

**Title**

**Positioning the Health Librarian as a Blended Professional:  
A Framework for Development**

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**Abstract**

Technology has transformed the professional landscape, expanding knowledge bases, generating specialisms and blurring traditional boundaries. Convergence has created debate around the roles and skills of 'hybrid', 'blended' and 'third space' professionals in business, healthcare, librarianship and the academy. Librarians working in the health domain are an extreme case of the hybrid phenomenon. Their habitat is complex and pluralist. Research, education and practice must be blended effectively to deliver evidence-based healthcare. Information and communication technologies have enabled integration of clinical data with knowledge-based scientific information. The web is blurring the boundaries between consumer health information and professional medical literature. Roles of other players, such as therapists, nurses and general practitioners, are extending and becoming more specialised, as new species emerge, intent on helping the whole system to function more efficiently. Within library and information science, new labels such as 'informationist' and 'informatician' have been used to denote specialists with scientific or clinical knowledge providing technology-assisted context-based information services, often physically embedded in client departments. Librarianship has arguably moved closer to informatics as technology has pervaded our work, offering opportunities for practitioners who are able to acquire sufficient subject knowledge for the job. New specialties have also emerged in our own field, such as training and patient-centred roles. Both specialist and generalist health librarians face a constant challenge in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding to keep up with developments in the field and enhance their contributions to their institutions. Commentators have identified the need for a broader skillset combining professional, technical, managerial, (inter)personal and context-specific competencies (e.g. educational, clinical) to enable in-depth involvement in core processes, with input to decision making. Finding time and a workable mode for continuing professional education and development can be problematic. The proposed paper will review changes in health library and information work in relation to evolution and revolution in other professions, discuss the competencies required in the field and methods for professional development, using published literature and illustrative models to provide a framework for reflection and action.

## **Biography**

Sheila Corral is Professor of Librarianship & Information Management and Head of the University of Sheffield iSchool. Before moving to Sheffield, she worked for 25 years as an information specialist, library manager and strategic director in public, special, national and university library and information services. She has academic qualifications in Librarianship, Business Administration, Information Systems and Learning & Teaching. Her teaching areas include academic and special libraries; information resources and information literacy; and the planning and management of library, information and IT services. Her current research interests include professional roles and competencies in knowledge-based organisations, information literacy strategy development and collection management in the digital world.

Sheila is the current chair of the British Association for Information & Library Education and Research (BAILER), she was the founding chair of the Information Services National Training Organisation (isNTO) and the first President of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP). She has undertaken consultancy assignments for universities and professional associations in the UK, Ireland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Iceland, Norway, Portugal and Spain. In 2002 she was named in the *Independent on Sunday* as one of the top ten librarians in the UK and in 2003 she was presented with the International Information Industries Lifetime Achievement Award for her contribution to the development of the information profession. She is one of the few librarians in *Who's Who*.