

NURSES — A USER GROUP IN DEVELOPMENT AND SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR LIBRARY AND INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS

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The nursing profession is the largest profession in the health care area, but not the heaviest user of library and information services. Nurses are, however, expanding their usage of library and information services and this presentation will outline some implications for library and information professionals including suggestions as to how they can participate in and contribute to this change. Nurses' information seeking and use will be discussed from three related angles 1) nurses as a user group, 2) the production of information relevant for nurses, and 3) the importance of knowledgeable library and information service providers. The paper will be illustrated with examples taken from both a Swedish and an international context.

The information seeking behaviour of nurses has been studied in the LIS literature. These studies indicate that nursing is still a practical profession without a tradition in reading as a source for developing professional knowledge. Nursing education has, however, developed from being a mainly practical to a more academic program, compatible with other higher education qualifications. In Sweden today most students leave their nursing education with a Bachelor's degree. It is now also possible in many places to take a Master's degree and the number of nurses in doctoral studies is increasing.

It is important to understand the nature of nursing knowledge and the distinction between nursing knowledge and medical knowledge, even if the areas are related to each other. Nursing research is a growing area and, as a result, the number of nursing research journals is increasing. A trend such as Evidence Based Medicine has, for example, an analogy in Evidence Based Nursing with a journal dedicated to the issue. Developments within the nursing profession along with an increasing production of relevant information will strengthen the link between nursing practice and theoretical nursing knowledge.

Increase in the production of relevant information and a more academic education of nurses remains insufficient. Key persons to support this relation are library and information professionals. Without high quality library and information services, provided by professionals who understand their user groups and know the tools for supporting and developing their needs, it is unlikely that searching and use of information by nurses will achieve its full potential. This paper will be concluded with some information sources and channels currently available over the Internet.

It is hoped that the presentation will contribute to a better understanding of nurses as information seekers and users, now and in the future, and how library and information professionals can better support the development of this user group.