

IN FOCUS / EN PROFONDEUR

Featuring: Sophie Regalado

Manager, Library Services, St. Joseph's Care Group

Degrees and professional designations held: BA, MA, MIST, AHIP (Senior Member).



1. Tell us about your current position.

Currently, I work as the Manager of Library Services for St. Joseph's Care Group (SJCG) in Thunder Bay, Ontario; SJCG is a Catholic healthcare organization that delivers services in the areas of addictions and mental health, complex care, and rehabilitation and long-term care. As Manager of Library Services, I am responsible for the overall direction, management, planning, and evaluation of the SJCG Libraries. We have two libraries: one is located at St. Joseph's Hospital and the other at Lakehead Psychiatric Hospital. The Library Team serves about 1700 staff geographically distributed over eight sites.

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

Working within a hospital setting offers me the latitude to work on a variety of projects and with a diverse number of health professionals – whether it's accreditation, sitting on a corporate committee such as the Communication and Information Management Quality Committee, collaborating on a research project, or providing education to a group of health professionals on a new resource – my role and work is not confined to what is traditionally considered library work.

3. What has been your greatest professional challenge?

Moving to Thunder Bay from the Hamilton–Toronto area has been my greatest professional challenge. When I first moved, everything was new; I was new to Northern Ontario, the city of Thunder Bay, the library profession as a whole, and I was unfamiliar with the local library landscape. However, with a bit of tenacity, some luck, and an incredibly supportive partner, I was able to

successfully transition. While the move to Thunder Bay was an adjustment, over the nine years I have lived here I have had opportunities to learn and grow professionally in ways that I would have never anticipated. I am grateful for the opportunities that Thunder Bay has provided me with.

4. How did you become interested in medical librarianship?

Like so many of us who are new to the profession, I needed to get my librarian foot in the door, so to speak. When an advertisement for a medical librarian position at SJCG appeared in the local paper I applied for it, even though I had limited direct experience in this setting. Fortunately, I got the job and it has been, by far, the absolute best thing that happened to me professionally. The really cool thing about this story is that the advertisement for the medical librarian position at SJCG was directly above an advert for a research statistician at SJCG – my partner, Sacha Dubois, happens to be a research statistician. So, Sacha applied for the statistician job, was interviewed, and the rest was history. We have both worked for SJCG for eight years in the same overall department (Learning, Research, and Professional Practice) and under the same Director. It was clearly meant to be!

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

Academically, I have a Master of Arts in History from McMaster University where my focus was medieval and early modern history. My Master of Information Studies is from the University of Toronto; the MIST programme at the University of Toronto allowed me to do a collaborative program in book history and print culture and Library and Information Sciences which I really enjoyed and found complemented my background in history. Professionally, before I moved to Thunder Bay I worked at the University of Toronto as a Special Projects Coordinator for *Iter*, an online medieval and Renaissance bibliographic database. The first year I lived in Thunder Bay, and prior to working at SJCG, I was a sessional lecturer in the History and Women's Studies Departments at Lakehead University. I also did some work as a librarian at Lakehead University's Education Library.

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

The graduate research I did for my MA thesis examined the devotion and piety of English women from 1480–1620. Given my love at the time for all things medieval I think I would have pursued further studies at the PhD level and

ended up teaching history in a university setting. I also am a big fan of the publishing world, and I can see myself working for Hearst Corporation or some other major publisher.

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

The changing role of librarians is a topic of interest to me. The traditional roles that librarians once held are no longer the normative standard, especially given the technological climate we are in. Right now it's important as a profession that we learn to remarket and repackage our skills and talents to make our work more vital and current.

8. What accomplishment are you most proud of?

Being awarded CHLA/ABSC Canadian Hospital Librarian of the Year for 2012 was a great honour for me. I was nominated by my Director, Geri Vainionpaa. There's nothing like being appreciated for the work that you do by a person whom you respect and admire.

9. Whom do you admire, and why?

Professionally my Director, Geri Vainionpaa, has been a mentor and wonderful support to me – Geri took a chance when she offered me the position at SJCG – my first “real” job ever as a librarian. There are several qualities in Geri that I find admirable; a few stand out for me that I try to incorporate into my role as a manager. Regardless of how busy Geri gets, she always makes time to listen to my concerns or issues, and she does so with an open mind. When I was a newbie to the hospital library world Geri was, and continues to be, willing to support my growth and knowledge as a health librarian and now as a Manager. Whether it is supporting my taking a course about expert searching or funding my attendance at a conference, Geri recognizes the value in networking with and learning from other library professionals.

10. What other organizations are you involved in?

I am a member of the Ontario Library Association and the Medical Library Association; with the MLA I'm a Senior Member with the Academy of Health Information Professionals. Currently, I am the President of the Ontario Health Libraries Association. I've also just finished up a five-year term with CHLA as an ex officio board member on the *Journal of the Canadian Health Libraries Association* Editorial Team.

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

I can read Early Modern English script. As part of my MA thesis I had to read about 300 or so wills. Not only did

I have to decipher the handwriting of the scribe, but the task was also further exacerbated by the fact that just as I was becoming familiar with one scribe's handwriting it would suddenly change, out of nowhere. Adding further to this stress was that I had to read these historical documents using an antiquated microfilm reader that looked like it was quite literally created and assembled during the Early Modern period.

12. Tell us about some of your hobbies.

I love to travel, explore new places, and take photos of the cities I journey through. In the fall of 2011 my partner and I travelled to Portugal where we were taken with Villa Nova de Gaia, a city located south of Porto and across from the Douro River. I also enjoy cooking, especially making soup. To keep me sane I work out, in particular I cycle and circuit train. On those forty below winter nights I like to curl up on my couch with an amply filled bowl of popcorn, warm quilt, and two shelties to watch some good TV like *Game of Thrones*, *Breaking Bad*, and dare I admit *The Real Housewives of New Jersey*.

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

I was born and grew up in downtown Toronto and to this day Toronto is one of my favourite places in Canada. You might think I'm biased, but I've not come across a place quite as multicultural. From Little Italy to Kensington Market to Chinatown the colours, smells, and sounds transport you to those amazing countries and cultures – there's just nothing like it.

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

Network! CHLA is a wonderfully engaged community; take advantage of the networking opportunities that CHLA or other local or provincial associations have to offer – whether it's attending an annual conference or volunteering as a committee or Board or Executive member – you won't regret it. From 2007–2012, I was an editor for the *Journal of the Canadian Health Libraries Association* and had the privilege of working with librarians from all over Canada; this experience has enriched me as a health librarian.

15. What are your plans for the future?

Eventually, I would like to pursue a PhD in Information Studies.

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