Harnessing History: Highlighting CHLA/ABSC Capacity Building Through the Northern Alberta Health Libraries Association (NAHLA), 1985—2007

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NAHLA Chapter Development

1985 February 9 CHLA/ABSC Board grants NAHLA official Chapter status

1987 Members range from Edmonton, Ponoka and Red Deer, to Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, and Yellowknife

Early 1990s NAHLA publishes a newsletter that includes updates on member meetings and events, CHLA/ABSC activities and MLA events

1990 At NAHLA's AGM the Hospital Library sub-group was formed to address concerns unique to hospital libraries

1990 June 9 – 13 NAHLA hosts CHLA/ABSC Annual Conference "Health Information for All", in Edmonton

1992 NAHLA becomes a member of the Partners in Education program in support of SLIS University of Alberta students

1993 CHLA/ABSC awards NAHLA's Hospital Library Group the 10th Anniversary Commemorative Award for the group's "cooperative spirit"

1994 NAHLA's AGM moves to Corbett Hall, University of Alberta, from restaurants or members' homes, signifying NAHLA's developing professionalism

1997 The NAHLA listserv is established

1998 The NAHLA logo is designed by a University of Alberta Arts student

1998 The NAHLA website is launched

1999/2000 The range of NAHLA membership narrows as a result of the closure of health libraries

2003 May 31 – June 4 NAHLA hosts CHLA/ABSC Annual Conference "Information Mosaic: Bringing the Pieces Together" in Edmonton

2005 The NAHLA Executive Handbook is created

2006 The NAHLA Mission Statement is approved at the AGM

1985 **1990** **1995** **2000** **2005**

1986 The first of five editions of a Union List of Serials for 15 Edmonton Health Libraries is published

1986 NAHLA lobbies in support of health libraries

1988 NAHLA encourages members to submit letters to MPs on copyright Bill C60 and access to health information

1988 NAHLA submits "*Information: a priceless and cost effective resource*" in response to the Premier's Commission on the Future of Health Care for Albertans

1989 NAHLA submits a response to CHLA/ABSC's strategic planning document "*Commitment to Change*"

1990 NAHLA hosts a forum to discuss the "*Rainbow Report*" on the future of Alberta's health care system, with MLAs from each of the three political parties

1992 NAHLA participates in a meeting with seven other Edmonton library groups to discuss a joint committee on staff development

1995 The Union List of Serials is converted for inclusion in SERHOLD

1995 The Consumer Health Information Working Group is established to produce a directory of information resources and services available in the Edmonton region. Funded by a CHLA/ABSC Development Award, the Directory was published in 1997 and updated in 2000.

1997 NAHLA membership continues to deal with restructuring in the health care sector. Emphasis shifts to ensure that health libraries are an integral part of the new health care environment. NAHLA educational events reflect this.

1998 NAHLA and SAHLA co-sponsor "EBM for Librarians: Panning for Gold", a workshop by Cindy Walker-Dilks from McMaster University

2001 NAHLA arranges and publicizes CHLA/ABSC focus groups

2002 April 12 1st TRENDS Mini-Conference is held, with sessions on EBL, grant writing and the hidden web

2004 CHLA/ABSC funds the Oral History Project through the Chapter Initiatives Fund

2004 April 23 2nd TRENDS Mini-Conference is held, with sessions on: designing effective questionnaires, marketing your library, and humour in the workplace

2005 February NAHLA begins its regular series of Leading Edge workshops. Sessions include electronic health resources, EBM, systematic reviews, EBSCO's CINAHL, and consumer health.

2005 April 15 3rd TRENDS Mini-Conference is held, with sessions on: roles and responsibilities at work, the Golden Age of information science, and community in the

2006 April 15 4th TRENDS Mini-Conference is held, with sessions on: aboriginal health information, advocacy of health librarians, and qualitative research

2007 NAHLA History Group presents poster at the CHLA/ABSC annual conference

Colour Code Key
Advocacy
Education
Special Projects

NAHLA Activities

Abstract

Background: NAHLA has been in existence for 22 years as a very active Chapter of CHLA/ABSC. This is the first attempt to create a narrative history of the Association. A grant was obtained from the CHLA/ABSC Chapter Initiatives Fund to support this project.

Objective: The purpose of the NAHLA History project is to capture, collect and document the history and activities of NAHLA, record and share the process with other Chapters, and systematically organize NAHLA documents for delivery to the Provincial Archives of Alberta, where they will be available for research and study.

Methods: A NAHLA History Working Group collected, reviewed and organized existing documentation and gleaned additional information from issues of BMC/JCHLA. Individuals who played a key role in the establishment of the Chapter, and others who made significant contributions, participated in focus groups or interviews to acquire anecdotal information relevant to the historical record.

Results: Final products include a qualitative narrative history of NAHLA, publication to JCHLA, a Fact Sheet on the process of reporting Chapter histories, and submission of NAHLA records to the Provincial Archives of Alberta for preservation.

Conclusion: This project contributes to the body of knowledge about health librarianship in Canada. It engenders a sense of pride in our profession, acknowledges our accomplishments, and encourages professional development. It demonstrates capacity building among members, facilitates knowledge transfer by serving as a model for promoting similar initiatives in other CHLA Chapters, and benefits future research.

Acknowledgements

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NAHLA: The Formative Years, 1985—1997

Original Bylaws: 1985. Provide professional support and fellowship to the membership and to foster quality health information services in Northern Alberta.

- Before email and conference calling, communication between NAHLA members was limited. One former member said that in the early days, NAHLA "**was a very social, bonding experience, and a way to get to know other health librarians who I spoke on the phone with a lot during the day**." A second participant further volunteered that "**meetings existed because they were more inclusive – you could communicate with more than one person at a time**".
- In the first decade of NAHLA, members were concerned with the shifting political environment. One Executive recollected "**that a lot of events were based on the current "political" situation, they weren't out of a catalogue, they weren't specifically library related, they were more topics of interest to things going on in the health care field in general**"
- In 1988, upon submitting a response to the Premier's Commission on the Future of Health Care for Albertan's, a former Executive member explained that "**working to write the response to the government was really good for NAHLA, and it was really good that we got a politician to come and speak. It helped us see that we could accomplish things. We may not have got any real results out of it, besides getting the politician to come and speak, but that was a really good thing.**"
- Planning for the 1990 CHLA/ABSC conference started in 1988. One of the founding NAHLA Executive commented that "**before the conference, we were a chapter, but we didn't have a whole lot of drive. I think that first CHLA conference drew everyone together and gave us a lot of drive and purpose**"
- "**We never did a sloppy job! We were VERY professional as a group. And I thought for just a small number of us, it was pretty amazing!"**

Hospital Library Group: 1990

In the early 1990s, some hospital librarians working in Edmonton felt a sense of isolation in their positions. Contact with other NAHLA colleagues helped to ease this isolation but there were only three or four NAHLA meetings each year. There was a need for an informal but frequent forum to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern. In response to this need, the Hospital Library Group was formed in 1990 as a sub-group of NAHLA. Still active, the Group's objectives are to encourage ongoing communication among members, to offer a forum for the exchange of information between the Group and the John W. Scott Health Sciences Library, University of Alberta, and to continue to foster mutually beneficial services for all concerned.

NAHLA: Coming of Age, 1997 - present

- One former Executive reminisced about her first exposure to NAHLA in the 1990s, "**I was very impressed with the group. They had a very short business meeting and then had a nice guest speaker. There was a lovely cheese platter. The food was stellar. The atmosphere was stellar. I thought 'this is a posh, very effective group to be involved with'**."
- NAHLA's AGM was originally held in members' homes or restaurants. One former executive member said: "**I'm all about open access! I didn't want people to have to pay for dinner at the AGM, and when we held it at restaurants they had to. We COULD afford it!**"
- In the late 1990s, the emphasis of NAHLA shifted away from politics and became more focused on education, with the Leading Edge workshops and the Teaching, Research, Education, 'Nowledge, Direction, Strength (TRENDS) mini-conference. One member recollected that "**the whole intent of TRENDS was that not everyone could go to CHLA and there were few educational opportunities at the time.**"
- Preparation for the 2003 CHLA/ABSC Conference was remembered as being very organized and very low stress, including the comment that: "**we had done it, and done it well the first time, so the second time wasn't stressful because we knew what we were doing and we knew we could do it!**"
- Many of the focus group participants commented about serving on the Executive, including one member who said "**serving on the Executive is an opportunity. You can lean how to chair meetings in a non-threatening environment and take advantage of learning different roles, such as Treasurer, President, etc.**"

NAHLA Mission Statement

NAHLA Mission Statement: Empowering health information specialists in Northern Alberta to support health care and research, through leadership, advocacy, networking and education.