

Teaching & Learning activities among the BiblioSan libraries: the result of a survey

Ivana Truccolo¹, Silvia Molinari², Alessandra Loreti³, Moreno Curti⁴.

¹ *Scientific & Patients'Library. Centro di Riferimento Oncologico CRO, Aviano, Italy.*
e-mail: itruccolo@cro.it

² *Multimedia Library, Istituto Neurologico C. Mondino, Pavia, Italy*

³ *Medical Library, Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital, Rome, Italy*

⁴ *Scientific Directorate, Policlinico San Matteo, Pavia, Italy (BiblioSan Coordinator)*

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Introduction

Although the vast literature and extensive discussion on the topics and events where the health librarians are teachers/trainers¹⁻³, not always these papers include what kind of endeavors are behind the organization of these events. In this paper, we will present the results of an Italian survey among the BiblioSan libraries about “what is behind a teaching library”.

BiblioSan⁴ is a 12-year old network of 60 biomedical non academic libraries affiliated to 66 healthcare and research institutions, both private and public, in Italy. This network is actually a reality in the outline of the national libraries consortia, receiving regular funding from the Ministry of Health (about 2 million Euros yearly), a common catalogue, an efficient document delivery system and, above all, a coordinate structure for the acquisition of shared electronic resources (i.e. journals and data bases).

Aim

Our first aim is to draw a picture from beginning to end of the teaching activities put in place by these libraries in relation to some structural variables. The second one is to find whether is an association between the educational activities and some structural variables such as budget library, staff, years of experience etc...

The assumption is that teaching is a crucial activity for a biomedical library^{2,5,6} member of the BiblioSan consortium.

Methods

To map the educational activities, we drafted an online questionnaire composed of 20 items using a GDrive tool. The main questions - mostly closed questions and/or multiple choices - were related not only to the number of courses put in place in the 2014, the kind of learnt topics, the preferred educational methods, the length of courses, the accreditation of events, but also to the methods of planning: the criteria of choice of the different topics, the impact evaluation, the teachers competence, the collaboration with other organizations, the kind of used competence, the communication of events, the use of feedback etc... The questionnaire was tested by 6 people affiliated to 3 different libraries. A link to the online questionnaire was sent to the BiblioSan referents and they were invited to fill in the quest in ten days (second half of November 2015). Only one reminder was sent.

A first data analysis was performed using the Gdrive summary of responses (frequency). We used the MicroSoft Excel algorithms to deep into some associations among variables. A draft presentation of the first results was made to the Bibliosan workshop, held in Rome on December 2, 2015. The aim was to gather some inputs and hints to deep some controversial data and discuss how to use the survey results.

Results/Discussion/Conclusions

47 out of 60 interviewed BiblioSan referents responded to the questionnaire. 37 out of 47 stated that they organized educational activities, about 84% of them are involved in an intense educational activity, 16% in a poor one, most libraries are able to address their education to different types of users. The interactive methods seem to be used more frequently than the frontal lessons, but a little percentage of libraries are involved as teachers in the whole research path, etc...

The first results of data analysis showed a “black and white picture” of the BiblioSan libraries. Summing up the non-respondents and the negative answers, about 48% of the BiblioSan libraries seem to be non-teaching libraries, but this partial conclusion need to be confirmed by the real educational activities data gathered yearly by the BiblioSan Executive Committee.

Apparently there is no association between library budget and n. of educational events, or educational events and librarian’s age, or years of experience of the librarian. A deeper analysis was performed, crossing the educational activities with the articles download.

Maybe the competence of librarians and a “certain idea” of library is behind an engagement⁷⁻¹¹ vs non-engagement of the library in this activity. Just to investigate about some issues needing further research such as reasons for not organizing educational activities, approach to choice of educational topics, the impact evaluation of educational activities, etc., we are going to ask some libraries to conduct a focus group with users and non-users of the library with an independent trainer.

In conclusion this first survey was very useful to address BiblioSan efforts in enhancing the educational activities of their libraries.

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