ARIHSL History

A Brief History of ARIHSL

Since 1951 the health science librarians of Rhode Island have been working together, sharing their resources and knowledge to improve library services to the healthcare community of our state. Beginning with an initial social hour attended by 25 health science librarians who saw the advantages that could result from increased cooperation, more librarians joined, plans for projects emerged and by 1953 meetings were being held on a regular basis although it wasn’t until 1975 that “Association of Rhode Island Health Science Librarians” was adopted as the official name and the first slate of officers elected. In 1994 the name of the group was changed to its present form to highlight the investment of resources on the part of the institutions and the benefits that accrue to them through the work of ARIHSL.

The first project undertaken was the compilation of a "Union List of Medical Journals", a catalog of the holdings of each of the cooperating libraries. The first edition was an ambitious and time-consuming task using the sophisticated hardware of the day, shoeboxes and index cards. Released on May 27, 1953, the "Union List" was extremely well received by librarians in and out-of-state and by area physicians as well. Current holdings data, now machine readable, are processed by the Medical Library Center of New York, entered into SERHOLD and UCMP and also published in book form. The "Union List" is now in its 14th edition with the 15th due out shortly.

Continuing education for both professional and paraprofessional librarians has always been one of ARIHSL’s priorities. Early on, when the hospital library was often an afterthought, cared for as a part-time activity by a secretary or medical records staff, the mission of ARIHSL was to give these paraprofessionals the training needed to select, accession, classify and catalog medical books and journals and to provide reference services. As the quality of the libraries and their services improved, emphasis has shifted to the continuing education of professional librarians. While we have always been willing to share our knowledge one-on-one, more formal educational events have included continuing education classes organized by the ARIHSL education committee or by the NN/LM Region 8 Resource Library at Brown University. Representatives from the Regional
Library at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester have been regular visitors at ARIHSL meetings. Most ARIHSL members also participate in other library organizations in state, in the region and nationally.

This abbreviated history is based on a more extensive document available from from the ARIHSL secretary.

JMC

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