

NLM/MLA Collaboration Fact Sheet

A long-standing collaboration to benefit the profession and the public

The National Library of Medicine (NLM) and the Medical Library Association (MLA) have a longstanding collaborative relationship to improve public health and advance medical progress by providing access to biomedical and health information resources for researchers, healthcare professionals, and the public.

[1948-1949 MLA President Janet Doe](#) was instrumental with contemporaries in establishing the Army Medical Library as the U.S. National Library of Medicine. In 1944, she was one of the “surveyors” of the Army Medical Library, leading to The National Medical Library, Report of a Survey of the Army Medical Library. This work guided reform at that library and began the campaign to transform it into a national medical library. Doe testified before Congress on behalf of a bill to establish NLM, and later she worked to secure its grant-making authority. Today, through the Network of the National Library of Medicine, funding improves access to health information, increases engagement with research and data, expands professional knowledge, and promotes awareness and use of NLM’s resources in local communities, especially underrepresented or underserved populations.

In the 1960’s MLA leaders and the Committee on Federal Legislation authorized association members to testify at relevant hearings and engaged MLA members in letter writing campaigns that led to passage of the Medical Library Assistance Act (MLAA) of 1965. The MLAA increased NLM’s stature within the US Congress and had a major impact on the growth of medical libraries. It improved medical library collections, upgraded their facilities, and trained medical librarians. It also established the Regional Medical Library Network (now the Network of the National Library of Medicine, NNLM).

2000-2001 President J. Michael Homan, AHIP, FMLA, represented the voice of librarians on the inaugural PubMed Central National Advisory Committee. In his [2015 MLA Oral History interview](#), Michael said [that] “...if you look at the whole continuum, the contributions of NLM have been gargantuan, not only to medical libraries but to the advance of science in general. Just unbelievable—the NCBI, in particular... To keep going forward and being visionary, as Don Lindberg has for all these years, I think is just nothing short of extraordinary.”

The groundwork laid by those who came before us have transformed the profession and strengthened ties between MLA and NLM.

Separate roles, common objectives

MLA executes its mission to foster excellence in the professional practice and leadership of health sciences library and information professionals by providing volunteerism and services in continuing education, networking, information sharing, recognitions, and in amplifying the voice of the profession. As a 501c(3) non-profit organization, MLA is limited in what it is allowed to do: MLA can “inform” but not “lobby”; MLA can take a stance on an issue that relates to its mission but it cannot support or be against a political party or candidate. MLA uses its limited resources due to its small size (\$3M organization) on national rather than local or state level issues.

The National Library of Medicine (NLM) is one of the 27 Institutes at the National Institutes of Health. NLM is a global leader in biomedical informatics and computational health data science and the world’s largest biomedical library. NLM’s legislative mandate is to support the essential work of acquiring, organizing, preserving, and disseminating biomedical information. NLM provides public access to this information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Together, MLA and NLM leverage each other’s roles and strengths and collaborate on multiple initiatives for the benefit of health information professionals and their institutions, stakeholders, and communities. Main areas of collaboration are information sharing, continuing education, and library services

Information Sharing

MLA has the objective to maximize the opportunities for health information professionals to learn about NLM programs and initiatives through:

- annual conference and related sessions (NNLM Day, NLM Update, PubMed Update, contributed content, and exhibit connections);
- joint selection and alternate hosting of the annual Joseph Leiter NLM/MLA Lectureship;
- quarterly meetings between NLM and MLA leaders; and
- amplification of NLM and NNLM messages and opportunities through MLAConnect.

Continuing Education

MLA and NLM collaborate to provide health information professionals with responsive and impactful continuing education. Key intentional initiatives include:

MLA Competencies for Lifelong Learning and Professional Success

As the professional association of health sciences librarians and other health information professionals, MLA owns the responsibility for defining professional competencies.

- An MLA Task Force spent several years revising and updating a 2007 competency document.

- In April 2016, the NNLM Southeastern/Atlantic Region awarded MLA a \$16,500 grant that enabled the Task Force to produce a first draft of the competencies.

Benefits of collaboration and NNLM support: The Competencies, published in May 2017, are the foundation of MLA Continuing Education. They are the basis for creating and organizing CE offerings and for identifying professional development needs of MLA AHIP (Academy of Health Information Professionals) members and other health information professionals. Other organizations use them to guide their members' professional development and write job descriptions.

Curriculum Development

MLA offers four Specializations, each designed to help health information professionals and others develop a level of expertise in a specific health information field. Each of them were made possible by financial support and guidance from NNLM and its staff.

- CHIS (Consumer Health Information Specialization) was created in 2001 with the support of NNLM. We have issued 2,153 CHIS certificates from 2001 to early March 2023.
- In 2019, the NNLM MidContinental Region approached MLA with the idea of integrating earning a CHIS into LIS courses. Since then, NNLM and MLA have collaborated to create a [Consumer Health Information Specialization for Library Students](#) program, to facilitate students gaining CE toward the specialization by completing courses within library programs that meet the criteria for CHIS. Four LIS programs have offered such courses 12 times since then.
- NNLM staff have also worked to package CHIS coursework to facilitate acquisition of the specialization, for example the "CHIS on Demand" modular offering via the NNLM Moodle: <https://www.nlm.gov/training/class/chis-demand>
- DIS (Disaster Information Specialization) was created in 2012 with the support of NNLM. We have issued 265 DIS certificates.
- NNLM members were on the teams that have created the SRSS (Systematic Review Services Specialization) and DSS (Data Services Specialization), which both launched Level I certificates in 2022. We have issued 30 DSS certificates and 11 SRSS certificates.
- The required Level I DSS courses and most of the electives are NNLM offerings.
- In 2021, a subaward of \$11,492 from NNLM MidContinental Region funded transferring and editing five DIS courses, making it possible for MLA to continue to offer the DIS after NNLM sunset the Disaster Information Management Research Center (DIMRC) and would no longer support it. NNLM staff were key in arranging and supporting the transfer of DIS courses to MLA.
- NNLM regions fund the cost of application fees for DIS, CHIS, and DSS. To date NNLM has supported 789 CHIS applications, 39 DIS applications, and 20 DSS applications and have provided funding for 600 future applications.
- NNLM staff were key participants in the 2018 revision of CHIS.

- NNLM and MLA work together to maintain tracking grids for completing the specializations.
- NNLM promotes specializations beyond medical libraries to other relevant audiences, including public libraries, emergency preparedness and response workers, and the public health workforce.

MLA and NNLM have worked together on curricula in other ways.

- At the 2018 Annual Conference, MLA and NNLM co-developed and co-sponsored the Health Information for Public Librarian Symposium. In 2019, NLM, NNLM, and MLA education coordinators met several times to review NNLM and MLA curriculum offerings, particularly in emerging areas such as data management, to identify potential overlap and gaps and maximize our resources. The conclusions from these discussions were shared with MLA curriculum committees and NNLM.
- In 2022, MLA engaged NNLM staff and others, including NNLM staff who created the DIS and DIS courses, for guidance on whether to continue to offer the DIS and in finding funding for continued support. Guidance from NNLM members was key to the MLA decision to sunset DIS and replace it with a catalog of courses for ALL librarians designed to help them prepare for and address library and local disasters that may befall them. The catalog will launch in April. Most if not all of the courses in it will be from NNLM.

The extensive MLA-NNLM collaboration and NNLM support for curriculum development over many years has enabled MLA and NNLM to advance their very similar missions of educating health information and health professionals and ensuring that individuals have access to quality health information. Together, we have accomplished what neither could have done as well alone.

Learning Management Systems (LMS)

MEDLIB-ED, MLA's LMS, is the learning destination for health information Professionals. As of early March 2023, it lists over 300 courses approved for MLA CE or approved and scheduled and offered by MLA, MLA Chapters, NNLM, and independent instructors.

Since MLA launched the LMS in 2017, over 2,000 offerings are or have been listed in the LMS. The LMS has transformed MLA's education programming. It has made it possible for us to offer an easy-to-navigate way for health information professionals and others to find the right CE courses to achieve their professional development goals, evaluate the courses they take, and generate a transcript. MLA is also able to generate reports and transcripts for learners and maintain the integrity of MLA CE certificates.

NNLM has supported the LMS annually since its launch in 2017. Their total funding through 4/23 is \$131,000. They also promote MLA specializations by listing them in their course catalog filters.

MLA provides a branded NNLM catalog of courses (currently 140 courses approved for MLA CE credit) with more than half of the 55,000 course completions since 2017 being NNLM courses. This collaboration enables those with limited funds to find and gain MLA CE credits without charge in an integrated platform that supports a joint educational mission. The LMS has yielded NNLM the same advantages it yields MLA: It makes it possible for many more people to easily find the courses they need.

Support for MLA education offerings

NNLM regions have sponsored webinar and webcast site licenses for many years.

NNLM regions have provided the Research Training Institute(RTI) registration fees/support in 2022-23 (\$7,500) and 2023-24 (\$15,000).

Library services

MLA and NLM collaborate to provide seamless services to libraries for inter-library loans (ILLs).

- Information professionals rely on NLM's DOCLINE to search for articles they need to borrow.
- DOCLINE matches borrowers with lenders.
- DOCLINE provides MLA's Electronic Fund Transfer System (EFTS) with the transaction information between two libraries who subscribe to EFTS.
- MLA's EFTS computes the charge, if any, for the transaction, and, once confirmed, transfers the funds from the borrower to the lender (less a transaction fee).
- For lenders using the auto-approval feature, the process is entirely automated, saving precious administrative time.

In 2022, libraries using EFTS exchanged over 120,000 ILL transactions.

MLA and NLM share a commitment to ensuring the viability and continued success of NLM's programs and services and furthering the mission of health sciences libraries to provide access to the world's largest collection of health and biosciences data and information.