A personal reflection: the first four months of the CHQ Library

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In September 2021 I started a new job with the Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service (CHQ) in Queensland. CHQ was established in 2012 and had never had a library. As I was to find out, my new manager had been pushing for a library/librarian for some time, and eventually obtained approval for a 0.4 position with the title "Librarian and Research Metrics Manager".

Prior to starting this position, I had been in public and health libraries for a lifetime, and had most recently worked in the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service (CHHHS) Library & Knowledge Centre for eight years. For the first four months of the CHQ position, I worked remotely from home in Cairns, while concurrently maintaining a part-time position with CHHHS. After my family and I relocated to South East Queensland, I officially left CHHHS and devoted my professional time to CHQ.

Those first four months were tricky. I found it quite challenging to work from home with a team that I had not met in person. I am thankful I still had my Cairns team to put up with my incessant interruptions, obsession with Christmas decorations, and penchant for a chat over a cup of tea – all of which are hard to maintain in a virtual position! My new team at CHQ were also in the Research Directorate, which was another first for me. While I had worked with researchers and research departments at CHHHS, I was not part of the actual research team, and my daily interactions were with a purely library team. Luckily, my new manager at CHQ was extremely supportive; the administration officer for the directorate was highly competent and welcoming; and the rest of the team were engaged and responsive in the meetings I attended fortnightly via Teams, and in any email interactions.

I also found it difficult to decide where to start, at a practical level. So I started with everything. Collection management, LMS, Libguides, journals, document delivery, staff publications, metrics etc etc etc. I was a flurry of activity for a couple of weeks, and then I wasn't. Because I was waiting. Waiting for responses, approval, more information, and so on. I also quickly realised that CHQ was very different to CHHHS.

Because CHQ is a new organisation and hadn't evolved over a long period of time like CHHHS, it operates quite differently. At CHQ everything is documented in advance, and lots of tasks that I was accustomed to doing in-house had to be outsourced to other departments. While it took some getting used to for me, I also recognised every interaction as an opportunity to build my CHQ network, and to build my profile.

Gradually I made progress. When I sit back and think about it now, I am quite proud of what I have achieved, even if I felt stagnant at various stages in the process. Here are the big things I completed/established in the first four months:

- Library Services Framework

  Documentation is key at CHQ, so I have written a Library Services Framework that outlines key activities, the rationale behind them, and the methods of implementation. I have also created an infographic version of this document. These documents are not finalised and approved yet, but the process is underway.

- Library Collection Management Procedure

  Another document, this actually helped me think through what I wanted to achieve via a collection, and what would suit CHQ best. I consulted a range of published collection management procedures and pulled together what I think will work at CHQ.

- Establishing GratisNet membership and services

  This one was relatively straightforward, but absolutely essential. I have both provided and received articles via the network, and I am always in awe of the excellence that is GratisNet, and what it represents.

- Staff Publications/affiliations searches

  This was high on the list of priorities for my manager, so I got to work on this straight away. Creating a comprehensive search strategy in a range of databases was the first step. I've had several requests for data based on staff publications in the first few months, so I was very glad to have established the searches in advance, as it streamlined these requests significantly.

- Weekly staff publications tweet

  Once the staff affiliations searches were established, I started running a weekly report, and selecting one article/researcher a week to send to Communications Team (Comms) for Twitter content. There is a process around getting approval from the researcher, and ensuring that the lead researcher is a CHQ staff member, but I enjoy doing this each week because it enables me to make connections with researchers, as well as see what amazing research is coming out of CHQ.

- Publication of Intranet pages

  At CHHHS we maintained both our own Intranet pages, as well as a website on the LibGuides platform. At CHQ, all online information is managed by the Communications team. I made contact with some key Comms staff members and starting compiling information for the Library Intranet pages. It is pretty bare bones, but was published early in the new year and will do the job of making basic information and request forms available to all staff. I intend to develop these pages and have extra content added regularly; the next information to go up will be around research metrics – what they are, where to get them, and how to use them.

- Paediatrics resources on CKN

  The Clinical Knowledge Network (CKN) is a state-wide portal to online resources, provided and managed by the QLD Department of Health. Before joining CHHHS I worked with CKN, back when it was delivered by the Department's Central Library team. These days the whole platform is outsourced to Ebsco, with Department oversight of contracts and content. With the go ahead from the internal CKN Manager, I worked with Ebsco staff to establish a page on CKN where paediatrics (paeds) resources are available. I curated a list of paeds resources in a range of formats, and Ebsco made them available on the one page. The next natural phase of this will be curating lists for specialty areas. I am excited by the opportunities CKN provides and look forward to working with them into the future.

That list might not seem all that impressive, but I am quietly chuffed with what I have done in my 15.2 hours per week. There are obviously a million things I still need to do. An LMS is at the top of that list, as is establishing a staff publications repository. My next big step will be to very carefully roll out services like literature searches, and ensure I am not inundated with requests. It's a balancing act between creating demand so that we can justify additional funding for an extension of hours, without disappointing clients with poor service due to time constraints. My position is fully funded by the Research Directorate, but I need to provide library services to all CHQ staff (approx. FTE 3016), as well as provide metrics assistance to researchers and directorate staff. I will be walking a fine line, but I am confident that with clear communication I can manage expectations and provide excellent services within negotiated timeframes.

The other big thing in my immediate further will be establishing the physical space. Reportedly there was a space allocated to a library when the Children's Hospital was built. Because it was never used as such, it has gradually been taken over by particular groups of staff, who use it as something of a computer lab/common room.

I intend to make this a welcoming space for all CHQ staff. As I won't be able to staff it at all times, and a physical collection is not a definite, if everyone uses it at least as a computer lab/common room, I will be happy. And if they use it for study, collaboration, resource access, training, and knowledge building, I will be even happier.

Finally, I'm also really looking forward to National Simultaneous Storytime this year! I can't wait to meet Captain Starlight and talk about how I can help with NSS in 2022 and beyond. What better place to combine my love of health libraries and storytelling than a Children's Hospital?!?!

I'm writing this from my new home in SEQ. Thanks to the latest QLD outbreak of COVID-19, I continue to work from home for the time being. In other news, just prior to Christmas when I was mid-relocation, I also heard from my new boss that she wasn't going to be my new boss anymore. She was finishing up by Christmas and moving onto a new position elsewhere. I must admit that this really threw me. Because her support of me personally and professionally, and of libraries generally, was so absolute, I felt like I was losing my top ally. But as I settled into work this morning I realised that she had done her job by getting the position established, and supporting me during the first months of the role. Now it is my job to find new allies, establish more relationships, and weave the new library and metrics service into the fabric of CHQ.