

## **INFORMATIONIST ACTION AGENDA WE WANT YOUR OPINION!**

At the September 2002 Board meeting, the MLA Board of Directors accepted the following action agenda drafted by the Informationist Task Force, chaired by Jean Shipman, AHIP. The action agenda was developed in response to the outcomes of the Informationist Conference held in April 2002 and the subsequent feedback received from the MLA membership via a web discussion, an open forum at the 2002 Annual Meeting, and several chapter roundtable discussions. An article about the conference and a commentary appear in the October *JMLA*.

As Dr. Davidoff suggested at the Informationist Conference, “Berwick’s Rules” can assist us with the transition from talk to action. These rules are:

- ◆ Find a sound innovation (not invention; innovation being invention that can be replicated reliably at affordable cost)
- ◆ Find and support innovators
- ◆ Invest in the early adopters and find more of them
- ◆ Make early adopter activity observable
- ◆ Trust and enable reinvention
- ◆ Create slack for change
- ◆ Lead by example

Previous activity surrounding the informationist concept have helped to shape a definition for the informationist as being an in-context information specialist who may practice in a variety of arenas including clinical settings, instruction, consumer services, research and health policy. It is key that the library profession support its members that wish to perform informationist roles and to assist them in acquiring the needed skill sets to achieve success in these roles. The profession may also want to assist professionals from other fields to gain the information sciences knowledge needed to perform informationist activities. The appended action agenda outlines suggested next steps and recommendations for the health sciences library profession and others.

We want your opinion! The Informationist Action Agenda is very comprehensive and includes an overall goal and objectives and strategies to achieve that goal. To accomplish the objectives, MLA, including its sections, other units, and chapters, will need to seek partnerships with other groups such as the National Library of Medicine, graduate schools of library and information sciences, and other health care agencies and library/information organizations to reflect the broader informationist audience. Funding to support the final agenda will be needed from a variety of sources. In order to prioritize the association’s initiatives in this area, we want to know what objectives and strategies are most important to you.

Please give us your comments on the action agenda by December 15, 2002. As part of your feedback please indicate what objectives and strategies you think are the most important for MLA to pursue. Your comments will be compiled and discussed by the Board of Directors at its January 2003 meeting. A revised action agenda will be available on MLANET shortly after the January meeting.

Thank you for your help in addressing this important issue.

Key documents and discussions regarding the history of the informationist concept are located on the MLANET site at <http://www.mlanet.org/research/informationist/>.

## MLA INFORMATIONIST DRAFT ACTION AGENDA

### OVERALL GOAL:

To further expand and clarify the concept of the informationist (an information specialist who works in context) by outlining an action agenda that brings together key collaborators to further define the role, training, health care team integration and funding issues related to the concept. The context in which an informationist may work could be a clinical or instructional setting, consumer services, research or health policy.

### OBJECTIVES:

*Objective 1* - Clarify informationist definitions and identify and promulgate descriptive roles for these professionals, be they health sciences librarians or other information specialists working in context.

### Strategies

1.1 Support testing of the informationist concept to:

- a. Define variety of problems to be solved by an informationist
- b. Identify potential roles
- c. Evaluate information resources required by an informationist
- d. Test concept in different practice arenas/environments
- e. Gather financial details needed to fund future informationists
- f. Concentrate on sustainability of informationist's role regardless of practice arena
- g. Link work of informationist to goals and objectives of research/institution
- h. Design credible research evaluation studies of these tests including gathering baseline data for benchmarking purposes
- i. Identify potential partners to test information concept
- j. Identify sites willing to test informationist models

1.2 Inventory and critically analyze current examples of in-context information specialists and their funding

- a. Identify organizations/institutions with such people in place; e.g., NIH, Hartford Hospital, Indiana University, Vanderbilt, UCSD, etc.
- b. Create an inventory of job descriptions and typical duties performed, beginning with librarian examples.
- c. Outline funding models for existing informationists, e.g., salary, fee for services, grant funding, patient care fees, etc.
- d. Analyze the work of information specialists from other disciplines, whose work fits the informationist concept, i.e., clinical pharmacists, nurse educators, lab data managers, legal librarians, etc.
- e. Differentiate role of informationist from other information professionals, e.g., librarians, clinical medical librarians, informaticians, etc.
- f. Compare and contrast information skills and disciplinary backgrounds of the informationist with other members of the health care or research team served

1.3 Develop practice protocols and standards for informationist activities

- a. Identify a core set of activities that define an informationist in each context (clinical, research, education, policy, consumer)
- b. Describe a core set of skills/knowledge required to perform this work
- c. Document evaluation criteria used to measure job performance in current informationist positions

- 1.4 Identify potential ideal backgrounds and traits for informationists
  - a. Look at potential background career fields such as informatics, computer science
  - b. Define personal traits needed, based on existing examples and research
  - c. Set level of education needed
  - d. Outline educational programs that will assist professionals wanting to enter one of the identified specialty areas for an informationist
  - e. Assess level of experience needed
  - f. Determine licensure/certification needs
  - g. Determine accreditation requirements

**Objective 2** - Encourage systematic evaluation and dissemination of findings on the costs and benefits of providing in context information specialist services.

**Strategies**

- 2.1 Support the conduct of research to determine the financial aspects of an informationist:
  - a. Document true program costs of the different “flavors”
  - b. Document perceived costs of informationist work to the individual and the organization
- 2.2 Support the conduct of research to determine the impact\* of an informationist on:
  - a. Patient outcomes and knowledge
    1. Effect on length of patient stays
    2. Effect on treatment costs; number of diagnostic tests
    3. Effect on patient outcomes; including reduction in errors, fewer adverse effects, better morbidity-mortality rates, etc.
    4. Effect on readmission statistics
    5. Measure patient understanding of health issues post intervention
  - b. Research outcomes and knowledge
    1. Effect on grant application development
    2. Effect on grant management through knowledge management
    3. Effect on IRB approval
  - c. Health professional and consumer decision making processes
    1. Measure impact on diagnostic decisions
    2. Measure impact on treatment decisions
    3. Measure impact on research decisions
    4. Measure impact on education decisions, student learning, lifelong learning
  - d. Proxy quality measures
    1. Acceptance of, rate of adoption and demand for informationists
    2. Increased information skills of health care or research team directly interacting with an informationist
    3. Increases in grant and contract activity
    4. Volume and quality of related publications and patents
    5. Institutional policy changes resulting from informationist intervention
    6. Changes in job descriptions for new positions
    7. Career growth of information specialty

\*Impacts can be: psychological (patient, public perception, family); ethical; economical, sociological and population health status effects.

- 2.3 Encourage NLM to fund evaluation studies on the cost and benefits of an informationist

2.4 Identify experts to assist with research/evaluation design of informationists

**Objective 3** - Promote and support the entry of health sciences librarians and other interested health professionals into informationist positions. Effectively articulate informationist expertise domains to potential employers.

**Strategies**

- 3.1 Publicize the role and accomplishments of in-context information specialists
  - a. Publish articles in all types of professional publishing venues
  - b. Encourage and support presentations at national and regional meetings that discuss the informationist concept and highlight successful models
  - c. Promote informationist professional at career fairs and career Web sites as a potential career ladder, especially for second career individuals
- 3.2 Gather and highlight successful outcomes; include anecdotal evidence of improvement
  - a. Encourage current informationists to self-promote their roles in health care and research teams and how they interact and assist other team members
  - b. Support disseminate of conducted research on informationist concept
- 3.3 Encourage early adoption of the informationist concept by creating educational opportunities for key adopters
  - a. Educate library, clinical and research administrators
  - b. Target hospital board of directors, funding agencies, accrediting bodies
  - c. Define incentives and target those with campaign - identify what will persuade key players to adopt informationist concept
  - d. Target national opinion leaders – AAMC, NLN, AARP, etc.
  - e. Cultivate enterprise champions
  - f. Encourage professional organizations to develop educational materials for their members to use to promote the concept in their organizations
  - g. Identify key users, key influencers and key resisters and identify what matters to each
  - h. Use existing technologies to further the exploration of the informationist concept, e.g., listservs, chat rooms, bulletin boards, etc.
- 3.4 Identify potential partners to promote/market the concept

**Objective 4** - Obtain funding to implement objectives and fund pilots.

**Strategies**

- 4.1 Identify potential funding agencies
- 4.2 Encourage the funding of informationists
  - a. Work with NCI cancer centers to support informationists
  - b. Work with insurance companies to get reimbursement for informationist services
  - c. Work with grant/contract agencies such as NIH to support informationists within their funding opportunities
- 4.3 Outline and promote financial support models for an informationist (cover training costs also) based on research [see Obj. 2]

**Objective 5** - Identify and publicize training opportunities for informationists.

**Strategies**

- 5.1 Explore and test various training methods such as:
  - a. Practical, on the job experience
  - b. Formal apprenticeships
    - 1. Clerkships
    - 2. Fellowships
    - 3. Subject area practicum; e.g., Woods Hole model
    - 4. NLM Associates model
    - 5. Residencies
    - 6. Structured clinical learning or research experiences
  - c. Self-learning
  - d. Mentoring
  - e. Formal educational programs
    - 1. Continuing education
    - 2. Additional courses beyond primary degree
    - 3. Distance education
    - 4. Executive training model
    - 5. Post-masters model
    - 6. Dual-degree programs
    - 7. Certificate programs
    - 8. Journal clubs
  - f. Multi-center programs
- 5.2 Develop critical mass of faculty to support informationist training
- 5.3 Identify organizations already providing or willing to provide specialty training for informationist and encourage partnerships
- 5.4 Develop model curricula for professionals who wish to enter information specialties
- 5.5 Encourage NLM to fund training for informationists in the various arenas and curricular development