

# The International Congress on Medical Librarianship (ICML) a history of cooperative worldwide medical librarianship developments

(Compiled from previous history papers and recent reports by Heather Todd and Lisa Kruesi, August 2006)

We are proud to announce that Australia will be hosting the International Congress on Medical Librarianship, in Brisbane, Queensland on the 31 August – 4 September 2009. This will be a landmark occasion to celebrate the tenth anniversary and fifty-fifth year of the Congress being held for the first time in Australia. Since the inception of the ICML in 1953 in London, where over 300 librarians first gathered, through to the ninth Congress held in Brazil in 2005 the status and issues confronting of medical libraries, especially those in developing countries, has been raised by the ICML throughout the world. The Congress is held every four or five years giving the health library sector an opportunity to meet together to address major issues confronting the profession.

There are some excellent papers<sup>1 2 3</sup> available which document the history of the ICML available from: <http://www.icml9.org/archives/hist.htm>.

Some of the issues that stand out when examining the history of the ICML that we still confront today include the high cost of journals, developments with library education, administration and operations and utilization of machines for bibliographic purposes.

Following the “Converge on London” web site initiative a brief summary of the previous (and the forthcoming) ICML in reverse chronological order follows<sup>4</sup>:

| Year | Location                        | Congress and Theme   |
|------|---------------------------------|--|
| 2009 | Brisbane, Queensland, Australia | Tenth – Positioning the Profession                                       |
| 2005 | Salvador, Bahia, Brazil         | Ninth – Commitment to Equity   |
| 2000 | London, U.K.                    | Eighth – Converge on London  |
| 1995 | Washington DC, USA              | Seventh - Health information for the global village                      |
| 1990 | New Deli, India                 | Sixth - Medical libraries - keys to health information                   |
| 1985 | Tokyo, Japan                    | Fifth – Medical libraries – one world: resources, cooperation, services. |
| 1980 | Belgrade, Yugoslavia            | Fourth – Health information in for a developing world.                   |

<sup>1</sup> Pizer, Irwin H. **The International Congress on Medical Librarianship - Thirty Years of Evolutionary Change**. Viewed 29 August 2006, <<http://www.icml9.org/archives/pizer.htm>>.

<sup>2</sup> Crawford, Susan Y. **The International Congress on Medical Librarianship, 1953-1995: Goals and Achievements**. Viewed 29 August 2006, <<http://www.icml9.org/archives/crawf.htm>>

<sup>3</sup> Groen, Frances. **Health Information in the Year 2000 - Towards the Millennium in International Medical Information** Viewed 29 August 2006, <<http://www.icml9.org/archives/groen.htm>>

<sup>4</sup> Converge on London, ICML website, Viewed 29 August 2006, <<http://www.icml9.org/archives/hist.htm>>

| Year | Location               | Congress and Theme  |
|------|------------------------|---|
| 1969 | Amsterdam, Netherlands | Third – World progress in medical librarianship   |
| 1963 | Washington DC, USA     | Second – To foster the development and improvement of medical library service throughout the world. |
| 1953 | London, UK             | First – Survey the current position and activity of medical libraries throughout the world          |

### Positioning the Profession, 2009

The theme is **Positioning the Profession** and the 10th ICML will embrace a range of areas central to health libraries throughout the world. The Congress will be held in the centre of Brisbane, (capital of Queensland, known as Australia’s sunshine state) at one of the world’s most prestigious convention centres<sup>5</sup>. It will be an opportunity to report the impact of information specialists upon organizations and best means to position the health library and information profession for the future; status and ongoing development of international and local partnerships and collaborations in the twenty-first century; health informatics and the medical librarian; evidence-based health care and libraries; health library research, education and training; marketing and promotion; and integration of the latest technologies with service delivery. Tours of architecturally designed and award-winning libraries will be organised for delegates. MLA accredited trainers will provide continuing education. Sight seeing and unique tourist events will be available for both city and outback experiences.

### Commitment to Equity, 2005

In September 2005 the 9<sup>th</sup> ICML was held in South America for the first time, located in dazzling Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. This Congress joined with a number of regional and national meetings, including the 7th Latin American and Caribbean Congress on Health Sciences Information, CRICS VII. The theme was **Commitment to Equity**, with the focus on the need for equality in access to and mastering of information and knowledge as essential for improving the health and quality of life of individuals and communities. Over 1,000 participants from more than 50 countries attended.

At the closing session participants agreed to the Declaration of Salvador – **Commitment to Equity** which defines a global commitment with equality of access to information and knowledge<sup>6</sup>. The declaration is available from:

<http://www.icml.org/channel.php?lang=en&channel=91&content=438>

### Convergence, 2000

The theme for the 8th ICML held in London during 2000 focused around the library and information profession becoming closely joined as information technology capabilities have merged computing and publishing together. The Congress explored the practicalities of this trend, and the ways in which it has changed the nature and philosophy of our profession<sup>7</sup>. A break from tradition occurred with the proceedings of the 8<sup>th</sup> ICML not being published in

<sup>5</sup> Brisbane Convention Centre at Top of World Ratings, 08 August 2006, viewed 27 August 2006: <<http://www.bcec.com.au/www/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.view&newsid=77>>

<sup>6</sup> Jakobsson, Arne. News from our Colleagues: 9th International Congress on Medical Librarianship, International Congress on Medical Librarianship, 20-23 September 2005, Salvador Bahia, Brazil. **Journal Of The European Association For Health Information and Libraries**, Vol.1 (4), p. 12 Available: <<http://www.eahil.net/newsletter/newsletters.htm>>

<sup>7</sup> Convergence of London – ICML -2000, Viewed 27 August 2006, <<http://www.eahil.net/newsletter/49/49-4-eng.htm>>

paper form. All the papers were published in full on the ICML web site. Held in the Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre in London attracted more than 1,400 delegates from 79 countries<sup>8</sup>.

### **Health Information for the Global Village, 1995**

Subthemes of the 7<sup>th</sup> ICML included the impact of culture, language and history on health information; education for health information delivery; measuring the effectiveness of health information on patient care; role of the government in health information delivery; standards for health information; medical informatics and telecommunications; and legal and ethical questions in the delivery of health care and health information<sup>9</sup>. The evolution from “medical libraries” into “health information” and “the world” had become “a global village” since the 1963 ICML was evident at the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress<sup>10</sup>.

### **Health Medical libraries - keys to health information, 1990**

More than half of the papers presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> ICML held in New Delhi, India, were by representatives from developing countries, compared to the 1<sup>st</sup> Congress when only one delegate represented Africa<sup>11</sup>. “At this ICML Arabic Countries, Africa, India and Latin American reported inadequate coverage of their medical literature in international databases.... Attempts to develop networks and resource sharing among medical libraries in China were reported...Most libraries in developing countries [were reported] to confront problems of distance, lack of resources, poor communications, inadequate facilities and insufficient budget for daily operations.<sup>12</sup>”

### **Medical libraries – one world: resources, cooperation, services, 1985**

The 5<sup>th</sup> ICML was held in Tokyo, Japan and covered issues of information transfer and technology, bibliographic control, cooperation, services and medical librarianship. Sixty-four countries were represented at the Congress. Crawford, indicates that China presented one of its first congress papers on problems of acquiring foreign journals, language differences in searching the literature and quality filtering in Medline<sup>13</sup>. Problems raised at previous Congresses such as cooperation in many developing countries, isolation of libraries, inadequate resources and poor communication were discussed.

### **Health information in for a developing world, 1980**

At the 4<sup>th</sup> ICML, held in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, three major sub-topics featured: infrastructure for health services; new technology applied to health information services; and cooperation through health information systems. Pizer reports that a major concern raised at this Congress was the long interval between the third and fourth Congress. From the first Congress it was envisaged the ICML would be held every five years. This had not been sustained by 1980. In 1977 IFLA was reorganised and the Biological and Medical Sciences Section was formed. This Section was identified with responsibility for providing support and continuity to the organization of the Congress<sup>14</sup>. The World Health Organization (WHO) held a special program for librarians working in its regional offices, who attended the

---

<sup>8</sup> Blenkinsopp, John. “What the doctor ordered.” Viewed 27 August 2006 <<http://www.la-hq.org.uk/directory/record/r200009/article3.html>>

<sup>9</sup> Crawford, Susan Y. op. cit. p. [4]

<sup>10</sup> Groen, Frances. op cit. p. [2]

<sup>11</sup> Crawford, Susan Y. op cit. p. [4]

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*, p. [3]

<sup>14</sup> Pizer, Irwin H. op cit [p. 4-5]

Congress. From the meeting onwards WHO and the IFLA Section of Biological and Medical Sciences would become permanent co-sponsors of the Congress<sup>15</sup>.

#### **World progress in medical librarianship, 1969**

Held in Amsterdam, the 3<sup>rd</sup> ICML included a symposium on regional and national systems in both developed and developing countries. Conditions in Southeast Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and Africa were described. Many of the presentations portrayed lack of facilities, funds and difficulties cooperating with other countries. A plea for assistance from the WHO was made by an Indian delegate, who noted the WHO had spent millions on eradication of diseases and for public health but not for libraries<sup>16</sup>.

#### **To foster the development and improvement of medical library service throughout the world, 1963**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> ICML held in Washington, DC, focused on library organization including emerging medical libraries in developing countries, library resources and interlibrary cooperation, education and training worldwide, medical subject bibliography and history of medical libraries<sup>17</sup>. The National Library of Medicine presented the newly emerged MEDLARS project. Technology opportunities for libraries of all sizes emerged as a theme from the Congress<sup>18</sup>.

#### **Survey the current position and activity of medical libraries throughout the world, 1953**

Control of the world's medical literature was an important topic raised at the 1<sup>st</sup> ICML held in London<sup>19</sup>. The meeting was organised by leaders from medical libraries not long after World War II. Around this period the Armed Forces Medical Library (USA) was being transformed and would eventually become the National Library of Medicine in 1956<sup>20</sup>. Topics included library education, administration and operations, the high cost of journals and the history of medicine. UNESCO had established an international exchange of publications in medical libraries which was helping those countries impacted by war to re-establish medical library services. At the inaugural meeting the "difficult state of libraries in Asia, Africa, Australia and Latin America was of great concern."<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> *ibid* [p. 6]

<sup>16</sup> Crawford, Susan Y. *op cit* [p. 2-3]

<sup>17</sup> *ibid* [p. 2]

<sup>18</sup> Pizer, Irwin H. *op cit* [p. 3]

<sup>19</sup> *ibid* [p 2]

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*

<sup>21</sup> Crawford, Susan Y. *op cit* [2]