: 1,000–2,500 words
- Figures and tables: no more than 3 in print
- Keywords: 3–10 keywords representing the main content of the article
- Font: double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 point

## Other *JMLA* Submission Categories

**Case Studies** describe an improvement in services or an innovative resolution to a problem or issue that advances health sciences librarianship. Case studies show evidence of the success or failure of the intervention along with a discussion of sustainability. Strong case studies report objective data or other evaluative information. Case studies are peer-reviewed.

### Case Studies Submission Requirements:

- Structured abstract (Background, Case Presentation, Conclusions): no more than 200 words
- Manuscript format: Background, Study Purpose, Case Presentation, and Discussion
- Manuscript length: 1,000–2,500 words
- Figures and tables: no more than 2 in print
- Keywords: 3–10 keywords representing the main content of the article
- Font: double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 point

*Note:* For case studies, the background should be concise without subheadings. There is no separate literature review section. Avoid redundancy between the text and information shown in

figures and tables; instead, talk about the values in the figures and tables. Conclusions should be a part of the discussion, but there are no separate conclusions or summary sections.

**Commentaries** present viewpoints on timely topics of interest to health sciences librarians and information specialists. This category allows freedom of expression and encourages constructive discussion. Commentaries undergo editorial review.

Commentary Submission Requirements:

- Abstract: none
- Manuscript length: 1,000–2,500 words
- Figures and tables: no more than 1 in print
- Font: double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 point

**Letters to the Editor** comment on recent *JMLA* publications. Letters need to be respectful in tone. Letters are sent to the lead author of the paper to invite commentary if the author desires. Letters and authors' responses (if provided) are published together.

Letter to the Editor Submission Requirements:

- Length: no more than 300–500 words
- References: no more than 5
- Font: double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 point

**Special Papers** are usually solicited by the editor-in-chief or a section editor. They include articles for special focus issues and feature columns (e.g., MLA proceedings, Janet Doe Lecture, MLA president's page, history matters, obituaries, virtual projects, and book and resource reviews).

## Writing Guidelines and Editorial Style

The style conventions used by the *JMLA* conform to the “Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals” (also known as “Vancouver Style”), prepared by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors [1]. Other authoritative sources that guide the editorial process include the *Medical Library Association (MLA) Style Manual* [2], *Citing Medicine: The NLM Style Guide for Authors, Editors, and Publishers, 2nd edition* [3], the latest edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* [4] for punctuation and form and other areas in which “Uniform Requirements” is silent, and the latest edition of *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* [5] for spelling.

Consult the MLA Research Section's [structured abstract guidelines](#) for more information on abstract requirements.

### Reference style

The [MLA Style Manual](#) provides examples of the *JMLA* reference style. Consult *Citing Medicine: The NLM Style Guide for Authors, Editors, and Publishers, 2nd edition*, for further information and examples.

## **Supplemental material**

Extensive data tables, survey instruments, and appendixes should be submitted as supplemental material. Note that papers reporting the results of a survey *must* include a copy of the survey instrument, unless it has been published elsewhere.

## **Data retention**

Data analyzed for material accepted for publication in the *JMLA*, along with any instructions or coding systems required to interpret them, should be retained for at least five years by the first author or his/her designee, so that they may be provided, whenever possible, in response to inquiries from interested readers. Authors who have data with longitudinal interest, for example a survey that someone might wish to repeat at a future date to track changes in user behavior, are encouraged to retain their raw data for at least ten years. Authors should make provisions for adequate backup of their data, in print or digital form, as well as for retaining access to the data should they move to another institution. All material published in the *JMLA* is archived and publicly available on PMC. To facilitate long-term data retention, *JMLA* authors have the option to have data files and accompanying materials stored on PMC as well and linked from their articles. Authors are responsible for ensuring that submitted data sets comply with any local rules regarding data distribution, such as those imposed by local institutional review boards.

## **Acknowledgments**

Personal acknowledgments may be placed at the end of the text, ahead of the references.

## **Illustrations**

**Images, charts, and graphs** should be in black and white for the print issue; they can be color for online only supplemental files. Consecutively numbered, brief, descriptive captions (e.g., “Figure 1 Distribution of test scores”) should on separate pages at the end of the manuscript.

Charts and graphs should be submitted in the program whereby they were created, such as Microsoft Excel, to be processed for printing.

Resolution for photographs or digital images should be at a minimum of 300 dots per inch (dpi). Please note that the *JMLA* does not accept screenshots for the print version, as nearly all images that are downloaded from the Internet will not have sufficient resolution for the printing process. More [details about requirements for illustrations](#) can be found online.

**Tables** should appear on separate numbered sheets at the end of the manuscript. Each table must be numbered consecutively and headed by a brief, descriptive title that includes the number of

the table (e.g., “Table 1 Number of study participants”). Use your word processor’s table commands.

**Charts and graphs** should print on separate pages, numbered consecutively, and headed by a brief descriptive title that includes the number of the figure (e.g., “Figure 1 Distribution of test scores”).

## **Submission Process**

All manuscripts must be submitted through the [JMLA electronic submission system](#). Authors are encouraged to consult the [Key Information Checklist](#) prior to submission to be sure that all information required for peer review has been included in their submission. Papers missing key information will be returned to the authors for revision.

The online submission system will prompt you for:

1. Article type. You may select from:
  - a. Paper
  - b. Surveys and studies
  - c. Research communication
  - d. Case study
  - e. Editorial
  - f. Obituary
  - g. Commentary
  - h. Letter to the editor
  - i. Feature
2. Full title and subtitle (if any) of the article
3. Coauthors names, addresses, and email addresses
4. Abstract (where applicable)
5. Information on any conflict of interest, prior publication, and institutional review board approval
6. Files to upload
7. Title page, including full author information and title page footnotes
8. Manuscript including text, references, acknowledgements, and tables
9. Figures, charts, graphs, and other illustrations, if any
10. Supplemental material (appendixes, survey instruments, etc.) if any; studies reporting the results of a survey must provide the survey instrument unless it has been published elsewhere
11. Cover letter (optional)

If you exit the system before completing the submission, your submission will be saved automatically. You may return to finish the submission (or remove it should you wish) at a future time. Once you have completed the submission process, you will be asked to review a PDF of

your submission and will have the opportunity to revise it if needed before submitting it to the editor.

## **Peer-Review Evaluation**

The *JMLA* uses a double-blind peer-review process, in which reviewers do not know the identity of the author and the identity of manuscript reviewers is not revealed to the author. The *JMLA* aims to complete the review process and provide feedback to authors within eight weeks of submission.

## **Copyright and Disclosure Agreement**

If a manuscript is accepted for publication, the *JMLA* will require the author and all coauthors to submit a signed copy (or individual copies) of the *JMLA* copyright license agreement and disclosure forms. It is the responsibility of the first author to ensure that all coauthors sign copyright and disclosure forms.

All persons designated as authors should have participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for the content. The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors provides [guidelines for determining authorship](#).

Download the [JMLA copyright license agreement and disclosure form](#).

## **Proofs**

Page proofs are provided to authors for correction of serious errors; minor alterations cannot be made at this stage.

## **References**

1. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals: writing and editing for biomedical publication [Internet]. The Committee; 2009 [cited 5 Jan 2011]. <<http://www.icmje.org>>.
2. Medical Library Association. MLA style manual [Internet]. Chicago, IL: The Association [cited 1 Sep 2011]. <<http://www.mlanet.org/page/style-manual>>.
3. Patrias K. Citing medicine: the NLM style guide for authors, editors, and publishers [Internet]. 2nd ed. Wendling DL, technical ed. Bethesda (MD): National Library of Medicine (US); 2007 [cited 22 Nov 2010]. <<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/citingmedicine/>>.
4. The Chicago manual of style. 16th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press; 2010.
5. Merriam Webster's collegiate dictionary. 11th ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster; 2003.

## **Contacts**

Email questions about *JMLA* content to [Katherine Gould Akers](#).

Send books or resources for review in the *JMLA* to:

*JMLA* Review Editor, Medical Library Association, 65 East Wacker Place, Suite 1900, Chicago, IL 60601-7246; 312.419.9094; fax, 312.419.8950