

ALIA advocacy events and the conundrum presented for Health and Special Libraries

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As a new graduate Librarian, I was extremely fortunate to find a part-time position in a Health Library close to home in late 2019. It is proving to be a wonderful experience with just enough challenges to keep me on my toes.

As I adjust to this new career, I have sometimes found myself butting need and imagination up against the advocacy and promotional opportunities afforded through the Australian Library and Information Association [ALIA], attempting to fit these themes into a health library context. I can usually see the opportunity, but I sense that sometimes, the generalized thematic thrust of ALIA events messaging may get lost in translation for the Specialist Librarian. Unless one has time and capacity to exert some imagination, these marketing opportunities and their themes will often mean little to our unique cohorts.

The Australian Libraries and Information Association [ALIA], performs an outstanding role in Australian society by promoting and reinforcing the professionalism of Librarians and extolling the value, impact, benefits and social compact of libraries, both public and specialist (ALIA, 2019). The Health Libraries Sector in Australia [HLA] has a high profile within ALIA and much excellent work has been achieved, particularly the NSQHS 2.0 Live Literature Searches (ALIA, n.d.a).

While this work is essential and ongoing, it is behind-the-scenes. To advocate for the benefits to clinicians and allied health teams, ALIA's public-facing marketing tools, eg Library & Information Week and Library Lovers Day, could be leaving many health and other specialist librarians scratching their heads as to how to use them within their unique use contexts. Perhaps ALIA could seek input from its specialist Librarian cohorts to better understand how they must reimagine and redesign event themes to be fit for purpose? I don't know how other health librarians have reworked LIW themes in the past, but my experience so far is telling me it is not as easy as it first appears!

In January 2020, just as the first murmurs of a new virus devastating the province of Wuhan, China was in the news (Ratcliffe & Pei Lin, 2020), I was innocently thinking about the 2020 theme of "Create at the Library" for Library & Information Week. The ALIA-provided poster template didn't easily translate for health libraries per se, so I suggested to Gemma Siemensma at Ballarat Health Services Library that I wanted to run a team competition using the ALIA LIW2020 poster but in which team members

would recommend health-related terms for the blank spaces. In a heartbeat, she saw the possibilities and arranged for a health-themed poster template to be prepared for HLA members. This template replaced words that were on the ALIA version with health-specific terms. It was the same poster design but with a health library twist. Imagination: we thought outside the box - in this case, near literally! I am unsure how Law, School, Academic and other specialist Librarians managed to rework this event's messaging for their unique contexts?

The first pandemic lockdown in Australia along with the increased pressure on the hospital's clinical teams resulted in not much participation in our Library & Information Week 2020 competition; even so, the response was still good when this is considered. By taking what ALIA had made and reimagining the theme to make it "make sense" for a health/hospital and clinician context, we achieved our goal of advocating for use of this health library. Our Dental team won the \$50 prize, much to their delight.

For Library Lovers Day 2021, ALIA produced the "Make a date with your Library" promotion. This theme did not gel easily for use with health clinicians. I felt that it is irrelevant to ask extremely busy clinicians to arrange "a date" physically, with their library - and on a Sunday! Again, after consultation with Gemma, we reworked the messaging for HLA use. Imagination used the ALIA-produced theme but aligned the messaging to what we knew would "speak" to our health team. We invited them to remember that they have access to fast, virtual, up to date, evidence-based clinical resources at their fingertips. This promo went into the team newsletter and onto our private social media page (see Appendix 1).

Measuring the reach of these types of advocacy tools is difficult. I shall continue to research methodologies for our library to capture this kind of data in the future. Still, we took what ALIA provided for the general library context and reimagined its theme so it made sense for a specialist library context.

Thinking ahead to this year's Library & Information Week, 2021, ALIA has announced the theme of "Adventures in Space & Time" (ALIA, 2021). Reconfiguring this thematic opportunity for a health library context is, yet again, proving challenging. With time and imagination, we shall rework this into something that we can use for our own unique advocacy needs. In the meantime, there is more work to do in understanding how special libraries - particularly health libraries - can readily capitalize on ALIA's high profile public marketing and advocacy opportunities as they arise. We know that all librarians, regardless of their specialty and expertise, do have extraordinary imaginations; it's making the time and having the mental space to exercise it that is the concern.

References

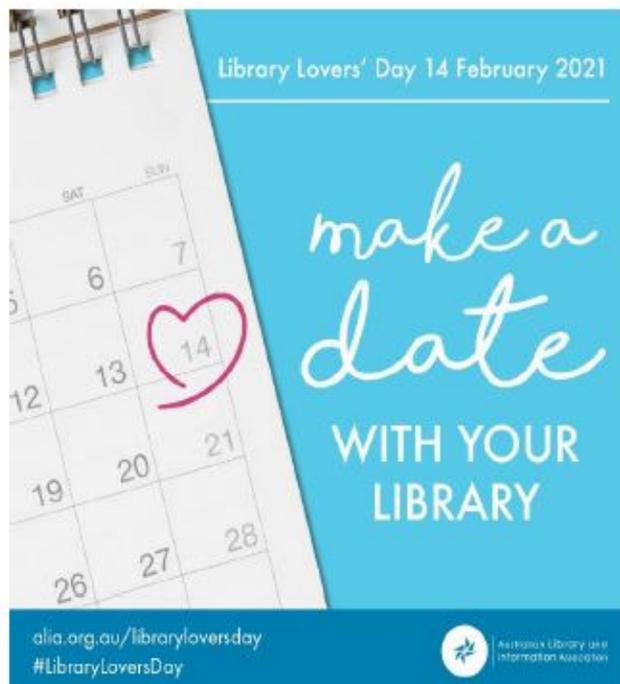
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Appendix 1



Speak to your friendly Medical Librarians at the Handbury Library – Ph: 19291 or at BHS Library - Ph: 94455 if you need help with access.

Health professionals don't often have time to 'make a date' with their Health Library...we get that. Perfectly understandable. Staying up to date with the latest literature is still important though, so....

The Handbury Library at WHCG and Ballarat Health Services Library are encouraging the team to...

[Make an online date with your medical library!](#)

- Download FREE clinical apps on your mobile device (e.g. MIMS & eTG).
- Access thousands of medical eBooks.
- Explore the latest evidence in journals or use our databases to find the evidence you need.
- Ask the Librarians for help with all your study and research needs.
- Happy Medical Library Lovers Day from us.

PS – if you want to do this at home, make sure you've registered for an OpenAthens login and password. While at home, Google BHS Library. Use this login and you should be good to go.