

## Tribute to Kathleen Gray OAM



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When the Queen's Birthday 2021 Honours included an Order of Australia medal to Kathleen Gray, it cheered many in the Australian health libraries' community. The OAM was bestowed for "service to medicine through digital health education", but we too have benefited. Kathleen is a qualified librarian and 'one of us', having joined ALIA in 1980, and worked in Australian health libraries between 1980 and 1986. She was part of the HLA Executive for ten years, through to 2021.

HLA convenor Gemma Siemensma credits Kathleen with "bringing about partnerships and recognition for health librarians as part of the wider health information workforce. She has been invaluable – a true change maker." Current HLA National Manager Ann Ritchie cites Kathleen as a "leading light for four decades, alerting her health library colleagues to developments and trends in digital health across education, research, health services and professions".

I would like to highlight Kathleen's contributions as a hard-working collaborator, and as a critical thinker, particularly on the theme of digital health.

But first, a little background.

Kathleen's early bibliophilia was nurtured at home where her Mum was a constant reader, and through her youth as a regular patron of the Vancouver Public Library. Her first library job was at the VPL, in a "gap year" before formal studies in Arts (Linguistics) (1975) and an MLIS (1977) at the University of British Columbia.

Her work has spanned three fields:

- Public libraries – in Vancouver, and in Nassau (Bahamas 1977-1978);
- Scientific editing and health libraries – at ASLIB (England 1978-80), Bendigo Base Hospital (1980-82), Queen Victoria Medical Centre in Melbourne (1983-86);
- Higher education – at RMIT University (1986-2005), initially lecturing in environmental studies, subsequently in academic quality and educational technology; followed by positions at the University of Melbourne (2005 –) as Senior Research Fellow in Health Informatics in the Faculty of Medicine,

Dentistry and Health Sciences, jointly with the Department of Computing and Information Systems.

Kathleen is currently Professor & Director of Education and Workforce Development at the Centre for Digital Transformation of Health, University of Melbourne.

Motivated by her love of learning, Kathleen completed multiple formal courses of study after her MLIS. These include a Master of Environmental Science (Monash University, 1987) and a PhD (Science / Education) at University of Melbourne, 2001. She also holds a number of professional certifications, including: Fellow, Australasian College of Health Informatics, 2011-2020; and Founding Fellow, Australasian Institute of Digital Health, 2020. She models the core characteristics of professionalism including competence, knowledge, ethics, integrity and commitment.

For decades, Kathleen has tracked the emergence of web technologies and researched their influence specifically on health, learning and education. In a range of collaborations and projects, her work critically investigated the experiences of students and staff with online learning. A foundational publication by Kathleen and colleagues on this research topic is *First year students' experiences with technology: Are they really digital natives?* This 2008 article remains one of her top-cited items.

She translated this research into practice at RMIT by initiating and managing the development and successful implementation of a fully-online version of the subject *Living in the Environment* during 1997-1998. This was a pioneering example of converting previously-print subject content, using the early online LMS platform, devising learning objects and digital IP, licensing arrangements, and other enablers. The implementation was rolled out more widely in the Life Sciences faculty, and involved significant culture change in teaching teams. Kathleen resourced the change process for staff via a mentoring program. Analysis of the project subsequently formed the core of her doctoral thesis.

More recently, issues such as the impact of web and e-health technologies on management of health information, and how patients, consumers and the health workforce interact with these disruptive innovations have propelled her research, teaching and practice.

### Work with Health Libraries Australia

Kathleen joined the HLA Executive in 2011. It was a timely match: HLA had conducted a comprehensive program in the Workforce and Education Research Project with the aim to develop a scope of practice, a competency-based structure for post-graduate qualifications, and professional development aimed at achieving certified status for health librarians. HLA Convenor Suzanne Lewis noted at the time: "Kathleen Gray is also on the working committee of the Australian Health Informatics Education

Council (AHIEC). She and HLA secretary Cheryl Hamill will be working to form closer links between HLA and AHIEC." (Lewis, March 2011, p. 2).

Kathleen pinpointed the areas of joint interest: defining current and emerging competencies, enhancing quality specialist workforce education, and promoting recognition of the disciplines as integral to the health workforce and its e-health capability. She proposed that specific areas of health library core knowledge should be included among the basic health informatics skill domains, and that health librarians would benefit by having basic health informatics skills (Gray, March 2011, p. 16).

Since that time Kathleen has contributed to HLA in strategy and in practical issues. In 2014 she proposed action on the issue of health librarians' identity in health policy. Subsequently, HLA joined the broader advocacy project to raise the recognition, status and future of the health information workforce. HLA was a partner in the Health Information Workforce Summits held in 2015 and 2016. The summits led to collaboration among the four Australian health informatics and health information management associations e.g. on creating a basic health information workforce dataset. HLA's census of Australian health libraries and librarians (released in 2016) was a valuable source of data for the health library workforce. Kathleen and Kerryn Butler-Henderson developed the HIDDIN census tool to collect data for the wider health information workforce. The Census is conducted every 3 years, and HLA is part of the Census management group. Analysis of 2018 census data for specific workforce segments – including health librarians – has been published in open access sources (<https://www.utas.edu.au/health/projects/hiwcensus>).

Gemma Siemensma commented: "Kathleen brought connections and championed for us in places where we were unknown. This helped us to strategically align with HIW associations and organisations, and to give us a voice as professionals in the broader health information workforce landscape."

Whilst an HLA executive member, Kathleen was on the awards panels for the Anne Harrison Award, and the HLA/Medical Director Digital Health Innovation Award. Ann Ritchie noted: "She brought drive and enthusiasm to this role too, by refining the focus of the health innovation award to highlight digital health innovation initiatives in health library services."

### Thinking critically about digital health

Kathleen questioned the sweeping generalisations that pervade descriptions of digital health initiatives. She observed: "Digital health may appear to have a life of its own", in the sense that these statements omit any consideration of the human agency and work of managing and governing health information and communication technology. She pointed out the need to recognise and plan for the specialised

workforce development required to deliver on the digital health promises of streamlining and transformation in healthcare (Gray et al., 2019). To redress the invisibility of this workforce, Kathleen initiated a scoping review of the literature which described an instrumental or professional human role in health information work. This research has since broadened to include the influence of technological change across health workforce boundaries. The findings will appear in late 2021 in *The Health Information Workforce: Current and future developments*, edited by Kerryn Butler-Henderson, Karen Day and Kathleen Gray.

As an educator, Kathleen has developed multiple health informatics subjects that are taught in the Masters program, in short courses for clinicians, and as community subjects. She has knowledge of a wealth of conceptual frameworks and resources for the digital health/health informatics research field. HLA and Kathleen worked jointly to expand and deliver the masters subject *Digital Health Information Services* which ran at the University of Melbourne in 2019. Biomedical librarian and PhD candidate Lisa Kruesi was coordinator for the Knowledge Management module in the subject, and recalled: "I was impressed with Kathleen's energy, enthusiasm, and sense of fun...these helped to advance the development of the course materials".

A colleague from RMIT, Dr Alexandra Radloff, noted that Kathleen's professional work "centres on the student experience and how to enhance it through curriculum design, academic development and the use of emerging technologies." Alex also commended Kathleen's scholarship, having researched and published with her for many years. There was always a very strong focus, she noted, on ensuring that projects were documented, and results were disseminated when analysis was completed.

### Personal observations

Alex Radloff offered: "On a personal level, Kathleen is a warm and empathic person, a loyal friend and a wonderful mentor to many younger and less experienced colleagues. She has a knack of enthusing and engaging people and keeping projects going when challenges arise. She will always focus on the big picture, and is a creative problem solver who persists to find the best way to achieve a successful outcome."

In a similar vein, Ann Ritchie commented on HLA's partnership with Kathleen: "[She] brought ideas and strategies to all our committee meetings, events, and projects. She could challenge the status quo, but always delivered her insights and probing thoughts with gentle consideration. A couple of her directive comments that I particularly remember serve to illustrate:

- What outcomes are we looking for?
- Does society need health librarians?

- We haven't won that battle yet – (in other words, it's tough, but this is too important to give up...)"

Finally, I'd add that Kathleen's work focus is outward; there's no personal ego or ambition. She is engaged and interested in contributing to the success of the project and the team. Kathleen was characteristically modest on the day of the OAM announcement, stating: "It's a team sport so I specially want to acknowledge all of my colleagues who've worked with me in this still unfinished project."

We congratulate Kathleen for this well-deserved recognition.

### References

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Kathleen's research publications in the University of Melbourne repository listed at <https://minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/handle/11343/159/browse?type=author&value=Gray%2C+Kathleen>