

EDITORIAL

Daniel McDonald

Librarian, Darling Downs Health | Editor, JoHILA

HLAnewsed@alia.org.au

Welcome to the third issue of the first volume of JoHILA, the 'Journal of Health Information and Libraries Australasia'. This is also my first issue as editor. I would like to thank the Health Libraries Australia executive and the editorial board of JoHILA for entrusting to me the continued evolution and maturation of this important publication. I would also like to pay special tribute to Taryn Hunt, who edited the previous iteration of this publication, 'HLA News', and oversaw the transition to JoHILA. This has been a significant shift and Taryn deserves much credit for handing over processes and a platform and a publication in such excellent shape.

The first known example of medical journalism in Australia was published in the 'Sydney Gazette' on 14 October 1804. Dr Thomas Jamison wrote for public information an article on Smallpox, decrying the misinformation surrounding this deadly infectious disease and striving "to remove prepossessions which, if adhered to, must be productive of the most calamitous consequences to the rising generation of these Colonies" (Cumpston, 1914). At least times have moved on and in 2020 we are no longer threatened by deadly infectious disease and attendant misinformation... unfortunately, of course, untrue. Writing in 'The Atlantic' on August 4 2020 Ed Yong noted:

"Clear distribution of accurate information is among the most important defenses against an epidemic's spread. And yet the largely unregulated, social-media-based communications infrastructure of the 21st century almost ensures that misinformation will proliferate fast... An infodemic of falsehoods spread alongside the actual [corona]virus. Rumors coursed through online platforms that are designed to keep users engaged, even if that means feeding them content that is polarizing or untrue. In a national crisis, when people need to act in concert, this is calamitous" (Yong, 2020).

Clearly in such an environment the role of health librarians and information professionals is of critical importance. To counter the infodemic, and the pandemic, and all disease epidemics, we need to discharge our primary responsibilities with intelligence and integrity and innovation. But we also need to reflect on, and interrogate, our role and its wider context, and to communicate these insights with each other and the broader health professional community. This is the essential purpose of JoHILA. And it needs you. In the first issue of the 'Medical Journal of Australia', published Saturday 4 July 1914, the editor(s) wrote of the MJA's purpose:

"It has to record the progress of scientific medicine, and to assist in rendering the practice of medicine in all its branches of the greatest benefit to the people of Australia. These aims can only be attained by an enthusiastic

cooperation of the whole profession... No journal can be thoroughly satisfactory from a scientific point of view unless the available amount of scientific matter, and especially of original articles, is well in excess of its actual needs... If every practitioner in the Commonwealth will commit to writing the results of special observations or study of hitherto but imperfectly understood pathological processes, or of new methods of treatment, the educational value of the Journal should be greatly enhanced."

The same can be said of this Journal. The work you do as a health librarian is valuable, and essential, and possibly unique, and colleagues would benefit greatly from reading about your splendid ideas and implementations. If you are so enthused consider submitting an article to JoHILA, either through the journal's website or to HLAnewsed@alia.org.au . Providing the planet still exists and is functioning in 2021, three issues will be published in April, August, and December. All the best, and thanks for all that you do to improve healthcare for the benefit of communities in our region.

References

Cumpston JHL. The History of Medical Journalism in Australia. Medical Journal of Australia. 1914 Jul 4; 1(1): 14-16

The Medical Journal of Australia. 1914 Jul 4; 1(1): 9

Yong, E. How the pandemic defeated America. The Atlantic. 2020 Aug 4: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/09/coronavirus-american-failure/614191/>