

SAILING IN THE REASERCH ACTIVITY OF ITALIAN BIOMEDICAL LIBRARIES : THE BIBLIOSAN ANALYSIS

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THE FRAMEWORK

Bibliosan is the Italian national network that groups all the libraries of Biomedical Research Institutes. It started at the end of 2003 as a pilot project and in 2006 became a System with regular annual funding from the Ministry of Health, with rules and a lithe management committee which programs, informs, trains and supervises the technical choices and promotes new initiatives. Actually 56 partners and 65 libraries are involved in the network including 43 Research Institutes and Hospitals, 10 Veterinary Institutes and the National Health Institute. After gaining the aims of a shared catalogue and document delivery service, the awarding of a consolidated budget of 1 million euros made it possible to start in 2007 with the acquisition of shared electronic biomedical resources, which was the main purpose that the System proposed. Since the beginning of the project, the final objective was to achieve a substantial reduction of paper journals subscribed and to find a better way for carrying out a coordinated acquisition policy for e-journals.

In 2008 and 2009 the System obtained a sharp increase in funding from the Ministry that is now two million euros. Thanks to this doubling of the sum more resources were added to those already subscribed. Today Bibliosan makes available to all doctors and researchers of the Biomedical Research Institutes participating, a substantial package of electronic journals and the most advanced tools for retrival and management of scientific information, such as biomedical databases, databanks, bibliographic software and services for remote access. The main resources available to all Bibliosan users consists of more than 5000 full-text purchased journals in addition to 3.500 open access journals assuring researchers more than 8.000 titles in the electronic catalogue. Bibliosan makes available online information resources of each Structure, increases the collaboration between the members, favours document sharing and dissemination of scientific information. We can say that the System is now fully operational thanks to participation and contribution of librarians. But who are the Bibliosan referentes?

SURVEY

During the summer of 2008 a survey was conducted to examine the activities of Bibliosan libraries and to recognize the number of staff. The aim was to update the one carry out in 2003, from the dawn of Bibliosan, to know more about the facilities, documentations, information and training needs, to monitor what was accomplished and to adjust their work forces to make a more workable and efficient System, even after the topics sollecited to the Ministry.

Through the distribution of an electronic questionnaire sent to the librarians, the data was acquired from libraries (included documentary and instrumental) and individual (functions, tasks,

occupational status, education, professional development and teaching) for each operator in the 65 libraries with a total of 195 work units.

Analysis of the data showed very clearly that the tasks of librarians are not limited to management, administrative and computer technology of documentary heritage, retrieval and spread of information. They are increasingly the protagonists of intense training and education, dissemination of knowledge, transmission and transfer of skills, organize and manage courses, seminars and meetings, speeches at conferences, publish articles in magazines and professional journals of international relevance.

In this paper we consider the latter two aspects, describing areas of activity and achievements during 2008 and 2009. In particular we will study the scientific productivity of Bibliosan libraries and the important role played by information professionals in modern biomedical libraries.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

Regarding training activities during 2008 a series of initiatives was continued by libraries to promote services to end users (physicians, veterinarians, researchers, etc.) through the use of tools and resources provided by the System. The data was encouraging.

Teaching on a large scale began in 2007 with 13 educational events produced peripherally. In 2008 and 2009 there was a substantial increase in the number of courses as well as in the number of participants. There were 63 training events with a total of 1,746 participants, up from 500 in 2007. The following table summarizes results.

Training activity: a comparison of data 2007-2009

Year	No. Events	No. Participants	Institutions Involved
2007	13	500	12
2008	39	1221	16
2009	63	1746	20

Table 1

The organization of the learning process, involved in multiple levels, greatly increased the number of courses carried out, although the institutions involved are still few (only 16 out of 56 in 2008 and 20 out of 56 in 2009). Alongside these traditional training sessions, publishers and producers organized Webinars online courses of electronic resources. Moreover, many librarians have decided to meet "*ad personam*" with researchers, not registrable as training events but equally efficient for user involvement.

The dissemination of information on services offered and training in their use is essential for one to have a widespread distribution of scientific knowledge among real and effective consumers.

This educational need has affected not only the end user but in the first instance the librarian who must know and study the innovations of the System, put them in practice and transmit the information to the researchers of their own institution, through a process of knowledge transfer, professional skills and abilities. All these processes require the doubling of the librarians

challenging role of teacher and student; to the role of the end user's teacher and then to the learner through continuing education courses.

The 2008 survey examines the data on educational activities related to library personnel during the period 2005-2007. Participation in training courses for librarians were 614 in total, 109 out of 195 people have not been trained (86 did not attend courses).

Bibliosan librarians conducted 444 lectures, even though 67 librarians out of 195 have done teaching activities (126 did not teach).

The data shows significant teaching activities, with a limited number of Institutions where there has been no training.

Unfortunately negative data exists on the group of structures whose librarians have not done any training during 2005-2007. This is a bad aspect especially in a context where there has been a rapid turnover of knowledge and resources available to researchers.

For years to come we will need to implement a program of continuing education through wide and constantly updated offers especially for those libraries who do not have a strategy or educational events designed. The purpose is to promote the professional role of the Bibliosan referent which is a key element in user training and dissemination of information resources.

SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES

Certainly the most interesting aspect emerged from the 2008 survey and subsequent monitoring of the librarians research activity, proves that they are processors and producers of an intensive scientific productivity. In fact they:

- organize seminars within their own structures aimed at facilitating access to scientific meetings and dissemination and promote health;
- are responsible for science teachers and training courses also accredited CME (Continuing Education in Medicine);
- are involved as coordinators, partners, promoters in several projects at local, regional and national collaborations with other documentation centers and public and private institutions;
- organize events and are part of scientific and organizational council committee;
- play a regular editorial role and disseminate brochures, pamphlets, collections, serial, etc.;
- publish articles in professional journals dedicated to librarians, including impacted journals, aimed at doctors, researchers and health professionals;
- participate and present their experiences and expertise at national and international conferences with oral presentations and posters;

In order to study and evaluate the last two aspects which are more interesting and challenging for the role that the librarian must play in modern biomedical libraries, we report in summary form in the following table, the contribution of the Bibliosan staff production of scientific articles and active participation at national or international events during 2008 and 2009:

Scientific Production in Bibliosan Libraries		
	2008	2009
No. articles published in journals with impact factor	2	2
No. articles published in journals without impact factor	11	38
No. of communications presented at International Conferences and published Congress Proceedings	4	16
No. of communications presented at National Conferences and published Congress Proceedings	4	37
No. of Posters presented at International Conferences	11	6
No. of books or chapters of books	2	7
Total	34	106

Table 2

To facilitate the analysis of content and monitor the trends of scientific production within the Bibliosan community for each publication we have identified some relevant topics and under these headings some subheadings:

- 1. Document Delivery**
- 2. Health Promotion**
- 3. Food Safety**
- 4. Library service and Tools:** including, Spaces and Places, Qualitative and Quantitative Indicators, Statistics User, Search Strategy, Training...
- 5. Patient Information and Education**
- 6. Spread Information:** including Open Access, Web 2.0 ...
- 7. EBM:** Evident Based Medicine and Librarianship
- 8. Health Librarians:** including roles, competencies, occupations
- 9. Health Technologies Assessment**

Scientific Production in Bibliosan Libraries shown by topics 2008-2009

Topics	Communications at International Conferences	Communications at National Conferences	Articles	Articles IF	Poster	Books	Tot.
1	2	4	1	0	0	0	7
2	1	1	7	0	2	1	12
3	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
4	1	10	11	1	4	3	30
5	0	9	1	0	3	0	13
6	10 (6 OA)	8 (7 OA)	18 (8 OA)	0	4 (1 OA)	4	44 (22 OA)
7	3	1	2	2	0	1	9
8	1	8	6	0	4	0	19
9	1	0	2	1	0	0	4
Tot.	20	41	49	4	17	9	140

Table 3

The table shows areas of interest and research of Bibliosan librarians. The main theme is the dissemination of information with as many as 44 contributions, mainly related to the extension of Open Access, whether it is free and immediate access to biomedical and life sciences journal literature, as well as to promote self-archiving in institutional repositories of scientific research results obtained thanks to government grants.

The second item in order of importance is that related to Librarian Services and Tools with 30 works, including an article published in a scientific journal with an Impact Factor, about new web tools to improve PubMed searches for the biomedical community.

Considerable importance is also given to the profession of librarians and recognition of his/her role (Health Librarians 19 works), Patient Information was 13 contributions and Health Promotion with 12 publications.

The study shows that it is possible to carry out research activity in each library and how this increases its visibility within their Institutes as well as within the Bibliosan network. This also contributes to enhance the role of librarians as a mediator and facilitator of quality information, which aims to support physicians, researchers, health care professionals, patients, consumers and citizens.

Although the data collected does not represent the entire scientific activity by Bibliosan librarians (not all colleagues have responded to the survey by sending their publications and communications), surely this is the expression and reflection of growth and professional maturity that today is not yet a widespread practice and does not involve all stakeholders in the System, but soon it will become common practice thanks to the propulsive and exciting actions of the network.

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