

***A HISTORY  
of the  
OHIO HEALTH SCIENCES LIBRARY ASSOCIATION***



***on the occasion of its  
Tenth Anniversary***

***1994-2004***

**Pamela M. Elwell**

## **Acknowledgements**

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Pamela M. Elwell  
March 8, 2004

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## **The Mission of OHSLA**

OHSLA officially established its mission on March 11, 1994 with the adoption of the bylaws:

The purposes of OHSLA shall be to: (1) promote, develop, and improve health sciences library services in the State of Ohio; (2) encourage sharing and cooperation among all types of libraries in the State of Ohio; (3) strengthen collaborative and network relationships within the State of Ohio, the region, and the nation; (4) provide a forum for the exchange of ideas among individuals who provide health information; (5) provide opportunities for continuing education and professional development; (6) provide a forum for the discussion of common problems and matters of mutual concern; (7) develop position(s) on issues affecting Ohio health sciences libraries; and (8) provide representation to the Regional Advisory Council of the Greater Midwest Region, National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM).

## **Retrospective – Before OHSLA**

In the years before 1993, there had been two statewide groups of health sciences librarians, not in competition with one another, but in response to circumstances of the times.

One important preceding effort was the Regional Medical Library System (RML), an outreach program of the National Library of Medicine (today known as the National Network of Libraries of Medicine). In the first implementation of the RML program in the late 1970s, the State of Ohio was grouped with Kentucky and Michigan, with the RML office located at Wayne State University in Detroit. As time passed, both the administration in Washington D.C. and the national budget situation changed. Pressure to reduce federal government spending resulted in a mandate that the National Library of Medicine reduce the overhead costs of operating the RML system by reducing the number of regions in the country. Subsequently, Ohio became a state in a much larger region, with the RML office located at the University of Illinois at Chicago. When the new RML was organized, many established relationships changed. Among the changes that followed was the RML requirement that each constituent state form a state council of health

sciences librarians, with prescribed membership. As envisioned by the RML contract, the state councils were to promote communication with the RML administrative office and be responsible for choosing various candidates for regional representative and advisory positions. This arrangement did not work smoothly in Ohio, a state with seven medical schools and many well-developed hospital libraries. Each time the RML requirements were adjusted to subsequent contractual provisions from the National Library of Medicine, a complex adjustment of Ohio's state council makeup and meeting requirements occurred. Despite these operating difficulties, the entity known as the State Council of Ohio existed and had met at least annually for a decade prior to 1994. By 1992, there was general dissatisfaction within the state council because of frustration over problems with the RML and the poor communication that existed between the RML and the state council. At that time, the academic representatives on the state council strongly supported a unified organization within the State of Ohio that would foster communication and cooperation within its membership and would potentially improve communication with the RML.

The second important earlier effort was the Ohio Health Information Organization (O.H.I.O.). Its overall purpose, according to its charter bylaws, was "to improve dissemination of health information in Ohio". Originally formed in 1979, this

**Charter Members,  
Ohio Health Sciences  
Library Association,  
March 11, 1994**

Debra A. Anderson  
Patricia L. Augustine  
Dave Boilard  
Bani Bose  
Pamela S. Bradigan  
Linda E. Bunyan  
Ester L. Burke  
Ann Carlson  
Fern M. Cheek  
Josephine Clark  
Nancy Cohen  
Lin Coleman  
Marilee Creelan  
Linda DeMuro  
Jean Dreifort  
Pamela M. Elwell  
Nancy Erwin  
Linda Geary  
Ann Goss  
Barbarie Hill  
Sandy Kerbow  
Susan Kroll  
Ann Lewis  
Michael Lucas  
Lisa McCormick  
Margaret Moutseous  
Jean Sayre  
Josephine P. Scipione  
Sally Sexton  
Tom Sink  
Mary W. Sprague  
Bette Sydelko  
Sarah Timmons  
Marsha Tomlin  
Monica Unger  
Barbara Van Brimmer  
B.J. Wilkus  
Chris Williams  
Marietta Wilson  
Josephine Yeoh

organization prospered after 1983 when the total membership reached 83 and attendance at meetings had grown to approximately 60 people from across the state. (Among its activities was the publication of a newsletter). Partly in response to decreasing budgets in both the academic and hospital libraries in the early 1990s, O.H.I.O. supported the formation of a new organization that would combine the functions of the state council and also serve as a professional association for health sciences librarians in the State of Ohio. It was hoped that the new organization would consolidate and improve communication as well as combine existing efforts to collaborate with others in the State of Ohio. Its membership and particularly its executive committee were essential planners for the new organization. O.H.I.O. dissolved upon the successful formation of OHSLA. Marsha Tomlin was O.H.I.O.'s last President. Her vision and initiative were important both to O.H.I.O. and its successor organization.

### **1993: The Organizing Year**

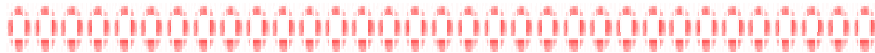
For several years in the early 1990s, members of both the state council and O.H.I.O. had been informally discussing the advantages of having one statewide organization to serve the interests of health sciences libraries in the State of Ohio. By late 1992 and early 1993, serious discussions began. A joint committee was formed, with representatives from O.H.I.O., the State Council of Ohio, the state's resource libraries, and the State Library of Ohio. Members of the joint committee included Richard Cheski, Jean Dreifort, Pamela Elwell, Ann Goss, Leslie Schick, Tom Sink, and Marsha Tomlin. The year 1993 became the year of planning and preparation for the new organization.

The joint committee identified the purposes of a new organization: (1) support library services within the state and the RML; (2) promote educational and professional development of health sciences librarians within the State of Ohio; (3) provide a forum for exchange of ideas among the membership; and (4) encourage cooperation and sharing among libraries within the State of Ohio. It was expressly hoped that the new organization would provide accredited continuing education courses to its membership and also serve as a unified voice from the State of Ohio to the RML.

On April 20, 1993, serious discussion took place at the O.H.I.O. meeting around the imperative from the RML regarding the state council. The joint committee had surveyed other states in the region that had one statewide organization, and it reported that other states provided a workable model within the RML region that could be adapted to meet the needs in Ohio. After extended discussion, the membership present unanimously decided to continue participation in the joint committee's work to form a single statewide organization. Following the April meeting of O.H.I.O., the joint committee developed a set of proposed bylaws for the new organization. The proposed bylaws were presented to the O.H.I.O. membership and endorsed at the O.H.I.O. Fall Meeting on November 9, 1993.

At the state council meeting on November 12, 1993, lengthy discussion took place regarding the proposal for a single statewide organization. The proposed bylaws were presented, discussed, and endorsed. Procedural motions were adopted to assure continuity and to accomplish a smooth transition of state council responsibilities to the new organization.

The work of many people from both of the preceding organizations, and the preparation that took place during 1993 culminated in the official formation of the new organization in the Spring of 1994. Such a merger could not have occurred without widespread support from health sciences librarians, who were employed in institutions (large and small) from around the state. The network of relationships, cooperation and collaboration that had been built over the preceding twenty years provided a firm foundation for the move to a single, stronger statewide health sciences library organization. The formal merger took place at a joint meeting on March 11, 1994.



### **Highlights and Accomplishments, 1994 to 2004**

- ◆ Outstanding guest speakers on current and relevant topic
- ◆ Continuing education courses offered annually
- ◆ Timely updates and improved communication with the RML
- ◆ Exhibits at health professionals' meetings
- ◆ Development of organizational logo
- ◆ Membership from all geographic areas of the State of Ohio
- ◆ Meetings held at a variety of sites
- ◆ Membership participation in committees and programs
- ◆ Development of a scholarship to Midwest Chapter MLA for library school students
- ◆ Regular publication of the association's newsletter
- ◆ Creation of organizational archives
- ◆ Supported 2 Midwest Chapter MLA meetings in the State of Ohio
- ◆ Membership e-mail discussion list
- ◆ Attractive and informative web site

**1994-2004**  
**OHSLA**



**1994-2004: Ten Strong Years**

OHSLA has brought together health sciences librarians in the State of Ohio during the past decade. The organization has supported the continued professional growth of its members by sponsoring continuing education on an annual basis. Topics have ranged from the technological changes of the times to the personal implications of the many changes that have occurred in the health care “industry” during the ten years of OHSLA’s life. We have collaborated with local sponsors within the State of Ohio who hosted two Midwest Chapter MLA meetings. We have worked through multiple transitions and programs with the RML office staff and structure to assure full participation and communication. We have attended to the business of building a stable professional organization that serves the needs of health sciences librarians within the State of Ohio. All of these activities have contributed greatly to the membership. They represent a significant contribution to health sciences librarianship and to the libraries and institutions we serve within the State of Ohio.

It has been a decade of challenge and growth for OHSLA members. Organizations have changed as consolidations have taken place in hospitals and their libraries across the state. Technology has changed operations, not only in health care but across our national economy. Colleagues have retired, and others have begun their careers in this vital profession. Through all the changes, year after year OHSLA has served the needs of its membership during the first decade of its life as an organization.



### **OHSLA Presidents**

1994	Marsha Tomlin
1995-1996	Margaret Moutseous
1996-1997	Claire Leibfarth
1997-1998	Claire Leibfarth
1998-1999	Mary Sprague
1999-2000	Patricia Augustine
2000-2001	Barbara Van Brimmer
2001-2002	Linda Bunyan
2002-2003	Pamela Bradigan
2003-2004	Linda DeMuro

*The original bylaws established the term of office according to the calendar year. After the first year of the organization, the bylaws were revised to set the term of office according to the fiscal year (that is, from July to June).*

*Two people were elected to the office of president-elect, but were unable to serve as president. One of them was to have served during 1996, which became the transition year to the new period for term of office. The transition occurred when Margaret Moutseous served as president for an additional six months. She therefore was president for a total of eighteen months. In the second case, Claire Leibfarth, who had been elected as president-elect when the presidency became vacant, served for two terms as president.*

### **Into the Future**

The future is always unknown. It can be safely predicted that the health sciences libraries and librarians in the State of Ohio will continue to serve their organizations with vision and dedication well into the future. Research will advance the frontiers of medical knowledge, information dispersion and electronic information delivery technologies will change, the health care business will grow as the population ages, and new health professionals will be trained at our medical schools and teaching hospitals. Through all the changes, health sciences libraries and librarians will engage in the challenges of making accumulated knowledge available to practitioners and students in the health professions. The Ohio Health Sciences Library Association has been a vital organization in the past. It has both a bright and challenging future!

### **About the Author**

Pamela M. Elwell earned her B.A. from the College of William and Mary and her MSLS degree from Case Western Reserve University. She has held librarian positions in both Cleveland and Columbus. Her most recent professional position, from which she is now retired, was that of Director of Library Services of the Mount Carmel Health System in Columbus.

She has been active in many professional organizations, including the Medical Library Association of Northeast Ohio (MLANO), the Mid-Ohio Health Sciences Library Association, the Ohio Health Information Organization (O.H.I.O.), the Ohio Health Sciences Library Association (OHSLA), the Midwest Chapter of the Medical Library Association, and the Medical Library Association.



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