

Librarians Without Borders®: Door to Sustainable Global Librarianship

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Introduction

Librarians Without Borders® (LWB), under the US Medical Library Association (MLA) International Co-operation Caucus, aims to form and strengthen co-operation among health sciences librarians worldwide for the purpose of providing health information to all. LWB strives for co-operation of library associations worldwide and for a structure that enables medical librarians everywhere to benefit. LWB was an MLA committee from 2009 to 2019.

Vision

The vision of LWB includes:

- The development of health information professionals globally
- Equity in access to health information
- International collaborations between MLA and related associations worldwide including AHILA.

Ongoing Activities

- MLA Allied Representatives
- MLA Cunningham Fellows
- Bilateral agreements with international partners
- Training through Elsevier Foundation/Research4Life grants
- Support for other international awards

Official MLA Allied Representatives

- MLA has representatives for most of the international library associations
- MLA Allied Representatives attend annual meetings/conferences of the international organizations
- Carol Lefebvre is the MLA Allied Representative to EAHIL (Europe) (2012-)
- Donna Flake was the MLA Allied Representative to EAHIL (Europe) in the late 1990s
- Rena Lubker is the MLA Allied Representative to AHILA (Africa) (2018-)
- LWB and the MLA Board are working to provide further guidelines and support for MLA Allied Representatives

Challenges and Lessons Learned

- Sustainability of international programmes
- Updating bilateral agreements
- Staying in touch with past Cunningham Fellows
- Publicizing activities

Next Steps

Librarians Without Borders® will continue to collaborate with other global health information organizations, including AHILA, in the future and connect with new ones as and when opportunities arise.

***The Librarians Without Borders Committee was disbanded by MLA in January 2022 with programs continuing under the International Co-operation Caucus

Bilateral Agreements

- Signed agreements exist between MLA and 10 other international library associations, including AHILA
- Most agreements offer reciprocal free registration for annual meetings/conferences for organization representatives
- Bilateral agreements are currently being updated

Cunningham Fellowships

- Established 1967; first Fellow 1973
- More than 50 Fellows have participated in the programme
- Brings librarians to the US to attend the MLA Annual Meeting and librarianship training of choice in the US
- LWB plans the itinerary for the Cunningham Fellows
- Past Fellows have come from Africa (c. 15), Asia, Australasia, Eastern and Western Europe, Latin America and the Middle East
- AHILA members are encouraged to apply

T. Mark Hodges International Service Award

- Established in 2007
- Named after T. Mark Hodges (1933-2006), a lifelong advocate of international librarianship
- The award honors an outstanding individual in international librarianship
- Carol Lefebvre, Donna Flake and Lenny Rhine were the first recipients (2008, 2009, 2010) after it had been awarded (posthumously) to Mark in 2007
- 2013 recipient: Pascal Mouhouelo, Congo
- 2020 recipient: Shane Godbolt, UK (posthumously)

Elsevier Foundation and Research4Life Grants

- The Elsevier Foundation funded the LWB E-library Training Initiative from 2009 to 2021
- Objective: to improve access to health information in low-income countries with the focus on the resources available from the Research4Life (R4L) programme (<https://www.research4life.org/>)
- 90 workshops to date in 40 R4L eligible countries
- Additional funding in 2015 to support 20 MLA Librarians Without Borders® Elsevier Foundation/Research4Life grants
- For face-to-face training but virtual encouraged for 2021

Quotes from Cunningham Fellows

"The Cunningham experience was an excellent opportunity to become more familiar with North American medical libraries, and the way they interact with faculty, students, physicians, and their cooperation with other National and International Libraries. With my American professional co-workers, I could share the love for American culture, art and history."

"There is no doubt that the Cunningham Fellowship was a decisive step in my professional career....It created a platform for change as well as a network of real and virtual friends who will always inspire me to go forward."

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Quotes from Research4Life Recipients

"We believe that it is a great opportunity for us to access legal information."

"Thanks for the opportunity to participate in your initiative. Your support means a great deal to our organization, aiding to our research and conservation efforts."

<https://www.research4life.org/voices/testimonials/>

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