

# **Final Report: NN/LM MAR Network Member Focus Groups conducted in February-March 2010**

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## Summary:

The National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM) Middle Atlantic Region (MAR) formally established a series of focus groups for a needs assessment of network members. The purpose of the focus groups was to learn from network members about their experiences with the programs and services of the MAR and their future needs and interests in order to plan for the next NN/LM five-year contract.

A total of four focus groups were conducted with a total of fourteen network members. The focus groups were made of up network members from hospital, public, academic, health sciences, and resource libraries. The Appreciative Inquiry method was used in the focus group sessions to learn about the past successes of the MAR programs in order to build on those to implement future programs and services.

Nine major themes emerged from the focus groups. The themes are: funding, training, customer service, communication, NLM resources, Value of Libraries Study, advocacy, connectivity and networking, and community. The nine themes are outlined in here with detailed comments by the participants included for each theme in the results section of this report.

**Funding:** Award opportunities have made an impact on libraries in offering them a chance to do something they could not normally do, help to improve workflow, support the value of the library in the eyes of administrators, provide the possibility for partnerships, and recognition from other potential funding sources to have the backing of NN/LM/NLM. While some participants thought the application process was straightforward, others thought it could be improved by MAR providing more guidance on how to complete the multiple forms required once an award has been granted. Additionally, the new cost reimbursement process for awards prohibits some hospital libraries from even considering making an award application.

**Training:** MAR's training and professional development opportunities are essential for librarians in the region to remain current with NLM resources and to develop new knowledge and skills. The variety of training topics, both online and in-person, are appreciated and utilized by network members. Participants acknowledged receiving high quality training and accessible professional development. The fact that all of this quality training is provided free of charge was noted.

**Customer Service:** Examples of excellent customer service include one-on-one DOCLINE and Linkout training, support for technical questions on NLM's resources, and a general courteousness when network members call or email with questions. The MAR staff are congenial and professional, and show a commitment to provide timely assistance to members. Support of regional and local chapters by the MAR staff attending meetings and providing RML updates is seen as a value. The MAR has made a point of seeking out network member

feedback. Participants think site visits to their library by the MAR staff are helpful and appreciated.

**Communication:** Participants noted an increase in communication between the MAR and network members over the past four years. Participants specifically mentioned using the following methods of communication, the MARL-listserv, the MARquee blog, the MAR website, and the 1-800 number.

**National Library of Medicine Resources:** Within other themes, notably advocacy, community, and connectivity and networking, participants remarked on their appreciation for the connection the MAR provides between network members and NLM, and the recognition of the quality resources and support NLM provides to libraries. In this theme participants listed wishes specific to NLM resources.

**Value of Libraries Study:** There is great interest about the progress of the MAR funded project, the Value of Libraries Study among network members. Participants wish for more communication about the project's progress.

**Advocacy:** Participants expressed concern for the rash of hospital library closures in the region. Suggestions expressed as wishes were for the MAR to be more proactive regarding library closures. Connecting with organizations like the American Hospital Association and those specific to hospital executives could be proactive steps. Facilitating awareness of legislative issues affecting health sciences and hospital libraries is another suggestion for the future. Continued support of solo librarians and small hospital libraries is particularly noted need.

**Connectivity and Networking:** The MAR provides a connection between the network members and the National Library of Medicine. Network members appreciate the effort the MAR staff makes to meet with network members.

**Community:** MAR offers opportunities for engagement on several levels. One of these is to be involved in MAR committees: interact with colleagues from around the region, consult on specific topics of interest, and engage in the review of award applications. Another recognized opportunity is the attendance at RAC meetings which are thought to be valuable from learning, sharing, and interacting perspectives. The MAR has established a sense of community for member engagement.

## **Purpose and Procedures:**

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of the focus groups was to bring active network members together to learn about their experiences with the MAR's programs and services in order to build on these good experiences to continue the RML into the next contract.

### **Methodology:**

In total four focus groups were conducted over the period of four weeks. Originally seven focus groups were planned but too few network members volunteered to complete this number of groups. Nineteen network members signed up for the focus groups with fourteen in total participating in the groups. The four groups were made up of the following network member library types,

- One group of hospital library members: 3 participants
- One group of public library members: 4 participants (1 participant is considered an other library type but fit into this group due to scheduling)
- Two groups of resource library members: 7 participants (1 participant is considered an academic library type but fit into this group due to scheduling): 3 in one group and 4 in the second group

A list of active network members as potential focus group participants was compiled. The criteria for the list included network members who have engaged in the programs and services of the NN/LM MAR such as, attended training sessions, applied for award funding opportunities, and participated on a MAR committee. A total of fifty-two invitations were issued to participate in the focus groups; twenty-five network members responded to the invitation.

The focus groups were conducted in one hour sessions online through Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro, the web conferencing software, which allows for audio, visual, and instant message communication. The conversation flowed smoothly within each group and all participants had the opportunity to speak about their experiences with MAR. Participants were alerted to tools within Adobe Connect to utilize should they have difficulty breaking into the conversation. The chat pod and the "raise hand" status icon were offered to participants for their use or to get the attention of the facilitator.

All of the focus groups were moderated by the same facilitator who asked the same questions of each group based on the Focus Group Interview Guide (see the appendix I) and ensured all participants communicated their comments. Three members of the MAR staff participated as focus group recorders for the sessions. The role of the recorder was to ensure the sessions

were recorded in Adobe Connect, to take notes during the discussion of the focus groups, and to write a mini-report after the conclusion of the focus group.

### **Appreciative Inquiry:**

NN/LM's Outreach Evaluation Resource Center (OERC) provided training, assistance with the development of the focus group interview guide, and the framework of Appreciative Inquiry for this needs assessment.

### **WHAT is Appreciative Inquiry and WHY use it?**

Appreciative Inquiry is a group process that inquires into, identifies, and further develops the best of "what is" in organizations in order to create a better future. Often used in the organization development field as an approach to large-scale change, it is a means for addressing issues, challenges, changes, and concerns of an organization in ways that build on the successful, effective, and energizing experiences of its members. (Preskill, 2006, p. 1-2)

Appreciative Inquiry proved to be a useful method for generating affirmative discussions. Participants easily described specific, good experiences they had with the programs and services of the MAR, and posed concrete suggestions based on those experiences for future developments in the MAR.

### **Focus Group Results:**

The first focus group question asked participants to cite a great experience they had with the MAR programs and services. The second question asked them to list a wish or two of what the MAR could offer in the future to make more of these great experiences possible. The third and final question asked participants what they value most about being a network member. (See Appendix I for the complete Focus Group Interview Guide).

The focus group results are presented by the themes that emerged from the focus groups. There were some common themes that resulted from each focus group, such as training and funding opportunities, as well as different themes from each group. There were nine major themes to emerge from the focus groups. The themes are: funding, training, customer service, communication, NLM resources, Value of Libraries Study, advocacy, connectivity and networking, and community. The table in appendix II illustrates the themes as they emerged from each focus group.

## **Funding Opportunities:**

Award funding opportunities have had a positive impact on libraries in offering them a chance to do something they could not normally do, help to improve workflow, support the value of the library in the eyes of administrators, provide the possibility for partnerships, and recognition from other potential funding sources to have the backing of NN/LM/NLM. While some participants thought the application process was straightforward, others thought it could be improved by MAR providing more guidance on how to complete the multiple forms required once an award has been granted. Additionally, the new cost reimbursement process for awards prohibits some hospital libraries from even considering making an award application.

### **What the participants said,**

- I got the two tech grants to modernize my library and it has made a huge impact and difference in our situation and I think it has raised and elevated the library in the eyes of many of our professionals here.
- Grant funding for promotional materials for a rural hospital library resulted in increased use of the library by the public. As a result, the library was able to stay open one day a week to provide consumer health information. Another positive outcome: during a budget crisis administrators saw that the librarian had brought in grant funding which essentially saved her position and the library program.
- An award also supported promotional materials for a library's new gateway web site. The promotion allowed the library to reach more users, and look more professional, than mailing out flyers. Gateway web page hits increased over 100% after the promotional materials award.
- An award to purchase an online public access catalog (OPAC) has made cataloging much easier: one stop shopping versus going to 3-4 places to do the same work.
- An award to implement EFTS grant resulted in 75% time savings on the ILL billing process; now it is done only once a year rather than 4 times a year.
- Bringing funding to the hospital makes the librarian look better to the administrators and makes the administrators consider the library a value to the institution and not a cost center or a drain on the budget. Funding helps with institutional outreach initiatives and raises awareness within the community.
- The online application process is not daunting and pretty straightforward.
- The grant program is very helpful, such as small grants for hospitals as well as a major technology grant. We could not do some current work without having received the MAR technology grant.
- Applying for an award is straightforward. Coping with the paperwork afterward is not. I am concerned with moving from giving money up front, especially in small hospitals, to being reimbursed later; it is a real barrier. Cost reimbursement is prohibitive for hospital libraries applying for an award. If the hospital library could pay the money up front for a project, then they would not need the MAR grant.

- There are other ways to offer funding. Some institutions, for example, give 75% of the funds up front and then require 25% reimbursement at the end of the project.
- It is important to have a grant maker like MAR who recognizes the unique needs of people working in medical libraries or supporting health sciences researcher or health information literacy, it makes such a big difference and it gives you credibility when you are looking for additional funds.
- Participation on the MAR Technology Committee to review grants was a valuable learning experience; it helped me write a successful grant proposal with a new librarian.
- The funding program is important in increasing recognition; as a result, we got more funding from some other agencies.
- A ... award opened a hundred doors for us. When the medical college was looking to do something with a local association in the region, we were able to come to the table with more money than was imaginable, and with backing from NLM. NN/LM recognized what we were doing and that we were worthy of getting that money.
- No matter how small the funding opportunity, there is something special that happens when an outside agency like MAR or NN/LM gives you money and your institution then gives you some visibility and support to do what maybe you always needed to do but they didn't support you. It opens doors and provides seed money. We have just done so much with so little and we could not have done it without the seed money. So it's been a wonderfully successful program.
- I have been in this position for three years and one of the first things we did was make a connection with MAR and apply for a grant. Which, from my perspective, was a really good way to both plug into MAR but also to get to know the individuals in the region and offer something useful. I thought that was very helpful. I appreciate the grants because it allows us to do those kinds of things we wouldn't be able to do otherwise.
- The Space Planning Conference was incredible. The fact that MAR provides resources to do things like that is invaluable for all network members.
- The process for applying for funds is straight forward. The applications are reviewed, which is good, and responses are timely.
- Grants are what I value most.

### **Wishes for the future:**

- Continue award opportunities for small hospital libraries.
- Continue the awards program no matter how small or large the awards MAR can offer.
- Continue the awards program. Our institutions appreciate the funding, and always respond well when we seek it out.
- Better communication about the award process. There should be a clear schedule/timeline for the processing of awards. Our award funding was delayed which delayed our project planning.
- The financial diligence part of the award paperwork can be unwieldy. Some hospitals' financial departments have never seen the kinds of questions that the MAR awards ask.

More explanation from MAR would help identify required questions (perhaps signify with a “red asterisk”) and give guidance on how to complete these forms.

- Refine the application process to incorporate all additional materials and clarify expectations for the award within the application.
- It is important for the librarian involved in the funded project to be recognized in the award letter from MAR as evidence of this accomplishment for tenure and promotion purposes.
- Offer funding to sustain existing Go Local projects and keep them up to date.
- MAR award proposal for administrative support for group e-licensing. This award will help continue a successful program threatened by the loss of the New Jersey Hospital Association library and Michelle Brewer, and all the support they offered hospital libraries with group licensing, meeting venues and communication tools.

### **Training:**

MAR’s training and professional development opportunities are essential for librarians in the region to remain current with NLM resources and to develop new knowledge and skills. The variety of training topics, both online and in-person, are appreciated and utilized by network members. Participants acknowledged receiving high quality training and accessible professional development. The fact that all of this quality training is provided free of charge was noted.

Wishes for the future include continuation of free classes offered in-person and online. There is a desire for continued training on NLM resources (PubMed, MedlinePlus, DOCLINE, Toxicology resources and genetics resources) as well as non-NLM resources (general professional development resources like basic project management skills and strategic planning, clinical case resources). The posting of online class recordings is another expressed wish. There is interest in MLA CE credit for the online classes.

### **What the participants said,**

- The ROI webinar was valuable; helped me to make better use of statistics. The results were presented to the director and chief financial officer and who were pleased and said that no other departments had provided financial ROI data; they hope to encourage other departments to do the same thing. It kind of fit in with the process improvement plans that we could actually show what we were doing and show it with statistics.....showed dollar amounts and value of what we are doing.
- As a director of the library, it makes it easier for all library staff to train together during an online class and then have a department meeting afterward about what they learned.
- Free online and in person classes are greatly appreciated. The suite of online classes includes many good options. Examples of good classes are DOCLINE and copyright and ILL.

- The format of online classes is appropriate. A 60-90 minute online class fits into a lunch hour.
- Offering classes in a multitude of ways has been great. Certainly the webinar format is accessible for so many librarians.
- Online classes fit librarians' schedules. Worthwhile ones have included basic nutrition resources, disaster information, technology, and DOCLINE. The DOCLINE classes are especially helpful to new librarians without DOCLINE experience as well as library staff who do not have an MLS.
- The series of consumer health classes, which can be applied to MLA's Consumer Health Information Specialization (CHIS) certification, have been a wonderful experience with an amazing array of classes.
- Librarians who attended the CHIS training have integrated the web sites on senior health and multilingual health resources into general computer classes.
- Other useful in-person classes include the class on genetics as well as technology classes, which allow librarians to keep up with the latest developments.
- RML CE classes are extremely important because they are free of charge. We cannot afford to get continuing education in any other way.
- The evaluation workshops on needs assessment [Community Assessment] and measuring outcomes [Planning Outcomes-Based Outreach Programs] were very valuable. It offered me new ideas for projects and grant writing. I was able to use new tools and techniques and understand them more.
- Training by the Outreach and Communications Coordinator at the time of transitioning from OVID to PubMed allowed retraining of public services staff which was critical. A few days of in-person instruction, hosted in the library, eased the transition. The course was at the appropriate level for the audience.
- PubMed changed so dramatically we were very fortunate that 25 people could take a class on the new changes. No one had time to learn it themselves.
- Training is a key part of the RML program.
- Training opportunities, both online and in-person, have been a valuable resource for library staff.
- Professional development opportunities and the educational component MAR offers are invaluable.
- In-person training: the fact that a MAR staff person could come to our location and our chapter meetings to provide training is a great resource.
- MAR's free lending library has been important too especially the tapes on Roles & Essential Skills of the Expert Searcher, Disaster Preparedness, and DOCLINE.

### **Wishes for the future:**

- More online classes, which appeal especially to solo librarians who cannot leave the hospital as often because Medicare reimbursement is decreasing. For example, one librarian's CHIS certification lapsed because of lack of opportunities to take a class.

- Continue online classes and the diversity of topics. Background sessions in current topics like health insurance and Medicare would be enormously helpful for public librarians.
- Offer a class about regional or national issues related to print to electronic transition and the broader world of publishing, and how these trends would affect SERHOLD as well as acquisition activities. We want to know how the big picture would affect the “micro” picture, e.g. how would the change from print to electronic translate to SERHOLD.
- Offer a class on new technologies, such as the Kindle, and how medical libraries can use them.
- MLA CE credit is very important. Librarians have to report to their hospital if the class they attended offered CE credit, so including it (and the certificate) would support continuing class attendance. Even .5-1 CE credit for a one hour class would be helpful.
- More in-person classes in area of need with no MLA chapter, especially western Pennsylvania.
- Online and in-person training are both very important.
- PubMed training that highlights NLM ref books and other NCBI resources, Toxtown training or tutorial, genetics resources for clinical applications, LactMed and other maternal/fetal medicine resources.
- Training on online clinical case resources regarding evidence-based medicine, and resources through the Joanna Briggs Institute.
- Institutional budget cuts have eliminated basic onsite training and cuts to travel budgets limit possibilities for professional development. A training program that focuses on basic project management and basic strategic planning would be useful.
- Recording of online MAR classes would be useful if one cannot attend the online class or if one simply wants to review the class again.

### **Customer Service:**

Examples of excellent customer service include one-on-one DOCLINE and Linkout training, support for technical questions on NLM’s resources, and a general courteousness when network members call or email with questions. The MAR staff are congenial and professional, and show a commitment to provide timely assistance to members. Support of regional and local chapters by the MAR staff attending meetings and providing RML updates is seen as a value. The MAR has made a point of seeking out network member feedback. Participants think site visits to their library by the MAR staff are helpful and appreciated.

### **What the participants said,**

- Interactions with staff have been fantastic and incredibly helpful with DOCLINE and LinkOut, especially for solo librarians.
- MAR staff have a very nice, congenial, and professional response to customer service inquiries. For instance, if a MAR staff cannot answer a question immediately, he/she

researches it and always calls back to answer the question. Excellent support for the technical issues of NLM's resources.

- Site visits are very helpful. They allow MAR staff to help librarians solve problems. In addition, MAR staff's presence at publicity events, such as library open houses or ribbon cutting ceremonies for new technology spaces, are greatly appreciated and noted by hospital staff.
- Telephone customer service is excellent. The most valuable thing about the RML is that I can call you, and you will answer in a timely manner. You offer troubleshooting on DOCLINE and LinkOut as well as consultation on technology issues.
- Reach out and participate in local chapters. Support regional/local chapters through exhibiting and RML updates.
- Promotional items and extra giveaways are also appreciated.
- MAR's mission is to support and help libraries in the region and it is a really great value to know we turn to you for help. For the solo librarians, it is critical to have that kind of support.
- Since the NYU team took over the contract you have been so helpful and involved by asking for feedback on a regular basis. You have raised expectations for anyone after.
- On site visits by MAR staff have been very helpful. An example is the Network Services Coordinator visiting hospital libraries to assist the librarians in updating SERHOLD and setting up LinkOut. I would hate to see you not continue to send staff out into the field. Many librarians prefer working with a person to working remotely.
- Quicker response to LinkOut difficulties from MAR staff than from NLM itself.

### **Communication:**

Participants noted an increase in communication between the MAR and network members over the past four years. Participants specifically mentioned using the following methods of communication, the MARL-listserv, the MARquee blog, the MAR website, and the 1-800 number.

### **What the participants said,**

- Promotional items, such as brochures and other literature, are great. I have used this literature to create health information packets for libraries that are unfamiliar with NLM.
- The MARL email list is a great current awareness tool for new classes, NLM activities, and new web sites.
- There has been more communication via the blog and the listserv since NYU has held the contract.
- The NN/LM offers an opportunity for exchange: the element of networking and listening to other librarians' experiences providing consumer health information.

- We were happy to be included in a regional meeting held in NYC to network with other librarians working in health information [this was the mid-contract site visit in December 2008].

### **Wishes for the future:**

- The MARL email list is great, but how can we make sure that everyone who should know about it has subscribed? For example, information sent to library top management sometimes does not filter down to the people who work directly with the public. Anyone who covers the desk, including the circulation desk, needs to know about MedlinePlus.
- Add specialized sections to the MAR website or blog on topics such as healthcare reform, and healthcare insurance. Add links to sites such as, Health Affairs, Kaiser Health News, Hastings Institute publications, The Health Care Cost, and blogs.
- Outreach: Make better connections with state libraries, and departments of education and health. Many public libraries subscribe to state library mailing lists, so they can become notified of MAR activities once this connection is established. Better reminders that MAR exists and what you are doing.
- Present a program at the state library conferences, and state nursing conferences, e.g. NYLA, to talk about MAR programs as well as give CHIS training. Bring NLM product literature to the conference for librarians to examine and think about how to integrate into their work.

### **NLM Resources:**

In the words of one participant, the beauty of PubMed is that we can all share in the research that people have developed.

### **Wishes for the future:**

- There is still confusion about the difference between MEDLINE (PubMed) and MedlinePlus. NLM should have a national information campaign to raise awareness of MedlinePlus among the general public of this free, quality resource.
- Publicize Go Local at state library conferences, especially to public librarians.
- There should be more consumer health tutorials and other information in American Sign Language (ASL), e.g. captioned tutorials.
- MedlinePlus, as good as it is, does not have useful capacity for navigation by lower literacy individuals. Using MedlinePlus is a challenge for people working independently (i.e., without the assistance of a librarian). Consider an Easy-To-Read interface for MedlinePlus.
- Getting on to MedlinePlus is a challenge for low literacy individuals.....Those interactive tutorials are great and by the way we subscribe to them directly from Patient Education

Institute, so they are directly available on our website. They are easier to navigate that way.

- Continue to add additional Easy-To-Read topics to MedlinePlus.
- Advocate for libraries to NLM for easier summary holdings statements in SERHOLD, so libraries can improve the integrity of their records.

### **Value of Libraries Study:**

There is great interest about the progress of the MAR funded project, the Value of Libraries Study among network members. Participants wish for more communication about the project's progress.

#### **What the participants said,**

- We have to keep on establishing the value of hospital libraries.
- Communication could have been improved by the study group clearly explaining its need to solicit additional funds from the regional MLA chapters.

#### **Wishes for the future:**

- Better communication about progress on the study. Members are interested to know when they can participate.
- Other groups are beginning to start similar studies and it would be great if MAR completed their study since they started it, and/or work in conjunction with these other groups (e.g., ACRL's value of academic libraries project).

### **Advocacy:**

Participants expressed concern for the rash of hospital library closures in the region. Suggestions expressed as wishes were for the MAR to be more proactive regarding library closures. Connecting with organizations like the American Hospital Association and those specific to hospital executives could be proactive steps. Facilitating awareness of legislative issues affecting health sciences and hospital libraries is another suggestion for the future.

#### **What the participants said,**

- While the closing of libraries is a business decision, we could be more pro-active and help to educate those decision makers.
- The Value of Libraries study will serve as an excellent advocacy tool for libraries.
- MAR plays an advocacy role by speaking to NLM on our behalf as network members.

## **Wishes for the Future:**

- MAR could work with the American Hospital Association and hospital executives on the issue of hospital libraries.
- Disseminate the Value of Libraries Study Report as a pro-active response to the closing of hospital libraries.
- As a group, libraries in the region need to be more aware of legislative initiatives, for example, Clinical ARIA, NYSHEI ARIA, and proposed NY state advisory board on review of textbooks. It would be appropriate for the group to take a more active role in some of the legislative initiatives, like the Clinical Aria program that is currently going through. Currently there is some legislation being proposed that would create a state level advisory group on textbooks in New York: An act to authorize the trustees of the State University of New York and the City University to create a joint advisory board for the review of the issues of textbooks: their cost, bulk e-purchasing, open access textbooks, and utilization of library resources.... They're looking to appoint 12 members of various institutions to this advisory board. This went out Feb 9/10, I just found out about it yesterday [2/24]. It would be great if we had, not only in New York, but in each of the states within the region, a clearing house of information like this. With NYSHEI..... Especially with the Aria it turned out there didn't seem to be a lot of awareness on the part of the health sciences, academic health sciences and hospital libraries about this type of legislation. And potentially this is really great legislation for health sciences libraries, certainly the Clinical Aria.
- MAR could serve as an information awareness clearinghouse for issues in the region. Use of MAR communication tools to alert members to key issues, legislation that affects the library and health information community both positively and negatively. Perhaps network members can report events/initiatives/legislative issues to MAR for electronic posting. You don't have to function in the role of lobbyist because you really can't do that, but you can act in an information role, pulling that information together and presenting via the website, blog or wiki..... It does require somebody, or a group of people, to be monitoring that stuff on a regular basis.

## **Connectivity & Networking:**

The MAR provides a connection between the network members and the National Library of Medicine. Network members appreciate the effort the MAR staff makes to meet with network members.

## **What the participants said,**

- MAR staff translates NLM's information resources and initiatives to make members feel connected. The result is that small hospital libraries feel like they are part of NLM because of the NN/LM.

- MAR does an excellent job of connecting at the regional/national level, e.g. email announcements and blog. This current awareness function really helps the members.
- Shared MAR's announcement about NLM's resources for the earthquake in Haiti, and posted it on the hospital web site.
- You do an excellent job at networking and connecting us at the regional and at the national level; particularly with awareness through email alerts and your website and we'd definitely like to see that continue. Often the only time we hear about what is happening at a regional and national level comes from MAR and we appreciate that greatly....That current awareness piece and what is going on regionally and nationally really helps us. For instance, we received an email about the resources available for Haiti. I immediately called our web master and had him put a link directly to that on the front page of our web site, so that we could give that information on to our users. Those kinds of things are very helpful because I don't have time to ferret out all those individual resources that you were able to provide in one single link. So for me things like that excellent examples of keeping us connected.
- In person updates at regional conferences are helpful and give a networking presence. They put a face to the RML. Library consortia, such as BQSIMB and HSLANJ, appreciate RML updates at their meetings.
- Members like in person networking as a means to glean information from MAR staff.
- For me it [value of network membership] is three aspects: the technical, the educational, and the networking support that all come together for us. We see this on many different levels like have already been mentioned. Your updates at our regional conferences are helpful, so there is that continued networking presence there at many of our meetings. We appreciate meeting you all in person when we have the opportunity. It puts a face to the technical and educational side of what we glean from being a part of this group.

### **Wishes for the future:**

- Network member groups such as HSLANJ would like to have access to Adobe Connect, Microsoft's product for web conferencing, or some similar software. This technology would increase connectivity within the group for meetings as well as save speaker travel costs for hosting a class to members. Perhaps this access could be offered with an RML award.

### **Community:**

MAR offers opportunities for engagement on several levels. One of these is to be involved in MAR committees: interact with colleagues from around the region, consult on specific topics of interest, and engage in the review of award applications. Another recognized opportunity is the attendance at RAC meetings which are thought to be valuable from learning, sharing, and

interacting perspectives. The MAR has established a sense of community for member engagement.

### **What the participants said,**

- MAR has created a sense of community and collegiality which is of great value.
- RAC meetings are of real value. RAC meetings offer a rare opportunity to make meaningful connections in the region, and to hear what others are doing and share your own experiences.
- Just sitting on the RAC, you know, that's been a wonderful opportunity. As close and collegial as our group tends to be there still just aren't that many opportunities for you to get together and chat with your colleagues just to see what they're doing. You call for a specific question and you get that answer but we're all doing so many other different things, that at a RAC meeting and other meetings you just get the opportunity to hear what they're saying and hear what they're doing and see if you can mimic it, use it with honor and exchange your own ideas and that's just been invaluable.
- RAC meetings are a real value. They say the point of most meetings is the collegiality and the social networking and we're all supposed to be experts at this social networking. It is a lot easier after you have made the connections [at a MAR RAC meeting].
- MAR also provides us with the connection to NLM which is significant and invaluable due to all of the resources and advocacy that NLM provides us.
- Plugging into what's going on with the National Library of Medicine and the opportunities that they have available as well, I think that is useful. NLM is very much an advocate for the ongoing survival of libraries and librarianship and the whole transformation into digital libraries and the rest of it.
- Important to have representatives from NLM at the RAC meetings so we can give them direct feedback; this is something only MAR has been able to provide.
- MAR facilitates networking among network members, through committee work and RAC meetings, which is valuable, especially for hospital librarians.

### **Wishes for the future:**

- I wonder if there are some other ways that the RML could help hospital libraries. Perhaps a forum for Hospital Libraries to offer collegial connections among hospital libraries and information sharing similar to the format of the RAC. This could be either in person or electronically.

Participants in the focus groups provided example of their experiences and their wishes specific to the MAR program and service offerings. Additionally, there were many creative suggestions put forth as wishes for potential future developments. A focus group participant finished off a session with this complimentary statement,

I think it shows that you're doing a really good job that we're satisfied with the services and haven't come up with great wish lists of things you're not doing. You're this conduit for the National Library of Medicine, you do great training, you give us a community to be a part of, and give opportunities for grants which has been very helpful. I think that's great.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **Focus Group Interview Guide:**

1. Think back over the past four years that you have been part of the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM) Mid-Atlantic Region (MAR) and give an example of a great experience you had as a member; tell us what made that experience so valuable to you. How did it help you do something better, for example, solve a problem, accomplish an important goal?
2. Based on these examples, what do you wish NN/LM MAR would offer to make more of these great experiences possible? As NN/LM MAR plans for the next five years, what do you hope they will offer network members?
3. What do you value most about being a member of NN/LM MAR?

## APPENDIX II

### Focus Group Themes:

This table provides a visual illustration of the themes as they emerged from each focus group. There were some clear similarities and differences in the themes across the network member library types as table illustrates.

	Hospital Library	Public Library	Resource Library 1	Resource Library 2
Training	Red	Green	Blue	Purple
Funding	Red	Green	Blue	Purple
Communication	White	Green	White	White
Customer Service	Red	White	Blue	White
NLM Resources	White	Green	White	White
Advocacy	White	White	White	Purple
Community	White	White	White	Purple
Connectivity & Networking	Red	White	White	White
Value of Libraries Study	White	White	Blue	White

## REFERENCES:

Krueger, R. (1998). *Focus Group Kit*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Preskill, H., & Catsambas, T. (2006). *Reframing evaluation through appreciative inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.