



Australian Library and  
Information Association

# 10 WAYS THAT LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES POWER THE HEALTH SECTOR

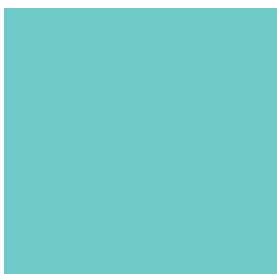
## AUSTRALIAN HEALTH LIBRARIES

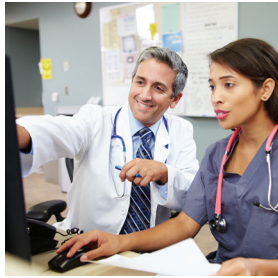
It is estimated there are between 350 and 400 health libraries in Australia, including hospital, community health, government department and university medical libraries. There are some 1,250 people employed in these libraries. Health librarians comprise an important part of the health information workforce, alongside health information managers and health informatics specialists.



## PATIENT CARE

Clinicians rely on health librarians for quality information to improve the health outcomes of their patients. A national survey of library users in 2012 found that for 83% of respondents library and information services had helped improve health outcomes for patients, and for 76%, the information provided had changed their thinking and improved their diagnosis or treatment plan.





## EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE

Health and medical research is moving fast and clinicians have to run to keep up. Health library and information services provide the most relevant books, journals, research databases and point of care resources for students starting out in their careers, and for professionals who need to remain in touch with the very latest developments in their fields, to ensure their practice is evidence based.

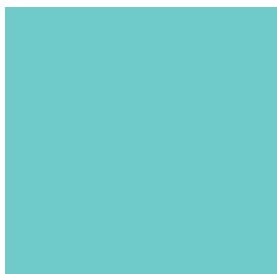
## VARIED USAGE

Health library and information services are used in many different ways: to keep abreast of clinical developments, progress research, underpin health service redesign and support ongoing professional development. Health professionals use library and information services to support innovation, and to ensure due diligence.



## SPECIALIST RESOURCES

Collections are tailored to the needs of clients, whether clinicians, students, scientists or researchers. Increasingly, these are digital collections, including multimedia resources, ebooks, journals and databases. Librarians keep up to date with the very latest products, print and digital, from publishers worldwide and are skilled at negotiating the best deal for their organisations.





## OUTSTANDING VALUE

An independent assessment of the return on investment in health libraries carried out in 2013 found that for every \$1 invested, there were \$9 worth of benefits. This was a conservative estimate. It took into account the time saved by clinicians in searching for answers, but it did not take into account the improved quality of the results supplied by trained information specialists. It looked at how much it would cost users to have to buy for themselves the information that they access from the library at no charge, but it did not assess the savings achieved by library staff negotiating advantageous prices with information suppliers.

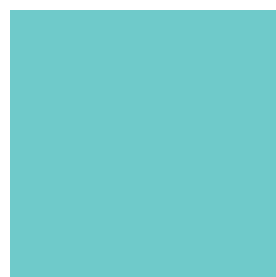


## INFORMATION LITERACY

Health librarians are not only skilled in information literacy and critical thinking, they help others develop these skills. Anyone can Google; not everyone knows how to identify the most relevant, timely and credible sources. As information seekers, librarians are fast, efficient and thorough, and they provide training for their clients to improve the information literacy of everyone in the organisation.

## DECISION-READY INFORMATION

Information seekers are often overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of content available. Health librarians are skilled at filtering large quantities of data to find the best available evidence. They can present this in a variety of ways, from an infographic through to a full report, helping to turn a loose idea into an evidence-based concept. Health librarians are also skilled at selecting the best point of care information resources with the aim of making these available at the bedside, on a range of platforms and, ideally, integrated into the electronic patient health record.





## CONSUMER HEALTH

While much of the work of health librarians is focused on health professionals, they are also well positioned to offer consumer health information services. Patients who start searching the Internet for information about their condition may be quickly overwhelmed by the staggering amount of information and can be misled by false claims. Health librarians can direct them instead to the latest scientific findings published in authoritative medical journals, and to reputable, high quality consumer health resources online.

## 24/7 SERVICE

With so much digital content, many health library and information services are now able to provide client service 24/7, all year round, with information sent straight to people's smartphones, tablets and laptops. At the same time, librarians can efficiently monitor the news media, social media, print and online publications and other 24/7 sources to provide alerts when highly relevant new information emerges.



## DIGITAL EXPERTISE

Health librarians have sound ICT knowledge and skills and are capable and responsible users of new and emerging technologies. Their roles as professionals in health information services are more and more intertwined with roles in information management and information systems and technologies. Working together in teams with other health information professionals, health librarians add value to design, implement, administer and evaluate quality platforms with quality content that deliver successful digital transformation in healthcare organisations.

