

HYPOTHESIS

THE JOURNAL OF THE RESEARCH SECTION OF MLA

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The Structured Abstract: An Essential Tool for Researchers

—by Liz Bayley, *McMaster University* and
 Jon Eldredge, *The University of New Mexico*

By now, most health sciences librarians are well aware of structured abstracts. Since the introduction of this convention for summarizing clinical research in 1987^{1,2} structured abstracts have become the predominant mode of abstract found in the major clinical journals. Many behavioral, social, biological, and basic medical sciences journals are now also following the convention of structured abstracts. In their most basic form, structured abstracts organize their summaries of publications with the following headings:

- OBJECTIVE
- METHODS
- RESULTS
- CONCLUSIONS

Some clinical journals include structured abstracts with variations on these headings. For example, some will use headings such as: Context, Background, Aim, Findings, and Interpretation. Some additional headings include: Design, Population, Setting, Participants, Intervention (method), Main Outcome Measures and other aspects relevant to the research.

A summary of the advantages of structured abstracts appears in the Summer 2001 issue of *Hypothesis*.³ The evidence points in particular to advantages for searching⁴⁻⁶ and quickly extracting needed information⁷ from these types of summaries, regardless of the exact headings use by a journal. No wonder then that structured abstracts are gaining popularity. The MLA Annual Meeting for 2003 strongly recommends use of structured abstracts; participants wishing to present papers or posters at the 2004 MLA Annual Meeting will be *required* to submit their entries in structured abstract format.

Fortunately, preparing structured abstracts also can help you from the very outset of contemplating your research, progressing through the research process itself, and culminating in its final reporting to your colleagues. This article shows you how.

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HYPOTHESIS. The Journal of the Research Section of MLA

<http://gain.mercer.edu/mla/research/hypothesis.html>

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International Research Reviews

— submitted by Anne Brice

Our column for this issue has been provided by one of our newest and most exciting contacts. Ibrahima Bob is currently President of the Association for Health Information and Libraries in Africa (AHILA), and is an important, and timely, link for our international activities. On a recent visit to Oxford, Ibrahima entered enthusiastically into a range of evidence based health care education activities, but more importantly agreed to act as a contact for the development of evidence based librarianship in his part of the world. Ibrahima has identified his professional interests as improving access to information in developing countries, Internet training, and information

resources for developing countries. This serves again to highlight the commonality we have in terms of our major concerns and questions, but raises interesting issues about how we cater for relevancy factors in finding and using an international evidence base.

Ibrahima recently carried out a study as part of the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications Health Information Forum (HIF) activities, which is reported below. We look forward to building even stronger links with all of our international partners.

International Funding Priorities for Health Information

—by Ibrahima Bob

Objective

The main objective was to explore the needs of health information stakeholders in Africa and to establish their requirements in terms of financial support from the International community. The study also set out to obtain an overview of the international financial support provided for health information activities, and to formulate orientations for donor agencies.

Methodology

A survey was carried out through 'HIF-net at WHO' and Ahila-net, which are discussion lists for health information specialists and medical librarians respectively in Africa, and via various forms of communication with people involved in providing health information.

Results

55 people responded to the survey. Among the 55 respondents, 41 worked for organisations in the developing world, and 14 from northern organisations. Forty-seven of the respondents were funded organisations ('recipients') and 8 donor agencies. There is some consistency between funding priorities of donor agencies and recipients, but there are also important differences. Funding organisations should be doing more to support the local creation and repackaging of health information in Africa.

Conclusion

Supporting the development and dissemination of health information is an important objective in development programmes. All that is needed is a mechanism to harmonise strategies, so that we 'all tell the same story'. There is a need to enhance international co-operation for health information, to mobilise all available resources for health information, and to engage political and financial commitment. How can this be achieved? Should there be a multi-agency task force to address the problem? In the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

there are long term objectives within its implementation plan, and a good deal of this involves bridging the digital divide by investing in ICTs. How can we as an information community fit in?

Call for action to funding bodies

1. Those already supporting and funding health information must have greater co-operation between them and create a special interest group whose role should be to advocate and mobilise more actors.
2. Taking the pressure off health information professionals who feel the need to create information anew often when relevant information exists. This happens because either people do not know that the information already exists or because they need to fulfill a "deliverable" for a project / funder.
3. Donors should understand that their support should not antagonise local ownership, which is the heart and brain of any real progress in improving health information management in developing countries.
4. Avoid sticking to policies that are only relevant to the institution and not to what is good for the recipient.
5. WHO and other organisations should do more to advocate, network, and mobilise resources for the international health information community.

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Structured Abstracts— They Really Work!

—by Liz Bayley, Jean Maragno and Lois Wyndham

In the summer and fall of 2001, the first author served on the Medical Library Association Evidence-Based Librarianship Implementation Committee's Research Results Dissemination Task Force¹. As part of its mandate, the Task Force was asked to look at the issue of structured abstracts for contributed papers and posters at meetings and ways to improve the dissemination of research results to members.

Included in the recommendations of the Task Force² were that:

1. a structured abstract be required for all articles submitted to health library journals (*Journal of the Medical Library Association* (JMLA), *Bibliotheca Medica Canadiana* (BMC) and *Health Information and Library Journal* (HILJ)) and all contributed papers and poster sessions at health library conferences (including MLA and MLA chapter annual meetings) that report research activities;
2. the structured abstract include as a minimum: Objective, Methods, Results and Discussion;
3. a more detailed structured abstract be recommended for specific research designs;
4. structured abstracts also be recommended for non-research articles;
5. JMLA, HILJ and BMC consider publishing the abstracts of papers presented at the annual meetings of their respective associations.

With very little persuasion, the Program/Poster Committee for the 2002 Canadian Health Libraries Association/ Association des bibliothèques de la santé du Canada (CHLA/ABSC) Conference agreed to ask that a 250 word abstract be submitted for all papers and posters, using the following guidelines:

Research Papers should include Introduction (including Objectives and Scope), Methods, Results and Discussion (including Conclusions); Program Descriptions should include Introduction, Program Description, Outcomes and Discussion; Case Reports should include Purpose, Setting, Method, Results and Discussion.

Although some editorial work and consultation with the presenters was needed, the Committee found that the requirement for structured abstracts resulted in a good level of consistency in the quality and completeness of the submissions and made their review much easier. In addition, there was anecdotal evidence from the presenters to indicate that they found it easier to focus and develop their presentations as a result of using the structured abstract format.

Abbreviated versions of these abstracts were printed in the preliminary and final programs and posted on the Conference Web site; the full versions appear in the Fall 2002 issue of BMC³. It is hoped that the publication of these abstracts will help to highlight work being undertaken in the field of health sciences librarianship to a wider audience, particularly to CHLA/ABSC members unable to attend the conference. In addition, it is hoped that the ongoing use of structured abstracts will encourage a more research/evidence-based approach to future projects. ?

References:

1 Bayley, L. Evidence-Based Librarianship Implementation Committee Report: Report of the Research Results Dissemination Task Force. *Hypothesis* 2001;15(2):6-7. Available at: <http://gain.mercer.edu/mla/research/hypothesis.html>

2 Bayley L., Wallace A., Brice A. Evidence Based Librarianship Implementation Committee Research Results Dissemination Task Force recommendations. *Hypothesis* 2002;16(1):6-8. Available at: <http://gain.mercer.edu/mla/research/hypothesis.html>

3 Bayley, L. Abstracts from the CHLA/ABSC 2002 Conference. *Bibliotheca Medica Canadiana* 2002;24(1):27-36.

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Liz Bayley is the Head of Systems / Curriculum Integration Coordinator in the Health Sciences Library and an Assistant Clinical Professor in the School of Nursing, at McMaster University.

Jean Maragno is the Manager of Library Services at St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton.

Lois Wyndham is Team Leader, Library Services for Hamilton Health Sciences.

Chapter Research Committees Report

— submitted by Martha Earl

South Central Chapter of the Medical Library Association Annual Meeting October 12-16, San Antonio TX

Members of the South Central Chapter (SCC) Research Committee joined with members of the SCC Awards and Scholarship Committee to judge a total of 36 entries (18 contributed papers and 18 posters) in the Research Awards competition, which was held at the SCC /MLA Annual Meeting on October 12 -16 in San Antonio TX. Award certificates in each division were presented at the Business Meeting to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners, as well as 2 Honorable Mentions. As of this year forward, South Central Academic Medical Libraries (SCAMeL) will be presenting cash awards to the 1st -3rd place winners in each category in the following amounts: Papers: 1st place: \$300; 2nd place: \$200; 3rd place: \$100. Posters: 1st place: \$200; 2nd place: \$100; 3rd place: \$50. Here are the results of the competition:

CONTRIBUTED PAPERS

1ST Place

Determinants of Effective Library-Faculty Communications. A Randomized Controlled Trial

Jonathan Eldredge, Coordinator of Academic and Clinical Services and Ingrid Hendrix, Nursing Librarian, Health Sciences Center Library and Informatics Center, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM

Abstract:

Question: Do direct, face-to-face, in-person contacts between a library liaison and faculty members both increase usage of library resources/service by these contacted faculty members and prompt these faculty members to have a more positive view of the library due to these contacts?

Population: All full-time faculty members at the University of New Mexico College of Nursing, excluding the dean and two associate deans.

Setting: Academic health sciences center. A survey was sent to all full-time College of Nursing faculty members, excluding the dean and the two associate deans, via email attachment and campus mail. All responses were tracked to individual faculty members even though the survey was strictly confidential. Respondents' names were stratified by faculty rank: instructor/assistant professor, associate professor, or professor. These respondents' names were placed in a hat and their names pulled out of the hat until an equal number of study and control names were identified per each faculty rank.

Method: Randomized controlled trial.

Intervention: Faculty members randomly selected to be part of the study group were visited by the new Nursing

Librarian for 30 -60 minutes. Although some questions were structured into the meeting, there were numerous opportunities for the faculty member to direct the discussion.

Results: We will report our results at the time of the annual meeting.

Conclusions: We will report our conclusions at the time of the annual meeting.

2nd Place

Systematic Training for Patient Support Groups

Margaret Anderson, Graduate Student, University of North Texas School of Library & Information Science, Denton, TX, and Will Olmstadt, Education Librarian, University of Texas/Southwestern Medical Center Library, Dallas, TX

Abstract:

Purpose: This paper describes a project that provided instruction for finding consumer health information to 5 patient support groups in the Bryan/College Station, Texas area, and discusses the background, partnerships, materials, and evaluation for this training.

Setting/Participants/Resources: Bryan/College Station, Texas, is a metropolitan area in central Texas of over 143,000 people. St. Joseph Regional Health Center (SJRHC), in Bryan, Texas, serves 7 counties in central Texas. The Texas A&M University Medical Sciences Library (TAMU MSL) provides contract library services to SJRHC and 9 of its facilities in rural central Texas. SJRHC supports and organizes 15 support groups for patients with a variety of specific diagnoses. In conjunction with SJRHC, the instructors identified 11 appropriate support groups and contacted their leaders, offering brief demonstrations about locating quality health care information on the Internet for their monthly meetings.

Brief Description: From January – April 2002, the authors provided demonstrations to 5 different patient groups, which reviewed key strategies for finding reliable health care information on the Internet. The sessions showcased the TAMU MSL as a local resource and highlighted MEDLINEplus as an example of an aggregator of high-quality patient information. Online demonstrations were included in all 5 sessions. Instructors distributed special brochures that targeted the public and described relevant TAMU MSL services.

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Results/Outcome: Evaluations were uniformly positive. Total attendance numbered 28. At all 5 sessions, patients voiced concerns about finding reliable information on the Internet that was free of advertising. The professional literature is lacking in demonstrating consistent training of this type conducted by librarians, although patient self help groups have existed for decades, and other professionals are regularly invited as guest speakers. Additional demonstrations are scheduled.

Evaluation Method: Because the project was offered in partnership with SJRHC, the instructor was evaluated using a 10-question, 5-point Likert scale, which is a modified version of the evaluation form SJRHC uses for other education sessions, so that the results would be meaningful to SJRHC. Specific questions were included about comfort using the Internet to find health care information and likelihood to use what was learned.

3rd Place

Linked Out or Left Out – How Do Your Users Fare?

Greg Pratt, Education and Reference Librarian and Wes Browning, Assistant Director for Information Systems, Research Medical Library, The University of Texas, M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Houston, TX

Abstract:

Announced in the Spring of 2001, the LinkOut program of the National Center for Biotechnology Information allows searchers of PubMed to link from a database record to various types of information including bibliographic, genetic, and taxonomic. In its initial phase, the bibliographic component enabled PubMed searchers to link to complete articles at journal providers' websites, if the searchers' respective libraries had subscriptions to the journals online. In March, 2002, developers announced the beta-testing of an additional bibliographic LinkOut component. This new feature makes it possible for a participating library to use print holdings information in SERHOLD to display an icon in PubMed records indicating to users that desired articles are available in the library's print collection. Together, LinkOut's bibliographic components constitute an "online catalog" of print and electronic journal holdings -- one that is shared internationally and capable of being searched topically using PubMed's powerful searching capabilities.

To characterize the growth of this program, the authors quantified and analyzed various elements of LinkOut during 2002, including the number of member libraries, the number of online titles available for linking, and the number of links to online and print holdings of participating libraries. The results will help librarians understand the significance of the LinkOut initiative, and librarians from participating libraries will gain a sense of how their libraries compare with others. For example, preliminary analysis indicates a great disparity among libraries in the number of online documents available to users. While a few libraries provide access to well over 1 million online

documents, approximately half of participating libraries provide access to less than 20% of the online documents available.

Honorable Mention

One Journal, Many Versions

Judith Wilkerson, Associate Professor, Head of Serials Services, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Oklahoma City, OK and Beverly Dowdy, Serials and Acquisitions Librarian, University of Central Oklahoma

Abstract:

Objective: Determine if various versions of SCIENCE are equivalent and interchangeable.

Design: Using selected issues of the journal, SCIENCE, compare dates available, percentage of content provided, indexing and retrieval, and other features, such as browse, key word search, links, controlled vocabulary search, access points, ease of use, database integration.

Setting: The Bird Library had a unique opportunity to compare the journal SCIENCE from a variety of vendors during a short period when a student had access on another campus, and the state-wide cooperative purchase of indexes with integrated full text were in transition. Products examined were Journals@OVID, EBSCOhost, JSTOR, InfoTrac (Gale Group), HighWire Press and Print.

Measures: Using the Print as the Standard, products were compared for currency, number of TOC items, availability of features listed.

Results: Each version was different. Two products were comparable for currency. Print was more current than all products except HighWire Press. The Online version for HighWire Press contained content and features not available in any other version. InfoTrac and JSTOR were closest to the print edition, but both were significantly delayed. Two products provided controlled vocabulary search. Four products offered PDF files. One product, HighWire press, offered interlinking with various outside databases. Three products offered interlinking with proprietary products only. For all products except one, the full text selection was the end of the search.

Conclusion: The various versions of SCIENCE are not equivalent.

Honorable Mention

Med High Peer Tutors Project – High School Students Teaching MEDLINE and MEDLINEplus

Debra Warner, RAHC Library Director and Assistant Library Director for Valley Services, University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, Harlingen TX.

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Abstract:

Four junior students were selected by the guidance counselors at Med High to be trained as peer tutors by the project staff. Peer tutors introduced MEDLINE *plus* and other NLM databases to the faculty, staff, and students at the South Texas High School for the Health Professions (“Med High”, as it is commonly called). This pilot project is part of an NLM contract with UTHSCSA at the Regional Academic Health Center in Harlingen, TX.

The peer tutors then trained the students and faculty from Med High to use the resources in classes and community service projects. The peer tutors also did a live demonstration of MEDLINE*plus* during an Open House for parents and the local community. Med High librarians participated in the project as partners with the peer tutors. Consumer health resources in both English and Spanish were highlighted in the training.

POSTERS

1st Place

Health Information Use by Physicians

Virginia M. Bowden, Jonquil Feldman, Debra Warner, Evelyn Olivier, Cynthia Olney, Mary Jo Dwyer, Graciela Reyna, Andrew Lombardo, University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio

Abstract:

The Texas Lower Rio Grande Valley Health Information Hispanic Outreach project, which is managed by the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio Library includes a survey of the computer and health information needs of physicians in the four southernmost counties on the Texas-Mexico border. This poster will discuss the survey, which was sent to approximately 1100 physicians identified on the database of the Board of Texas Medical Examiners in October 2001. The initial questionnaire was mailed in March 2002 and follow-up questionnaires were mailed to non-respondents in April and May. Approximately 350 questionnaires were returned, for a response rate of 31%. There were questions about familiarity with computers, professional tasks done by computer, access to Internet, information resources used, and email. Results will be compared with the physician survey done of this same group ten years earlier. The poster will graphically display the interesting results.

2nd Place

Gathering Customer Input Prior to Home Page Redesign: An Ontological Study

Katherine Alexander, Education Librarian; Karen Harker, Web Developer; Mori Lou Higa-Moore, Chief Futurist and Strategist; Shelley McKibbon, Research and Clinical Librarian; Helen Mayo, Outreach Manager; Laura Wilder, Research and Clinical Librarian; UT Southwestern Medical Center Library, Dallas, TX

Abstract:

In the summer of 2001, the Library's Content Team, which addresses the selection of content in the Library's Web site, studied how clients organize and describe information. Specifically, we identified which library resources and services were considered to be most important by our clients, how clients organized the library's electronic resources and services, and the terminology clients used to describe their groupings. We used these results to redesign the library's home page.

This poster presents our experience in planning and conducting this study. We will report on the process we developed to guide us through this study, from setting our initial goals to analyzing the data. We will present our card sort methodology as well as the participant-selection process. We will share our detailed working procedures, our analysis methods for the gathered data, and identify the resources necessary to complete this type of study successfully.

3rd Place

Comparing the Self-described Searching Knowledge of First Year Medical and Dental Students Before and After a MEDLINE Class

Janna Lawrence, Reference and Instructional Services Coordinator, and Linda Levy, Database Services Coordinator, Briscoe Library, University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, San Antonio, TX

Abstract:

Purpose: Compare the self-described search skills of first-year medical and dental students before taking a required MEDLINE search class with the results of their evaluation of the same search skills after taking the class.

Setting/subjects: First-year medical students (194); first-year dental students (83) knew how to use MeSH. Also, even among those students who believed they already possessed particular skills, most indicated in the post-test that they had learned more during the class.

Discussion/conclusion: During several years of teaching a required MEDLINE class, we have noted that many students claim to already know how to search MEDLINE. Our observation, however, has been that most students learn additional skills and also enhance the skills they already possess. Use of the pre-test and post-test with the students verified what we had observed and also verified the anecdotal comments of the students and faculty members responsible for the program.

Methodology: Pre-test and post-test

Results: In order to examine actual search knowledge and skills, a pre-test/post-test was developed and administered to all first-year medical and dental students attending a required class on MEDLINE searching. The pre-test/post-test asked students about their knowledge of fea-

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tures such as MeSH, subheadings, focusing, and Boolean operators. When asked to quantify their search skills, students recognized that their actual knowledge was limited. For example, only about 19% of the total number of 277 students completing the pre-test indicated that they knew how to use MeSH. Also, even among those students who believed they already possessed particular skills, most indicated in the post-test that they had learned more during the class.

Honorable Mention

Woman2Woman: A Community Health Information Outreach Project*

Jeffrey T. Huber, PhD, Associate Professor, School of Library and Information Studies, Texas Woman's University and Associate Director for Research, Houston Academy of Medicine -Texas Medical Center Library, Houston, TX

Abstract:

The overall goal of this outreach initiative is to facilitate information access at select community-based women's health agencies. Specific objectives include creating a local health information network, training women's health agency staff to use electronic information resources, providing consumer health information support to clients at these facilities, and increasing awareness of electronic information resources and services. Funded by the National Library of Medicine, the Woman2Woman project is a collaborative effort involving Texas Woman's University, the Houston Academy of Medicine -Texas Medical Center Library, and four community based women's health agencies: Houston Area Women's Center, The Rose, El Centro de Corazon, and the Lesbian Health Initiative housed at the Montrose Clinic and Montrose Counseling Center. Houston Area Women's Center provides shelter and support services to survivors of sexual assault and family violence. The Rose is a primary referral facility for community-based breast health programs. El Centro de Corazon focuses on women's health needs among the Hispanic community located in the Second Ward area of Houston. The Lesbian Health Initiative is devoted to furthering the mental and physical well-being of lesbians and their family members. To achieve project objectives, Internet-connected workstations were

placed at each participating women's health agency. A project Web page was developed to facilitate information access and training. Training sessions were conducted for agency staff on site and at the Houston Academy of Medicine-Texas Medical Center Library. Agency staff in turn are training their clients as appropriate. Agency staff training sessions included post-session evaluations as well as post-session follow-up surveys. In addition, project staff evaluated work flow at each participating agency site using qualitative research methodologies to determine areas for project expansion.

*Funded in part by National Library of Medicine Grant No. 1 G07 LM07259-01

Honorable Mention

PowerPoint Instruction Pearls and Pitfalls

Beth Wagner, Librarian, Division of Diagnostic Imaging, The University of Texas, M. D. Anderson Cancer Center, Houston, TX

Abstract:

Digital presentations have become the standard for clinical and educational presentations. PowerPoint has emerged as the presentation software program of choice. In the medical arena, the ability to incorporate text, images (still and video), animation, and sound provide an opportunity to create professional presentations for a variety of end uses. While creating a PowerPoint presentation can be "a learning by doing" experience, there is a need for individual and group instruction. Examples and techniques used successfully in past experience with individual and group workshops are discussed. Methods used to market workshops to the intended audience are presented. Instructors need to consider the participants' skill level not just with PowerPoint, but with Windows operating system functions as well. The participants' position (job title) within the organization may also be a factor. Position or job title should also be considered when scheduling the content, time of day, and length of instructional sessions. The ability to provide hands on instruction enhances the participants' experience. Educational materials provided to participants can also improve retention of concepts learned. Incorporating feedback from participants is also critical to the success of future workshops. How to solicit feedback and incorporate comments positively into future workshops is also discussed. ?



**RESEARCH SECTION
ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING**

SUNDAY, MAY 4

7:30—9:00 AM

L/ISTEN UP: Research News from the Groves of Academe

— submitted by Ellen Detlefsen, DLS

Research Being Done Outside the L/IS Realm

It has been my hope, since taking on responsibility for this column of research news from the groves of academe, to have an ongoing registry of the topics in medical L/IS research that graduate students are investigating. To date, my efforts to persuade my gentle readers to share information about projects that they are doing or supervising has yielded little. So, I recently attempted a scan of UMI's Digital Dissertations to ascertain if and what research had been completed thus far in the new century. What follows is a list of dissertations and theses recently completed (and reported to UMI) in the broad areas of medical library and information science.

[NOTE to those who want to replicate this project: I used various truncated forms of the words "librar?" and "inform?" and "medic?" and "healt?" in order to retrieve hits; the sorting and classifying of the retrieval is entirely mine, as are the choices of topical areas. I limited the search to the time frame of 2000-2003.]

What is notable about this list (aside from the fact that little research is in the classical library arena, and that most research is in the areas related to Information Behavior and Medical Informatics) is that more than half of this research (19 of 31 documents) is being done in universities that do NOT have L/IS degree programs. Many of our research colleagues are in schools and departments of business, nursing, education, communications, etc.; these are individuals who may not even know of the existence of the Research Section of MLA!

And, my personal favorite is the 410 page study from Guelph on "The impact of health information on wine demand: The case of Ontario"

Theses and Dissertations with an Informatics focus

A bibliometric investigation of medical informatics: A communicative action perspective by Andrews, James Everett, PhD UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI - COLUMBIA, 2000, 166 pages

Public health informatics: A consensus on core competencies by Richards, Janise Elaine, PhD THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN, 2000, 244 pages

Design, development and evaluation of asynchronous learning networks in primary care medicine: An application of biomedical informatics engineering principles in

medical education by Alrajeh, Nabil Ali, PhD VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY, 2001, 149 pages

Structural relationships within medical informatics: A classification/indexing co-occurrence analysis by Morris, Theodore Allan, PhD DREXEL UNIVERSITY, 2001, 303 pages

Digital diffusion in the clinical trenches: Findings from a telemedicine needs assessment by Harrop, Verle Margaret, PhD MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, 2002, 157 pages

Using automated extraction from the medical record to access biomedical literature by Mendonca, Eneida Abrantes, PhD COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, 2002, 134 pages

Theses and Dissertations with an Information Behavior focus

A qualitative study of archival data from an Internet self-help group for people living with atopic dermatitis by Diamond, Shelley Fern, MA SAYBROOK INSTITUTE, 2000, 110 pages

An examination of the information resources preferred by physicians by Duggan, Lawrence Joseph, MLIS DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY (CANADA), 2000, 104 pages

Readiness for evidence-based practice: Information literacy needs of nursing faculty and students in a Southern United States state by Pierce, Susan Tatum, EdD NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA, 2000, 288 pages

A study of the information behavior of health care planners, managers and administrators in Botswana and implications for the design of a national health information system (NHIS) by Moahi, Kgomo Hildegard, PhD UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH, 2000, 197 pages

The quality of medical students' confidence judgments when using external information resources: The effects of different media formats, source of questions, and question formats by O'Keefe, Karen Michelle, PhD THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL, 2000, 117 pages

(Continued on page 10)

(L/IS Theses — Continued from page 9)

The utilization of available health information by district nurses in the Midlands province: Zimbabwe by Zvavamwe, Simbisai, MA(Cur) UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA (SOUTH AFRICA), 2000

Underlying meanings of the physician curbside consultation by Perley, Cathy M., PhD EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY, 2001, 179 pages

Health information seeking behavior of rural consumers in the Big Bend region of west Texas by Ortego, Gilda Baeza, PhD TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY, 2001, 221 pages

The impact of health information on wine demand: The case of Ontario by Dyack, Brenda Joan, PhD UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH (CANADA), 2002, 410 pages

Knowledge is power: Health information seeking of Internet cancer support group members by Ginossar, Tamar, PhD THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, 2002, 208 pages

Factors related to the information needs and desired level of participation of older women engaged in medical decision making by Martin, Ronald Ralph, PhD WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY, 2002, 103 pages

An investigation of the perceived information needs, information-seeking behaviors, and the use of community public libraries among first-generation adult Korean immigrants living in the Dallas, Texas, area by Rho, Jin-Ja; PhD TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY, 2002, 225 pages

Theses and Dissertations with an Information Technology focus

Patterns of exposure to publicly accessible health information: An evaluation of the Michigan Interactive Health Kiosk Demonstration Project by Greenwood, Todd Wesley, PhD INDIANA UNIVERSITY, 2000, 338 pages

Data mining techniques applied to medical information: Multiple solutions to support decision making by Lee, I-Nong, PhD RENSSELAER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE, 2000, 215 pages

An international cross-cultural study of the role of chief information officers in healthcare by Saunders, Wallace Sanford, DBA UNIVERSITY OF SARASOTA, 2000, 161 pages

Under the knife: An analysis of information technology and the prognosis for success in the contemporary medical

office by Swandollar Eger, Mary Elizabeth, MBA LAMAR UNIVERSITY - BEAUMONT, 2001, 333 pages

Theses and Dissertations with an Internet/Web focus

Balance and bias of the Internet: A qualitative study of a purposive sample for breast cancer health information web sites by Becker, Julie Ann, PhD TEMPLE UNIVERSITY, 2000, 211 pages

Information retrieval of self-care and dependent-care agents using NetWellness™, a consumer health information network by Rieg, Linda Coyle, PhD UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI, 2000, 200 pages

A comparison of the user interface features of the free versions of MEDLINE on the Internet World Wide Web by Schneider, Lynette Conrad, PhD NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY, 2000, 174 pages

Effect of metasite selection on the quality of World Wide Web information: A collection development approach to the evaluation of Web-based consumer health information on the treatment of hypercholesterolemia by Hogan, Linda, PhD UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH, 2001, 274 pages

Web-based integrated medical information system for primary care physicians, students of medicine, and medical device design by Tsai, Mark Ching-feng, PhD STANFORD UNIVERSITY, 2001, 106 pages

Theses and Dissertations with a Library Focus

A case study of library/community agency coordination and health information partnering practices: The Teen CARE Network (Illinois) by Howrey, Mary M.; EdD NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY 2000, 325 pages

Theses and Dissertations with a Patient/Consumer Focus

Using focus groups to identify patient needs in the implementation of a patient health library by Clancy, Phyllis Anne, MSN WILMINGTON COLLEGE DIVISION OF NURSING (DELAWARE), 2000, 53 pages

An investigation of adult comprehension of HIV/AIDS health information presented with a variety of educational interventions (Immune deficiency) by Hall, Rebecca Glass, EdD THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS, 2001, 136 pages

Using GOMS to predict older adults' search time of health information in a hierarchical structure by Kurniawan, Sri Hastuti, PhD WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY, 2001, 118 pages

(Structured Abstracts — Continued from page 1)

OBJECTIVE: Envisioning Your Research Question

Do you have a research idea? Not sure where to start? The structured abstract can guide your thinking at the very beginning. Consider the overall purpose of your research. What are you trying to learn or to demonstrate? Such questions are the beginnings of a hypothesis. Here are some generic examples of research questions:

- *What made our program a success?*
- *Which form of teaching results in students searching effectively?*
- *Which information resources are used the most?*

There are many types of other questions you can entertain. For an inventory of research questions already developed by a worldwide collaboration of health sciences librarians see the Spring 2001 issue of *Hypothesis*⁸. Advice on formulating questions can be found elsewhere⁹. In addition, please see Bayley et al's examples of alternatives to the more conventional formats for structured abstracts¹⁰.

An increasing number of journals are allowing authors to begin their structured abstracts under the heading QUESTION. Should you choose a more traditional approach, however, you can convert your question into a statement under the heading of OBJECTIVE. Consider how the questions above become converted to OBJECTIVE statements:

- *To demonstrate how this program (name) was a success in achieving its five goals.*
- *To determine if teaching MEDLINE by the _____ method results in second year medical students retaining 90% of the search skills learned after three months duration.*
- *To measure electronic resources usage at the _____ Library and Informatics Center over the 2001-2002 period as a means of predicting future use.*

Note how these research questions became more refined in the process of stating them clearly for the structured abstract. Research questions typically become more focused as one writes up the proposal in structured abstract form. Normally research questions also become more specific and detailed during this process.

The content to be drafted in the METHODS and RESULTS sections will anticipate the actual research project in the initial stages. This might be the moment when you decide to submit your structured abstract for consideration as a presentation or poster at a professional meeting such as the MLA Annual Meeting. Your eventual research project need not be tied absolutely to what you propose, but the more you can clarify what methods you

think will be needed and what results you anticipate while still in the proposal stage, the easier your work will be later. Clarification also will attract colleagues with similar interests.

METHODS: Documenting Your Research Steps

Now that you have determined what you want to research or demonstrate, *how* will you proceed?

The METHODS section in a structured abstract should accurately, although concisely, summarize how you will proceed in learning the answer to your question. METHODS headings are sometimes brief:

- *Prospective cohort study*
- *Randomized controlled trial*
- *Series of three focus groups*

These brief descriptions often communicate a great deal because of the specific meanings attached to these shorthand descriptions of study designs. A handbook of research methods or two probably will suggest the type of methods that might be appropriate for answering your question and suggest some instruments you might use to gather information. Some authors substitute the term DESIGN for methods in their structured abstracts. Because questions vary and the designs have relative validity you also might want to consult a table of Evidence-Based Librarianship (EBL) Levels of Evidence for ideas¹⁰. As your research inquiry proceeds, you will find that your methods become more specific. Even the most experienced researchers must fine-tune their methods as practical issues arise.

As you contemplate what method to use, you might find it easier to identify two other elements found in some structured abstracts: SETTING and POPULATION. Most health sciences librarianship/informatics research includes these components. And, by thinking about the parameters of your setting or the exact criteria of who will be included (and who will be excluded) in your population, you begin to clarify your research project that much further. SETTING headings might be followed by the following sample statements:

- *A small library with one librarian and two technicians serving a 400-bed hospital.*
- *A small research library that serves an MRI research facility owned by a healthcare corporation.*
- *An academic health sciences library serving a school of medicine, a college of nursing, and two allied health sciences programs*

POPULATION headings might precede the following types of concise, but descriptive text:

- *First-year medical students with no previous formal MEDLINE training*

(Continued on page 12)

(Structured Abstracts — Continued from page 11)

- Third-year internal medicine residents
- All users of an academic health sciences library
- Physicians and research scientists

Will your methods include an INTERVENTION or an EXPOSURE? These might be helpful headings to include in your structured abstract. These headings might, coincidentally, help clarify the direction of your research. Experimental designs such as randomized controlled trials or observational designs such as the cohort studies usually utilize interventions or exposures respectively. An INTERVENTION usually has a specific research meaning. Some examples are:

- Weeding according by _____, _____, and _____ criteria.
- A 30-60 minute interview in the faculty members' offices
- A 120-minute in-depth MEDLINE training session for the study group whereas the control group received only a 15-minute overview session

The heading EXPOSURE also has a specific research design meaning. Some examples are:

- Access to information resources during the 2002 - 2003 period
- One 60-minute required training session on MEDLINE search strategies
- Teamwork training lasting two days for all managers

RESULTS: Reporting Your Research

The RESULTS section of the structured abstract reports what you have discovered. It will probably report that you only made a modest discovery or perhaps some unexpected results. Contrary to popular belief, when conducted correctly most solid research often does not report any dramatic or surprising results. Even if you wonder, "Who cares?" while reviewing less than dramatic or unexpected results, you have a professional responsibility to report whatever it was that your research produced. Do try to be as accurate as possible for the sake of those trying to understand your research method and results. Quantify as much as possible to lend precision. You might want to review the kinds of methods employed by colleagues who have attempted to answer research questions resembling your own. If their methods do not seem appropriate do not let the range of their methods limit your choice of research design. Your own design might produce unique data or observations worth sharing with your colleagues. On the other hand, by employing similar research designs capable of collecting compatible data, your research might be more easily included in a systematic review or meta-analysis.

At the time of submitting a proposal for a poster or a presented paper you most likely will not have your results

ready yet or the results might still be unanalyzed. This should be perfectly acceptable, but you should consider what results your hypothesis, null hypothesis, and alternative hypotheses suggest. Colleagues reviewing your proposal should be able to evaluate your proposal on the basis of your Objective, Methods, and anticipated Results alone, so do not worry about having actual results to report at the proposal submission stage.

The CONCLUSION should not introduce any information or ideas not already described elsewhere in your structured abstracts. Ideally, it should be only one or two sentences in length, and can include an evaluation of your research and areas for further research -- questions for your colleagues to use as they start research with their own structured abstracts!

Examples of Structured Abstracts

The following articles include structured abstracts to give you some examples for different types of research:

SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS

Brettle A. Information skills training: a systematic review of the literature. *Health Information and Libraries Journal*. 2003 Jun; 20 (2): in press.

Winning A., Beverley C. Clinical librarianship: a systematic review. *Hypothesis*. 2001 Fall; 15(3): 3, 8-9. Available from: <http://gain.mercer.edu/mla/research/hypothesis.html>

META-ANALYSIS

Sharpe D, Rossiter L. Siblings of children with a chronic illness: a meta-analysis. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*. 2002 Dec; 27 (8): 699-710.

RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL (INTERVENTION)

Bradley DR et al. Real-time, evidence-based medicine instruction: a randomized controlled trial in a neonatal intensive care unit. *Journal of the Medical Library Association*. 2002 Apr; 90(2):194-201. Available from: <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/tocrender.fcgi?journal=93>

COHORT STUDY (PREDICTION)

Alpi K, Cleary D, Dorsey MJ. Accessing the most recent information Part II. *Hypothesis*. 2002 Summer; 16 (2): 6. Available from: <http://gain.mercer.edu/mla/research/hypothesis.html>

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDIES (EXPLORATION)

Maliski SL, Heilemann MV, McCorkle R. From "death sentence" to "good cancer": couples' transformation of a prostate cancer diagnosis. *Nursing Research*. 2002 Nov-Dec; 51(6):391-7.

(Continued on page 13)

(Structured Abstracts—Continued from page 12)

Fuat A, Hungin AP, Murphy JJ. Barriers to accurate diagnosis and effective management of heart failure in primary care: qualitative study. *BMJ*. 2003 Jan 25;326(7382):196.

Gallagher TH, Waterman AD, Ebers AG, Fraser VJ, Levinson W. Patients' and physicians' attitudes regarding the disclosure of medical errors. *JAMA*. 2003 Feb 26;289(8):1001-7.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Tannery NH et. al. Use of Web-based library resources by medical students in community and ambulatory settings. *Journal of the Medical Library Association*. 2002 Jul;90(3):305-9. Available from: <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/tocrender.fcgi?journal=93>

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Gregg AL et al. Designing a curriculum on Internet health resources for deaf high school students. *Journal of the Medical Library Association*. 2002 Oct;90(4):431-6. Available from: <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/tocrender.fcgi?journal=93>

NARRATIVE REVIEW

Eldredge J. Cohort studies in health sciences librarianship. *Journal of the Medical Library Association*. 2002 Oct;90(4):380-92. Available from: <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/tocrender.fcgi?journal=93>

SUMMARY

Here is a checklist based on this description of the steps in the research process and how the structured abstract can assist you in clarifying your thoughts and actions:

1. Formulate a research QUESTION, refining it as you proceed with your research.
2. Consider the METHODS you will use to answer the question, including the population and setting, the research design, any instruments you might develop or employ and if you will include an intervention or exposure.
3. Once you have carried out your research, analyze the

data you have collected and summarize it in your RESULTS section.

4. Finally, prepare your CONCLUSION and inspire your colleagues.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Ad Hoc Working Group for Critical Appraisal of the Medical Literature. A proposal for more informative abstracts of clinical articles. *Annals of Internal Medicine* 1987 Apr.; 106(4):598-604.
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- ⁴ McIntosh N. Structured abstracts and information transfer. *British Library R&D Report* 6142. London: British Library, 1994.
- ⁵ Hartley J. Sydes M. Blurton A. Obtaining information accurately and quickly: are structured abstracts more efficient? *Journal of Information Science* 1996; 22(5):349-356.
- ⁶ Booth A. O'Rourke AJ. The value of structured abstracts in information retrieval from MEDLINE. *Health Libraries Review* 1997 Sep; 14(3):157-166.
- ⁷ Hartley J. Sydes M. Are structured abstracts easier to read than traditional ones? *Journal of Research in Reading* 1997 Jun; 20(2):122-136.
- ⁸ Evidence-Based Librarianship Implementation Committee. The most relevant and answerable research questions facing the practice of health sciences librarianship. *Hypothesis* 2001 Spring; 15(1): 9-15, 17.
- ⁹ Eldredge JD. Evidence-based librarianship: formulating EBL questions. *Bibliotheca Medica Canadiana*; BMC 2000 Winter; 22(2): 74-7.
- ¹⁰ Bayley L. Wallace A. Brice A. Evidence-Based Librarianship Implementation Committee Research Results Dissemination Task Force recommendations. *Hypothesis* 2002 Spring; 16(1):6-8.
- ¹¹ Eldredge JD. Evidence-based librarianship levels of evidence. *Hypothesis* 2002 Fall; 10-13.

Monday, May 5	Shoot the Pipeline with Evidence-Based Librarians: Original Research and Practical Methods	3:30 - 5:00 PM
<p>This session will bring Evidence-Based Librarianship (EBL) to life for all who want to integrate EBL into their practice. This session will feature the first-ever systematic review (the highest level in the EBL hierarchy of evidence) of Clinical Medical Librarian programs conducted in the US. Two other presentations will summarize methods for measuring user attitudes and behaviors.</p> <p>Come join the MLA Research Section for an afternoon of practical learning that will bring us closer to the exciting international EBL movement.</p>		



Literature Review

—submitted by Ruth Fenske, Ph.D.

Andersen, Deborah Lines. Teaching Analytic Thinking: Bridging the Gap between Student Skills and Professional Needs in Information Science. Journal of Education for Library and Information Science. 43(3):187-196, Fall 2002.

Descriptive data on mathematical skills, undergraduate major, and confidence in statistical ability were collected from 232 master's students enrolled in research methods classes at the University of Albany, SUNY from 1996 through 1999. Data were collected on the first day of each class. The author does not indicate if the classes were required or elective.

Almost half the students were in their twenties; only a few were fifty or older. The most frequent undergraduate majors were English and history, neither of which typically requires much study of quantitative methods. Students' self-perceptions of enjoyment of and ability to do mathematics and statistics fell toward the midpoint of a five-point Likert scale. The author does not indicate how the Likert scale was presented. Were the students asked to rate themselves on a scale of one to five or could the midpoint have been interpreted to be neutral or no opinion? It is not clear if she defined mathematics and statistics in her survey. Students could have been thinking of many different levels of quantitative ability when they answered the questions.

Andersen attempts to demonstrate that research methods and statistics should be required, both for the traditional reasons of "professionalism," practical problem solving, serving as a guide to others doing research, and being a consumer of research, and for four newer reasons: (1) increasing use of software packages for collecting data, (2) the need to evaluate traditional services vs web-based services, (3) the need to evaluate services to distance education students, and (4) a general need for librarians to be more business oriented. In order to carry out the latter, she advocates moving beyond statistics and research methods to more teaching about system modeling, stakeholder analysis, and multiattribute utility models.

While this paper is of some use in documenting the well known fact that library science students are not very mathematically inclined, I am not sure that the author has demonstrated any greater a need now than there ever was for requiring research methods and statistics courses. Our profession always has, and will continue to need to have a majority of its members be numerate as well as literate. There is also a need for a cadre of members who

have the kind of advanced analytical skills not common among today's information professionals.

Cook, Colleen, Fred Heath, and Bruce Thompson. "Zones of Tolerance" in Perceptions of Library Service Quality: A LibQUAL+ Study. portal: Libraries and the Academy. 3(1):113-123, January 2003.

LIBQUAL+™ is a method for evaluating library service quality in widespread use by college and university libraries, including health sciences libraries. Participants rate twenty-five items on the minimally acceptable level of service, the perceived actual level of service, and the desired level of service. "Zones of tolerance" are "the distance between minimally acceptable and desired service quality levels."

Using data gathered from 63,285 students and faculty in 2002, the current analysis looks at zones of tolerance across undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty and across community colleges, health sciences centers, four-year ARL universities, and four-year non-ARL universities. Data from 10,388 health sciences library users are included. Results show that average minimally acceptable and average desired levels of service are comparable across both user types and university types. Faculty had somewhat narrower zones of tolerance than did students. Community colleges had narrower zones of tolerance than did the three other university types.

The authors conclude that LIBQUAL data can be used across user types and university types, except for community colleges. Since the LIBQUAL survey was developed in non-community college settings, this conclusion was not unexpected. It would be interesting to see a detailed analysis of the data gathered in health sciences libraries. Health sciences librarians in community colleges might have an opportunity to participate in development of a similar survey more suited to community colleges.

Robins, David and Sigrid Kelsey. Analysis of Web-based Information Architecture in a University Library: Navigating for Known Items. Information Technology and Libraries. 21(4):158-169, December 2002.

In 1999, the Louisiana State Universities Libraries webgroup redesigned their library webpage, using a directory structure. The homepage has seven major headings with related links under each heading. A Search This Site box was added to the homepage and an A to Z contents listing was added under General Information. At some point between then and now, they did a usability survey.

The Software Usability Measurement Inventory, designed to evaluate productivity applications, was modified

(Continued on page 15)

(Literature Review — Continued from page 14)

fied to fit application to a library website. Respondents were a self-selected group who chose to respond to a request on the website to fill in the survey. It is not clear if there were 129 respondents or 74 respondents in a three-month period. Participants had to answer almost all the questions to be included in data analysis. Table 4 shows between 61 and 69 respondents answered each question. The text describes this as being a range of three, whereas it is really a range of eight.

In a second part, 314 undergraduates enrolled in a 100 level library skills class were asked to do two navigation tasks each during the first week of class. Students were asked to document each click as they did the task. There were a total of ten tasks, with between 20 and 47 students being assigned each task. A total of 772 clicks were made by 308 subjects on the ten tasks. Some tasks proved to be much more difficult than others.

Although they acknowledge that having widely varying numbers of subjects assigned to tasks caused problems with data analysis across tasks, they nevertheless did just that in Table 7. It is surprising the editor did not notice this. Across tasks analysis was also used in some of the analysis presented in Tables 8 and 9. In one paragraph they say they are talking about Table 8 when they mean Table 9. At one point, they point out some seemingly incongruent results and suggest readers go back to earlier tables to "ascertain why differences occur."

The first part of this study gathered valid data from only a few library users. Nevertheless, the results were of use in telling them further redesign would be required. Assuming lower division students correctly recorded clicks, the method used in the second part of the study has promise. However, anyone replicating this study would want to carry it out in a more competent manner and do a correct analysis of the data that were collected.

Belefant-Miller, Helen and Donald W. King. A Profile of Faculty Reading and Information Use Behaviors on the Cusp of the Electronic Age. Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology. 54(2):179-181, January 15, 2003.

Although these data are almost ten years old (1993), the authors feel that they are providing a baseline for faculty reading behaviors in the early years of the electronic age. In this case, faculty also includes researchers, administrators, and academic professionals. The return rate was 33.4%.

Faculty read an average of 384 documents of any type in a year; they average 161 journal articles per year. Each faculty member subscribed to an average of 4.2 journals; 84% paid the subscriptions themselves. 91.5% had access to a computer; 85% use e-mail. Each spent about 24 minutes a day on e-mail. Although all had used bibliographic databases, only 46% found the last article they had read by using a database. Browsing was the most frequent source of the last article read. Even in 1993, 25% of the journal articles were accessed in electronic format. Self-reported publication rate is three articles per year; however, they point out that more objective counts done by others yield lower numbers.

Dinkins, Debbi. Circulation as Assessment: Collection Development Policies Evaluated in Terms of Circulation at a Small Academic Library. College & Research Libraries. 64(1):46-52, January 2003.

Faculty play a large role in selection in most small academic libraries. In this study, circulation of five years of selections made by faculty in five departments was compared to circulation of books on similar subjects selected by librarians. None of the science departments was studied, due to their having relatively small budgets for monographs.

Automated acquisitions and circulation data were used to build spreadsheets. Librarian vs faculty selections were determined by fund used to purchase the book.

Although the author had predicted that books selected by faculty would circulate more than books selected by librarians, in fact, librarian selections circulated as much or more than faculty selections for all areas except art. Librarians in small health sciences libraries could perform a similar study of their own selections vs materials selected by users. ?

Improving Practice Through Research			June 5-6
Current Perspectives, Future Prospects			Edmonton, Alberta
Evidence Based Librarianship 2003			

And many thanks to the Editorial Board—and all the contributing authors—who make this a publication worthy of being called a JOURNAL!

Many thanks to the Executive Committee for making this happen.

HYPOTHESIS: THE JOURNAL OF THE RESEARCH SECTION OF MLA

Notice anything different?
Hypothesis has changed it's name!



HYPOTHESIS

THE JOURNAL OF THE RESEARCH SECTION OF MLA

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