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The Medical Library Association's Role in Disseminating Information Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic

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INTRODUCTION

The Medical Library Association (MLA) has been part of the library and information science field since 1898 (The Medical Library Association, 2020). According to the website, the mission of the organization is to promote library and information science knowledge and make it available and accessible to medical information specialists and the general public (The Medical Library Association, 2020). Yet, how effective is the MLA in its mission when it comes to educating medical information specialists and the public about COVID-19, specifically?

Purpose Statement

This project examines the Medical Library Association's (MLA) role in the 2019/2020 COVID-19 public health crisis, specifically the ways in which the MLA has provided resources about the pandemic to libraries and librarians as well as the public.

Research Questions

- R1. What kinds of information about the COVID-19 health crisis has the MLA made available to the general public?
- R2. What kinds of information about the COVID-19 health crisis has the MLA made available to libraries and/or librarians?
- R3. Where has the MLA specifically made this information available? (e.g., websites, social media, etc.)

Definitions

Content Analysis (qualitative): According to the American Library Association, Content Analysis "is the study of recorded communications to determine patterns, themes, and infer meaning" (American Library Association, 2020). A Qualitative Content Analysis method refers to a non-numerical

assessment of data typically employed by a social science research project (*Collins Dictionary, 2020*).

COVID-19: According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), COVID-19 or Coronavirus is a novel, or new, respiratory virus that is easily spread from person to person. It has become globally prevalent with symptoms ranging from mild, flu-like to severe. It has caused a global pandemic and is believed to have originated in Wuhan, China, in late 2019 (Center for Disease Control, 2020).

Medical Library Association (MLA): The Medical Library Association is "a global, non-profit educational organization, with a membership of more than 400 institutions and 3,000 professionals in the health information field" (Medical Library Association, 2020). The organization originated in 1898 with the mission to help educate health information specialists while promoting health research, ultimately aiming to disseminate health information knowledge to everyone.

Delimitations of the Study

Some limitations within this study pertain to the ever-changing nature of this particular illness. New symptoms are being discovered daily, it seems, while other symptoms are sometimes ruled out due to new information being uncovered. The rapidly emerging details of this novel virus limit the study to information on the MLA website and other e-sources from December 2019 to June 2020. Any information about the disease discovered after June 2020 is not included in this study.

Assumptions

It is assumed that the information from websites in this study is complete and accurate. Further, all articles, statements, and responses directly from the MLA, although potentially single-authored from one

MLA representative or librarian, are assumed to represent the whole of the organization.

Importance of the Study

The objective of this study is to examine how the Medical Library Association functions during health crises. This study focuses on the MLA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically, but MLA's overall efficacy is somewhat in question when examining its overall response to a health crisis like COVID-19. Is the MLA staying true to its original vision and mission to help make health information available to the masses (The Medical Library Association, 2020)? This project may be of interest to medical libraries and medical librarians globally. Their interest is precipitated by their curiosity to evaluate how the MLA has handled the pandemic and whether or not the organization is effective in providing responses and advice to medical libraries/librarians in how to treat future health crises.

The project may also be of interest to medical health care specialists in general. Is the MLA providing resources and responses from which health care specialists can benefit? Medical health care specialists may want to know whether or not the MLA's scope is far-reaching enough that the responses supplied will benefit the medical field as a whole.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In a review of peer-reviewed journal articles relevant to this paper's focus, several similar themes as well as guidelines for how to conduct research on the MLA's response to COVID-19 emerge. First, there are several articles that employ a similar methodology by using qualitative content analysis. Aharony (2009) compares and contrasts the content of 30 U.S. Library Information Science (LIS) blogs. Another example of similar methodology is Huber, Shapiro, Burke, and Palmer's (2014) study that examined the "overlap between roles and activities that health care navigators perform and competencies identified by the MLA's educational policy statement" (p. 1). Qualitative content analysis was used and the conclusions drawn that the greater cooperation between the health field and the library science field,

the greater the outcome for people in need of these services.

Additionally, Hubert et al. (2014) note that both library science and medical fields are always evolving, and the successful components of each field are due to their ability to adapt. As Schwartz (2020) points out in her op-ed article, the coronavirus highlights many of the shortcomings in our world's various global industries while simultaneously showing which are more essential than initially understood. Libraries should be considered essential in that they provide over 100 million people with internet access who otherwise would not have access (Schwartz, 2020). Librarians, then have the potential to rise to the occasion in response to COVID-19.

Studies reviewed here demonstrate who exactly benefits from these types of qualitative content analyses. Piracha and Ameen (2016) conducted a content analysis of five LIS journals examining authorship patterns, geographical location of authors, etc. They discovered that research such as this primarily benefits LIS faculty. This begs the question, who will benefit from the results of this paper's study of MLA's response to COVID-19?

Several articles examined for this review discussed the effectiveness of websites and/or databases in general. Paquette-Lemieux, Hays, and Gaspo (2019) conducted a "systematic review" of 23 U.S. medical websites. They looked at their usability, accessibility, and areas of improvement. They awarded scores to each website to determine their efficacy, which is not done in this paper; however, this article is a useful resource for how to assess the MLA's website, generally. Alvim and Calixto (2016) created four categories in order to review the social media of libraries in Portugal: "Generate social capital and social cohesion, Consolidate democracy and citizenship, Social and digital inclusion, and Fighting illiteracies" (p. 165). Bankson's 2009 article on health literacy explored the "pandemic" of sorts related to patients' ill-understood health literacy. Bankson reviewed library databases and found that there were resources that medical librarians might use to

help patients better understand their health but concluded there needed to be more.

Two articles examined the value of medical librarianship while exploring the connection between medical health workers and medical information specialists. Nix, Huber, Shapiro, and Pfeifle (2016) examined the ways in which library science and health science share similar educational backgrounds and social justice connections, producing a conclusion that both fields should work together. Price, Basyal, Smit, and Needham (2020) discussed the great value that having a medical librarian at a medical conference can provide. This highlights the significant role the MLA can have on the COVID-19 response.

The methodology of this study is similar to the works aforementioned in that it employs a qualitative content analysis of issues pertinent to the medical library field. It differs in that it explores a single issue, the COVID-19 pandemic, and does not include scores or numerical data. Rather, the value of the MLA's response to a specific health crisis is examined based on overall accessibility, availability, and scope of response.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this paper is qualitative content analysis. Non-numerical data were collected in order to analyze the Medical Library Association's treatment of and response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Information Sources and Procedures

The sources of information for this project are the Medical Library Association's (MLA) website's responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. This study also examined MLA's social media pages to determine some of the ways in which the MLA has provided outreach to the general public. Additionally, this paper examined COVID-19 specific articles from the organization's peer-reviewed journal, *The Journal of the Medical Library Association (JMLA)*. The article discussed was written by an MLA representative or information specialist and is considered a primary

source for this project. This determines how the MLA has responded to the pandemic within academia. The data were collected from a search of the *JMLA* website, <http://jmla.mlanet.org/ojs/jmla/issue/view/19>. The most recent edition of the journal was examined, Vol 108, 3 (2020).

The procedures used in this study include a content analysis of the MLA's website and specific webpages about COVID-19. Additionally, the analysis of content was divided into two distinct categories: COVID-19 information for the public and COVID-19 information for medical librarians. These resources were examined separately in order to determine how the MLA's response varies from the public's to the medical information specialists.'

The resources provided by the MLA to both the public and medical information specialists were evaluated by surveying how many resources are available and in what format. Are the resources being made available to the general public in a way that is easily accessible? The websites and resources were evaluated, not necessarily by being given a numerical rate, but by reviewing their overall presence, usability, and accessibility.

Limitations

The intention of this study is to locate as many COVID-19 response resources issued by the MLA as possible while relegating each response as either intended for the public or medical specialists. Any responses from the MLA that were unnoticed may certainly be considered a limitation to this paper. If there are responses not captured by this content analysis, it might have an effect on the general outcome of the findings, but it is anticipated that it would not have a significant impact on the results.

Another limitation is that MLA authored articles and responses might have certain biases. It is unclear what those biases might be at this stage, but it is worth mentioning as a boundary towards uncovering an accurate analysis of the responses issued by the MLA, generally.

RESULTS

R1. What kinds of information about the COVID-19 health crisis has the MLA made available to the general public?

Although the Medical Library Association (MLA) is known as a resource for health sciences library and information professionals, part of its mission is to help make health information “available to all” (Medical Library Association, para. 1, 2020). During the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis, the MLA has made several resources available for public consumption. What follows are resources from the MLA main webpage titled COVID-19 Resources for Patients and the Public. This section reported all the resources listed and provided one or two examples from each category in order to give a sense of what the MLA offers in terms of COVID-19 information to the public. The resources were last updated on April 9, 2020, with no information about whether or not updates will continue (MLA For Health Consumers, <https://www.mlanet.org/p/cm/ld/fid=1717>, 2020). There are no editors or authors listed for the information given. There are eight categories of public information: Evidence-Based Resources and Guidance, Directories, General Interest, For Older Family Members, For Parents and Kids, Myths about COVID-19, U.S. Government Resources, and the World Health Organization (Medical Library Association, <https://www.mlanet.org/p/cm/ld/fid=1717>, 2020).

The U.S. Government resources category includes the Center for Disease Control (CDC) main webpage about COVID-19, The National Institute of Standards and Technology, The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), The U.S. Department of Labor, The National Network of Libraries of Medicine, specifically the Pacific Southwest region, which has resources in both English and Spanish (Medical Library Association, <https://www.mlanet.org/p/cm/ld/fid=1717>, 2020).

The World Health Organization resource is the WHO main webpage about COVID-19, which includes resources for the public and a Q&A or “FAQs” on

coronaviruses (Medical Library Association, <https://www.mlanet.org/p/cm/ld/fid=1717>, 2020).

The Evidence-Based Resources and Guidance category includes six resources, including, for example, a resource called Animals and Coronavirus Disease, which comes from the CDC and can be found here, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/animals.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fanimals.html. Another resource included in this category is a link explaining unemployment in the U.S. The source is from USA.gov and can be found here, <https://www.usa.gov/unemployment>. It is worth noting that the information in this category is not organized in any particular fashion. For example, the resources are not alphabetized, and five of the six resources are from the CDC’s website.

The Directories category has only two resources: The Directory of State Health Departments from the CDC’s website, <https://www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/healthdirectories/healthdepartments.html> and the Directory of Local Health Departments, <https://www.naccho.org/membership/lhd-directory>. The General Interest Information category includes two resources. The first is a comic about COVID-19, <https://www.graphicmedicine.org/covid-19-comics/>. The second is an article called *When Xenophobia Spreads Like a Virus*, from the National Public Radio organization (NPR) <https://www.npr.org/2020/03/02/811363404/when-xenophobia-spreads-like-a-virus>.

The Resources for Older Family Members category also includes two resources. One resource sponsored by the AARP is a Coronavirus Tele Town Hall resource, <https://www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/info-2020/tele-town-hall-coronavirus.html?intcmp=AE-HP-LL1>. The second resource is called Common Questions and Answers About COVID-19 for Older Adults and People with Chronic Health Conditions, <https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/common/AOA%20->

https://www2.heart.org/site/DocServer/KHC_25_Ways_to_Get_Moving_at_home.pdf, and a resource from the CDC about Managing Stress and Anxiety, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fmanaging-stress-anxiety.html.

The category For Parents and Kids has five resources from organizations such as NPR, WHO, CDC, and the American Health Association (AHA). Two examples from this section include an article on *25 Ways to Get Moving at Home* from AHA,

https://www2.heart.org/site/DocServer/KHC_25_Ways_to_Get_Moving_at_home.pdf, and a resource from the CDC about Managing Stress and Anxiety, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fmanaging-stress-anxiety.html.

The final category, COVID-19 Mythbusters, has two resources. There is a resource on Coronavirus rumors which can be found in both Spanish and English, <https://www.fema.gov/coronavirus/rumor-control> and Advice for the Public from Mythbusters via the WHO, <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>.

It is interesting to note that there is no MLA sponsored content for COVID-19 information for the public. This could be due to the MLA’s academic reputation and primarily research-based approach as an organization. For a complete list of all resources listed for the public by the MLA, about COVID-19 follow this link:

<https://www.mlanet.org/p/cm/ld/fid=1717>. Below is a table listing all the different categories discussed here and the number of resources found for each category.

Table 1. MLA COVID-19 Resources for the Public

U.S. Government Resources	5
World Health Organization	1
Evidence-Based Resources and Guidance	6
Directories	2

General Interest Information	2
Resources for Older Family Members	2
For Parents and Kids	5
COVID-19 Mythbusters	2
<u>Total resources</u>	<u>25</u>

R2. What kinds of information about the COVID-19 health crisis has the MLA made available to libraries and/or librarians.

The MLA provides a robust collection of resources for health sciences and information professionals. The information can be accessed on the main webpage, <https://www.mlanet.org/page/covid-19-resources-for-medical-librarians>, and includes eight distinct categories of resources and information specifically for health professionals and health sciences librarians. The resources were edited and selected by Callaway, J.L, Spencer, A., and Aaronson, E.M (2020). The resource page was last updated on May 8, 2020, with a note saying that it will no longer be updated (MLA COVID-19 Resources for Medical Librarians, <https://www.mlanet.org/page/covid-19-resources-for-medical-librarians>, 2020). The eight categories of resources are as follows: U.S. Government Resources, WHO, Clinical Resources and Guides, Data, Research, Article Collections, Systematic Reviews, Journal, Publisher, Society Resource Sites, Public Health Portals and Sites, Education Resources, and Medical Librarians and COVID-19. The introduction at the beginning of the resource page notes that prior to May 8, the list would be updated as frequently as needed. The editors have chosen these resources based on “suggestions from MLA members and other health information professionals on the front lines of providing information during the COVID-19 pandemic.” They go on to state that it is “not intended to be an exhaustive list, as many librarians have already created excellent resource guides for their institutions and patients” (Medical Library Association, <https://www.mlanet.org/page/covid-19-resources-for-medical-librarians>, para.1, 2020). It is also important to note that many of the medical

journals and resources listed herein have waived their subscription fees through the summer to provide as much access as possible.

The U.S. Government category lists 11 resources including the CDC, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), The Food and Drug Association (FDA), The National Center for Biotechnology, the National Library of Medicine, The National Institute on Allergies and Infectious Diseases, The National Institutes of Health, and The National Institute of Standards and Technology and OSHA (Medical Library Association, <https://www.mlanet.org/page/covid-19-resources-for-medical-librarians>, 2020).

The World Health Organization (WHO) section lists two resources, both of which can be found on the WHO's main webpage about COVID-19 <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>.

The Clinical Resources and Guides section includes 50 resources that are alphabetically listed, including active links to the source and a description of each. This is similar to the MLA COVID-19 public webpage. Some examples from this category include Veterinary Medicine, Information about COVID and Animals from the American Veterinary Medical Association, <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19>. Another example of a resource from this category is Obstetrics: Coronavirus Pregnancy and Breastfeeding, a Message for Patients, <https://www.acog.org/patient-resources/faqs/pregnancy/coronavirus-pregnancy-and-breastfeeding> from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

In the category Data, Research, Article Collections, and Systematic Reviews, 12 resources are listed in alphabetical order with descriptions. For example, Coronavirus in the U.S.: Latest Map and Case Count sponsored by N.Y. Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-us-cases.html>. There is also a resource on Evidence for Interventions for COVID-19 at <https://covid-evidence.org/>

The category of Journal, Publisher, Society Resource Sites includes 37 resources such as the *British Medical Journal*, which states that its resources will be free until the end of July (The British Medical Journal, https://www.bmj.com/coronavirus?utm_source=adestra&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=usage&utm_content=americas-covid19&utm_term=tbmj, 2020). Additionally, the EBSCO Medical Portal can be accessed here, <https://covid-19.ebscomedical.com/>.

The Public Health Portals and Sites category includes seven resources in total. There is a Medicare Telehealth FAQs resource found here, <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/medicare-telehealth-frequently-asked-questions-fags-31720.pdf>. There is also a resource from the University of Minnesota Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy found here, <https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/>.

The Education Resources category includes five resources. For example, there is a COVID-19 Health Literacy Project found here, <https://covid19healthliteracyproject.com/>, which has been translated into 30 different languages. There is also an American Library Association article titled *How to Sanitize Collections in a Pandemic* found here, <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/how-to-sanitize-collections-covid-19/>.

The last category, Medical Librarians and COVID-19, includes six resources. One of these is directly from the MLA about how libraries can support library workers during the pandemic, <https://www.mlanet.org/p/cm/ld/fid=1122&&blogaid=2884>. Another resource is about Academic Health Sciences Libraries and COVID-19, <https://nlmdirector.nlm.nih.gov/2020/04/07/answerimg-the-call-academic-health-sciences-libraries-and-covid-19/>.

The MLA's resources for medical health and information science specialists are lengthy and impressive. There is one resource directly from the MLA, as mentioned above, as opposed to the

resources listed for the public where there was none. For the MLA's full list of resources for medical health science and library professionals, click here <https://www.mlanet.org/page/covid-19-resources-for-medical-librarians>. Below is Table 2 listing all of the main categories for resources from the MLA COVID-19 Resources for Medical Librarians webpage, including number of resources per category. Also below, see Table 3, which compares the MLA's public and medical librarian total resources.

Table 2. MLA COVID-19 Resources for Medical Librarians

U.S. Government Resources	11
World Health Organization	1
Clinical Research and Guides	50
Data, Research, Article Collections, and Systematic Reviews	12
Journal, Publisher, Society Resource Sites	37
Public Health Portals and Sites	7
Educational Resources	5
Medical Librarians and COVID-19	6
<u>Total resources</u>	<u>129</u>

Table 3. Table 1 vs. Table 2

Total MLA COVID-19 Resources for the Public	25
Total MLA COVID-19 Resources for Medical Librarians	129

R3. Where has the MLA specifically made this information available? (e.g., websites, social media, etc.)

The MLA has made COVID-19 information and resources available to the public and professional health science and information specialists via their webpage as discussed in R1. and R2. That

information can be found here, <https://www.mlanet.org/page/covid-19-resources-for-medical-librarians> and here <https://www.mlanet.org/p/cm/ld/fid=1717>. The MLA has also utilized a variety of social media and organizational resources in order to discuss COVID-19 and provide some information about the pandemic to interested parties.

The MLA has used social media, primarily Facebook and Twitter, to disseminate information about COVID-19. On the MLA's main Facebook page, [Medical Library Association - Home](https://www.facebook.com/MedicalLibraryAssn), one can find various COVID-19 topics pertaining to the organization and the library science field in general. There is information about the upcoming MLA conference, which will be held virtually in August 2020. This event's keynote speaker will discuss "How Health Care Inequities Have Been Exacerbated by COVID-19" (MLA Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/MedicalLibraryAssn>, 2020). Related to the conference, there is an application for people that have been negatively financially affected by the pandemic to apply for assistance to attend the conference. There is also an advertisement for a virtual lunchtime discussion about Facilities and Personnel Management in the Time of Covid-19 (MLA Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/MedicalLibraryAssn>, 2020). There is information on the Facebook page that can be considered informative and topical as it pertains to COVID-19. The MLA Twitter account repeats much of what is advertised on the Facebook page regarding information about the upcoming COVID-19 related events (MLA Twitter, <https://twitter.com/MedLibAssn>, 2020).

Another informational resource is the MEDLIB-L Email Listserv for Medical Librarians found here, <https://www.mlanet.org/p/cm/ld/fid=377>. This resource presumably offers a discussion about COVID-19 and libraries, although one must be a member of the MLA and subscribe to the list in order to participate. This is a speculative inclusion to the information resource list; however, the description

states that all current topics will be discussed (MLA Listserv, <https://www.mlanet.org/p/cm/ld/fid=377>, 2020).

Another way COVID-19 information is being addressed and disseminated for medical professionals is via the MLA Conference in August 2020. According to the conference webpage, COVID-19 will take center stage as discussions, lectures, and keynote speeches will all address concerns of the pandemic. One must register for the event, so this information is for medical and information specialists who belong to the MLA and wish to participate in the conference (MLA 2020 Conference, <https://www.mlanet.org/p/cm/ld/fid=1583>, 2020).

Another way the MLA has made COVID-19 related information available is via the MLA Public Policy Center Website, <https://www.mlanet.org/p/cm/ld/fid=59>. The MLA Public Policy Center has most recently contributed commentary to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions regarding a paper addressing preparedness for another pandemic. In order to access this information directly, one must have an MLA username and password. MLA members presumably have full access to the statements submitted to the senate committee regarding COVID-19 and future pandemics (MLA Public Policy Center, <https://www.mlanet.org/p/cm/ld/fid=59>, 2020).

Additionally, the main MLA webpage has a link titled Breaking News and Developments, which appears to be updated regularly. As of the writing of this paper, the most recent update was on July 8, 2020. There are three active links on this page, two of which are from the Yale Research Center for Covid-19, and the other is a review of COVID-19 information from MIT. These links and information are open to the public; no MLA membership is required (MLA Breaking News and Developments, <https://www.mlanet.org/p/cm/ld/&fid=1733>, 2020). There is also a link on the main MLA webpage titled COVID-19 Literature Searches. This page was last updated on April 9, 2020, so it does not appear current. The confusing part of this website comes

from a note stating, "The search strings are provided via the good will of health information professionals, not from MLA as an organization" (MLA COVID-19 Literature Searches, para. 1, <https://www.mlanet.org/page/covid-19-literature-searching>, 2020). The searches listed are presumably from medical science professionals and information specialists who feel the information is worth examining. The links are active and open to the public.

Lastly, the MLA has made COVID-19 information accessible via various publications, including the MLA News and *JMLA*. The latter journal is for MLA members only; however, there are some open access articles. The University of Southern Mississippi does, in fact, subscribe to the *JMLA*, and upon inspection, there was a COVID-19 related article in the most recent edition: Greenberg, S.J. (2020). Resilience, relevance, remembering: History in the time of coronavirus. *Journal of the Medical Library Association*, 108(3), 494-497. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/lynx.lib.usm.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=144426222&site=ehost-live>. The MLA News has a blog called *FullSpeed Ahead*. There are several blog posts about COVID-19. The most recent article is titled, *Doing our Jobs in the Time of COVID-19: Facilities and Personnel Management While Your Library is Closed, Open, Reopening or Somewhere in Between*. The post was from July 2, 2020, and is available to the public (FullSpeed Ahead, <https://www.mlanet.org/p/bl/et/blogid=36>, 2020).

There are several ways in which the MLA has made COVID-19 information available to both the public and its members. Below, please find a table that lists all the various ways this information has been disseminated, including information about which mediums are openly accessible to the public and require MLA membership or academic affiliation. Both MLA webpages for the public and for librarians are publicly available. Some of the resources listed on the webpage for librarians and health professionals will eventually require institutional or member credential logins. The MLA social media pages are all accessible to the public. However, the MLA MEDLIB-L

Email Listserv is for MLA members only. The information posted on the MLA Conference’s webpage is public, but the actual conference itself is for MLA members only. The MLA Public Policy Center is for MLA members only; however, some of the information might be publicly available since it has

been submitted to Congress, as discussed earlier. The MLA Breaking News and Developments, COVID-19 Literature Searches, and the MLA blog are all open access and publicly available. Lastly, access to the *JMLA* is private but has some open-access articles available to the public.

Table 4. MLA Disseminated COVID-19 Information

MLA Page for Medical Librarians	Mostly publicly available
MLA Page for Patients and Public	Public
Social Media: Facebook and Twitter	Public
MEDLIB-L Email Listserv	Private (MLA members only)
MLA 2020 Conference	Some info. public, conference attendance requires financial admission
MLA Public Policy Center	Private (MLA members only) /Senate information may be public.
MLA Breaking News and Developments	Public
MLA COVID-19 Literature Searches	Public
MLA Blog, <i>FullSpeed Ahead</i>	Public
Journal of the Medical Library Association	Private /Some open access articles

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION
COVID-19 Resources for the General Public

The MLA has created several webpages containing a plethora of information regarding the COVID-19 health crisis. The first webpage reviewed in this paper was the COVID-19 Resources for Patients and the Public. Considering the MLA is an academic, research-based organization dedicated to providing information for health science and information

specialists, the very inclusion of a public information webpage can be considered going above and beyond their own mission. This is a noble act, considering most of the public might not even be aware of the organization’s existence. However, one might argue that this webpage is overall superfluous and that the webpage that was developed for medical librarians could have stood alone. Nonetheless, the public outreach page has some notable resources. Providing links to the World Health Organization’s

main COVID-19 information page and to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's main COVID-19 information page is helpful. Information about how to access unemployment benefits via the USA.gov website can also benefit the general public. Including a category where COVID-19 myths are debunked is seemingly helpful from a general public standpoint, as well.

Where things get a little strange or unhelpful is in the General Interest Information category. This category has only two resources, one of which is a comic strip about COVID-19. There is a section called For Parents and Kids that this comic might have been better suited. Overall, the comic seems out of place in the context of a resource coming from the esteemed Medical Library Association. On the other hand, the NPR article from the same section about xenophobia seems timely and helpful.

Overall, the public information webpage seems disjointed and disorganized. Very few of the categories are organized in any conceivable way, especially when one compares this webpage to the medical librarian webpage. Very few of the categories are alphabetized, for example, and the descriptions of the resources listed lack details. However, all links appear to be active, and the overall intent of the information page is well-thought.

COVID-19 Resources for Medical Librarians

The information provided by the MLA on the COVID-19 Information for Medical Librarians webpage is overall, incredibly organized, detailed, and thorough. This webpage was formally edited by MLA organization contributors, as opposed to the former webpage where there was no editor credit provided. Interestingly, several disclaimers state that the webpage would not be updated after May 8, 2020. There was no clear explanation for why this would be the case; however, all of the links examined for this paper are active and clearly updated regularly, which is helpful.

The content on this page is clearly organized with alphabetized resources in each category with robust

descriptions of each resource provided. There are also considerably more resources included on this webpage than the public page. For example, the Clinical Resources and Guides section has 50 resources, and the Journal category has 37. The resources investigated for this paper were all publicly accessible. Many medical journals state they are providing free and open access through the summer to help provide as much information to the public as possible. This is why the public webpage might be considered unnecessary. Additionally, many of the public resources are repeated on the medical professionals' page, such as the WHO and the CDC. Even though this webpage states that the resources listed are not meant to be exhaustive, as most medical institutions are providing their own resource guides, the information provided appears to be diverse and helpful to both the public and to medical information specialists.

Locations of COVID-19 Resources

Regarding where and how the MLA is disseminating information about COVID-19, it seems that the organization uses many different technological mediums. The MLA social media, including Twitter and Facebook, provide some information about COVID-19 and library science. There is not quite as much general public information offered there; however, there is an informative presence. One thing worth mentioning is of the seven social media accounts listed on the MLA's homepage, only two are active and up to date. For example, LinkedIn and YouTube accounts have not been managed or updated in years.

Some other data included in R3. were the MLA listserv, which is a private email group for medical librarians, the MLA 2020 Conference, and the Public Policy Center website. All three are primarily only open to MLA members but all offer previews of some information provided. COVID-19 is a discussion present in all three.

The Literature Searches and Breaking News and Developments webpages are part of the public MLA website. The searches were a strange medium to include in this paper because it is not regulated by

the MLA but by medical and health information professionals who feel the information might serve the MLA community. So, it was difficult to include this as an MLA-sponsored medium; however, it is a part of the official website. The Breaking News and Developments webpage has links to academic institutions that are reporting information publicly about COVID-19, which is helpful, but not exactly MLA sponsored aside from the fact that it is listed on the MLA website. The links are useful; however, the information is not generated by the MLA.

Lastly, the blog and *JMLA* are certainly MLA sponsored; however, there is not much COVID-19 information included. There was one recent blog post about COVID-19 and its impact on libraries, and there was a COVID-19 article in the most recent edition of the *JMLA*. One might expect to find more COVID-19 information included in these mediums.

Concluding Remarks

The Medical Library Association's mission to educate both medical information specialists and the general public on relevant library science topics has been more or less achieved in their treatment of COVID-19 information and resources. The MLA has provided many COVID-19 informational resources to both the public and medical information professionals. The data from this paper indicate that the MLA has been successful in responding to the current health crisis by staying true to its overall mission. Medical health care specialists and information specialists can both benefit from the information provided by the MLA as it pertains to COVID-19.

Additionally, the qualitative content analysis employed in this paper comes to many of the same conclusions as those methods reviewed earlier in chapter two: medical health and information specialists have the ability to rise to the demands placed on medical libraries, medical facilities, and libraries in general, armed with an array of informative resources. The data certainly highlight what Huber et al. (2014) point out, which is that both the library science and medical fields clearly overlap. The collaboration is evident by the very fact that the MLA, an organization for medical librarians,

included such a thorough COVID-19 resource guide for medical workers and librarians alike. Much like Bankson (2009) points out, medical librarians owe it to their patrons to be able to access the most informative resources and offer research guidance to help them gain competency in health literacy, something that is of the utmost importance in this pandemic. The cooperation between library science and medicine has thus been successful, and as Phelan et al. (2020) point out, there will need to be all hands on deck, so to speak, in order to get through this current pandemic. Everyone will need to work together to prevent future pandemics, and that includes librarians.

Further Work

As the COVID-19 health crisis continues to rage on, all libraries will need to continue to rise to the needs of a changing informational environment. As Schwartz (2020) points out, librarians find themselves in a unique situation that will require their research skills and ability to work with the public in a whole new way. Libraries have always been at the forefront of innovation and technology. The current pandemic will challenge libraries to continue to evolve the ways in which information is communicated. This will be an ever-changing task.

Further research about how libraries continue to meet these challenges in a pandemic will be interesting. How are public libraries evolving technologies to meet the unique needs of their patrons? How are medical librarians rising to the challenges of constant innovative medical research being published and cataloged? Will libraries and library organizations offer more than resource guides? Are librarians' roles changing to be more technical or more patron-driven than before? One thing is certain, and that is times are changing, and uncharted information services await.

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