

History of the Cancer Librarians Section

The Cancer Librarians Section dates back to a discussion in 1974 between Marie Harvin, director of the Research Medical Library at M.D. Anderson Hospital, and Ann P. Hutchinson, the newly appointed director of the Medical and Scientific Library at Roswell Park Memorial Institute. As a result of their discussion, Marie organized the first meeting which took place in San Antonio at the 1974 MLA Annual Meeting—seven librarians attended. Although cancer librarians met every year thereafter at the annual meeting and kept minutes, it was not until 1982 that the group obtained official section status.

The first issue of the “Cancer Librarians Section News” appears to have been published on October 25, 1982. It is now published three times a year.

The first edition of the section’s annotated bibliography, Clinical Oncology: a selected list of new books, was dated 1984-85 and cost only \$2.50! The fourth edition covered 1992-94.

In December 1994, Eve Ruff, library director at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center (FHCRC), began CANCERLIB-L, a listserv to support the section’s activities. CANCERLIB-L was established with technical support from the FHCRC’s Public Health Sciences Administrative Computing Department and Library Services. It is open to health science and research librarians who are particularly interested in issues relevant to the section and to the initiatives of cancer librarians.

From 1982 through 1995, the Section has had its own program at MLA annual meetings. Speakers have included Dr. Daniel Masys who spoke on the human genome and molecular oncology, Rosemary Laidacker of the Texas Cancer Data, Dr. E. Loren Buhle, founder of Oncolink, and Eve Ruff, who spoke about cancer information on the Internet.

Section membership includes librarians at cancer and academic medical centers, hospitals, businesses, and government agencies. Membership has grown from 40 in 1981 to 138 in 1997.

Submitted by,

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