

THE FUTURE OF LIBRARIES FOR NURSING

This paper was presented to the LfN Committee in July 1996. Your comments are invited.

Objectives of LfN

The objectives of LfN as laid out in the rules are:

- . to provide a focal point for professional contact and discussion amongst qualified librarians/members of the Library Association serving nurses;
- . to promote a dialogue between nurses and librarians and a greater understanding of the roles and functions of the two professions;
- . to bring together periodically all persons involved in the provision of library and information services for nurses.

Perceived problems

LfN is a group in transition. Its changing position has been brought about by the move of nursing education into higher education. This has resulted in many nursing libraries being absorbed into multidisciplinary hospital libraries or into universities. Library staff have been made redundant, retired or absorbed, with varying degrees of success, into larger institutions. LfN members have gone through sometimes protracted periods of uncertainty and stress about the future, for themselves, their services and their organisations. We should not underestimate the impact that this has had on some people.

Librarian members of LfN finding themselves in the 'grand' university setting may feel that a mere sub-group of a group of the Library Association can no longer represent them. Should they be seeking representation through the Health Libraries Group more directly, or the University Health Science Librarians, or SCONUL, the association of University Librarians? Is part of the problem that LfN is now seen as lacking clout in representing them?

LfN works through committees, through study days and through publications. LfN was not allowed foundation membership of the new LINC Health Panel; ironically one of the first things that group decides to concern itself with is libraries for nurses. Study days continue to be a focus for LfN membership, serving as excellent ways of gathering information and meeting members. They almost always produce positive evaluations. The latest, however, attracted only 40 people compared with 70 or 80 at previous events. Is this indicative of lack of interest in the topic or general decline? The *LfN Bulletin* has improved in recent issues. Articles do not flood, or even trickle, in. The Bulletin depends on write-ups of study days and the occasional review. Contributions and feedback from members are minimal.

Nursing education itself continues to undergo change. There is a shift to more resource based and self directed learning. Continuing education, in the form of PREP, and demands for evidence based practice place greater demands on library services and their staff. Many librarians are in varying degrees of dispute with their actual or potential customers because contracts have failed to precisely identify client groups. Nurses often do not know who

is supposed to be providing them with a library service and librarians are sometimes not in a position to clarify things for them.

Seeking solutions

Should LfN be seeking to raise its profile? Should we be seeking to strengthen our links with other organisations, Health Libraries Group, other HLG sub-groups, Regional NHS Library groups, UHSL, the LINC Health Panel, the Medical Information Working Party, the RCN, the National Boards? Should we become a more active lobbying group, within the LA, HLG or beyond? Does this mean more actively seeking representation? regular meetings between Committees or joint study days, for example with UHSL?

Should we be actively promoting ourselves more directly to nurses? Should nurses be made more aware of our presence? Should we be concerning ourselves more with the attitudes of nurses or encouraging them to join with us in lobbying for better library facilities?

Should we be looking to more actively bring together people with an interest in nursing and libraries - NHS purchasers/providers/managers (who seem to be the great under-represented in any nursing/library forum)?, publishers?, booksellers?, educationalists and course providers?

Should we continue to run study days? Do we need to promote them better or be more imaginative in our choice of subject? Does the future lie with combining with other groups or should we carry on as we are?

Has the *Bulletin* served its purpose? Should we investigate integrating it with the *HLG newsletter* or the *Health Libraries Review* in order to widen its audience? Should we seek to promote it more, in its own right or as a membership benefit? Should we promote it to prospective advertisers, other publishers and other organisations in order to get on to mailing lists for press releases?, or should we let it carry on as it is?

Some concluding comments

Nurses remain a distinct client group for libraries by virtue of the nature of their job and their work patterns; like everything else, though, both of these are changing. There is evidence that an extra 4000 new basic nurse training places will be needed by 2001. As students and as professionals they will continue to require library services. Librarians, whether in universities or hospital libraries or elsewhere, will continue to serve them.

LfN would still appear to have a role to play. In some ways its problems stem from doubt as to whether it can carry out that role. It is a voluntary organisation. All the people that work on its activities are increasingly pressured for time because, often, of the additional demands made by the very people that LfN itself is attempting to support, the nurses and the librarians who work with them.

These are comments to conclude this paper, they are not a conclusion. We have attempted in this paper to raise some issues and to present some alternative views; there are almost certainly others to be expressed.

Over to you.

WIN £20

We would like your views on LfN - present and future.

Tear out the next page or send a photocopy.

The questionnaire is anonymous so if you want to be included in the Prize Draw put your name and address on a separate piece of paper and enclose it with your questionnaire. These will be put into a hat and drawn and the winner will receive £20.

Further comments on the question of the future of LfN and the Bulletin can be included on additional sheets.

Please return by 31 December 1996 to Paul Moorbatb, Library,
St Bartholomew School of Nursing, London EC1A 7QN



QUESTIONNAIRE

THE FUTURE OF LIBRARIES FOR NURSING

Please tick

1. Are you a member of the LfN? Yes No

2. Type of Library you work in (a) University
(b) Institute or College of Health
(c) Multidisciplinary
(d) Post-grad. medical
(e) Hospital
(f) Other (Please give details)

3. Should LfN continue to exist as a separate Sub-group of HLG?
Yes No

4. Should the interests of nursing libraries be channelled mainly through HLG?
Yes No

5. Should LfN try to
(a) have its own links with other organisations, e.g. National Boards or LINC?
(b) act entirely through Health Libraries Group?

6. Should the *Bulletin* (a) continue to be published quarterly?
(b) cease publication?
(c) be integrated into *HLG Newsletter*?
(d) other (please specify)

7. Should LfN study days
(a) continue?
(b) cease?
(c) be held jointly with HLG or other groups?

8. Have you attended an LfN Study Day in the last two years?

9. How much of the LfN *Bulletin* do you read?

- (a) very little
- (b) about half
- (c) all of it

Additional comments, for example on the future of LfN or the *Bulletin*:

Please return by 31 December 1996 to

Paul Moorbath,
Library,
St Bartholomew School of Nursing,
London EC1A 7QN