



BELOW: The HLA Committee (left to right): Back: Jane Orbell-Smith, Laura Foley, Bronia Renison, Gemma Siemensma, Kathleen Gray, Front: Ann Ritchie, Sarah Hayman.



ALIA GROUP PROFILE: HEALTH LIBRARIES AUSTRALIA

This month in our series on ALIA Groups, we profile Health Libraries Australia (HLA). HLA is the national ALIA Group representing librarians and information professionals working in all types of health care organisations.

The HLA executive consists of 13 hardworking and committed health librarians from across Australia. We teleconference every month, and aim to meet annually for a strategic directions planning day. The HLA executive acts as the Health Library and Information Advisory Group to the ALIA Board of Directors, advising the Board on issues relating to health librarianship and helping to strengthen our participation in ALIA business.

HLA's vision is that all Australians benefit from health library and information professionals' expertise that is integral to evidence-based health care.

To realise this vision, HLA undertakes activities in five portfolios: professional development, education and training; demonstrating value (awards, research, marketing and advocacy); partnerships and collaborations; publishing and communication; and membership.

The professional development, education and training portfolio is the area in which we have seen the most sustained and regular activity. Based on the findings of the two year research project, Health Librarianship Workforce and Education (see the *Final Report* at bit.ly/1pslNyc) we aim to develop health library professionals as part of the health information professional workforce.

The initial focus has been on using our framework of competency-based standards as a basis for a health specialist program of study, comprising a postgraduate certificate and a three year cycle of professional development.

Achievements to date have included the introduction of the health specialisation into the ALIA PD Scheme in 2012 and the Competency Mapping Project (2013) supporting health librarians to meet the requirements of the PD Scheme. In conjunction with Queensland University of Technology we are designing an online course, Essentials of Health Librarianship, which will become part of a post graduate specialist program of study. HLA also organises an annual professional development day event.

A new online Journal Club has been launched with immediate uptake from enthusiastic contributors to the online discussions, which focus on recent journal articles in the health library literature. The results are used to produce evidence summaries which are, in turn, published in *HLA News*.

The demonstrating value portfolio is concerned with demonstrating the value of health libraries and the health library and information professionals. Our approach focuses on researching and generating evidence and hard data about the economic value and contribution of health library services and health librarian skills, marketing our skills and communicating with our clients and employers so that we are perceived as valuable in their eyes and using this evidence and these perceptions of value to advance health librarianship and influence policy.

In 2013, HLA (ALIA), with Health Libraries Inc, commissioned an independent study of economic value. The results suggest that hospitals, government departments, associations and other organisations involved in healthcare gain a \$9 return for every dollar they invest in health libraries. Advocacy work like this continues to be at the forefront of our minds.