

IN FOCUS / EN PROFONDEUR

Featuring: Yongtao Lin

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In Focus is a new JCHLA feature that will profile a different CHLA-ABSC member in each issue. If you are interested in being featured in an upcoming issue, or know of a fellow member who would be an interesting candidate, please contact Heather Ganshorn at junior-editor@chla-absc.ca.

1. Tell us about your current position.

I have been a Health Information Network (HIN) Librarian with the University of Calgary working at the Tom Baker Cancer Knowledge Centre since 2008. The HIN provides information services to patients, the public, and staff working in Alberta Health Services Calgary Zone and in Cancer Care South.

2. What do you find most interesting about your work?

I enjoy the close contact with patients and health care practitioners, as it helps me to get to know what they want and what they actually need.

3. What has been your greatest professional challenge?

Advocating the value that an integrated information service can bring to evidence-based practice is a constant challenge but a rewarding one.

4. How did you become interested in medical librarianship?

I started my librarianship as an intern for Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information (CISTI) where I found myself intrigued by how Research and Development (R&D) can be directly impacted by information retrieval. Seeing the differences that a medical librarian can possibly make in patient care, teaching and research is what interests and motivates me every day.

5. What was your background before you became a medical librarian?

I was a teacher for nine years prior to becoming a medical librarian and I am still addicted to teaching and learning.

6. What would you be doing if you weren't a librarian?

I would probably be teaching, or I would be a translator/interpreter, as I am a qualified translator. I am constantly amazed by the differences and similarities of different languages in various cultural contexts.

7. What do you think is the most interesting issue in the library field (medical libraries or more general) today?

I think the most interesting issue in the current library field is the integration of Web 2.0 in information services:



how information professionals embrace and adopt new technologies in reference, instruction, and outreach.

8. What accomplishment are you most proud of?

A network-wide library instruction program which includes ten brief and three advanced courses was implemented last fall and made available to thousands of health care professionals. I was proud to be the lead. Course schedules and registration are managed by a regional learning management system. Sessions are now available at any time within the organizations. Consistency, structure, and flexibility are built into a self-directed learning process.

9. Whom do you admire, and why?

I am not sure I would use “admire” to describe my relationship with my five-year-old daughter, but I truly admire her in having the courage to try out new things and being fearless enough to say “I’m smarter than you in this.” I hope she won’t stop that when she grows up.

10. What other organizations are you involved in?

Other than CHLA, I am a member of GreyNet, an international group to facilitate, and promote research and communication in the field of grey literature. I am also actively involved with Cancer Patient Education Network, sharing experiences and best practices in various aspects of cancer patient education including health literacy.

11. Is there anything about you that your colleagues might be surprised to know?

We all probably have something that we don't share with our colleagues, not purposely, just things you take for granted as part of you but not part of your work. I was a dedicated eraser collector for many years before I finally managed to break the habit, but deep in my genes I am quite a collector.

12. Tell us about some of your hobbies.

I love kids' yoga, the playful yoga. I also enjoy fashion design and could probably still sew and knit.

13. What is your favourite place in Canada, and why?

I love Nelson BC, known for its restored heritage buildings. The city's mountainous geography kept growth confined to the narrow valley bottom, but culturally the place is so "youth-oriented" and "improvisational."

14. What advice would you give to a new member of CHLA or someone new to the field?

A good mentor would provide you with tools to navigate the "world" of health science librarianship. Find one when you start your health librarianship, if possible. Mentorship also doesn't need to be structured or formal – learn by doing, learn with peers, learn from your own mistakes and don't be afraid to say "I don't know, let me find out."

15. What are your plans for the future?

I still consider myself a novice health sciences librarian and my short-term plan is to further develop some in-depth knowledge in evidence-based practice and get more involved in systematic reviews with researchers.

We gratefully acknowledge the Medical Library Association's permission to adapt the question list from the MLA News Member Spotlight feature.