



## **So, you want to work in a health library?**

Health librarianship can be a challenging and rewarding professional experience; however, its' specialist nature may present as a barrier to new librarians or librarians looking for a new challenge or change. But is this really the case? If you are considering a role in a health library, or if health librarianship has always piqued your curiosity, then read on.

### **What do health libraries do?**

Health libraries provide services that directly and indirectly support patient care and patient outcomes through health education, literacy, informatics and research. Most health libraries are in health care delivery services such as hospitals, but there are also some health libraries in government departments such as Departments of Health and in universities. Health library clients are diverse and come from across the health professions including medicine, nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology, social work, pharmacy and so on. Client groups also include health administrators and those working in health executive and other leadership roles. In addition, some health libraries provide information services to health consumers (defined as anyone that may have been in hospital or is currently a patient in hospital, and their family or caregivers).

### **What do health librarians do?**

Health librarians are involved in a great many roles. With most health libraries having small teams, health librarians have extremely diverse roles. Frequently working alongside clinicians to provide evidence to support patient care, they also work as part of clinical teams to undertake scoping or systematic reviews or original research. In addition, they provide information and training to clients to enable them to maintain contemporary knowledge of their areas of clinical practice; all the while managing services and collections.

### **So how do you get a job in a health library?**

The key thing to remember is that those of us currently working as health librarians weren't born into these roles and we didn't inherently have the requisite skills and knowledge. We learnt it, and you can too!

A background as a health sciences professional or formal study in health sciences will certainly be helpful but few of us have this and it is not a prerequisite. Undertaking a practicum placement in a health library, or a previous role in the health sector, will be beneficial. Knowledge of health information resources and health research practices (such as the purpose of systematic and other evidence-based reviews and the role of clinical trials), along with knowledge of general research practices and the publishing sector, will be helpful in a health librarian role. That said, the enormous value of our core knowledge base and skill set as library and information professionals, and our transferrable skills, must not be ignored or undervalued. In other words, when asked "What skills can you bring to this job" as part of a job application, draw widely on your generic skills, experiences, and knowledge; and demonstrate their relevance to health library context. Your desire to support the community, and passion to make a difference will shine through!