



# Synapse

ALABAMA HEALTH LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION

VOLUME III, NO. 23

SEPTEMBER 1983

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

by Mary Ann Donnell  
AIHeLA President

The Health Care Financing Administration received approximately 40,000 letters regarding the DHHS proposed guidelines for hospital libraries published in the Federal Register! I suspect we certainly modified the image of librarians at least at the federal level.

We are quick to defend our territory and our perceived roles in patient care. But do we really know our own territories? For example, have we tabulated, noted, or even inquired as to what journals or publications are being received in other departments. Two years ago I discovered quite by accident that materials management had been receiving HEALTH DEVICES and HEALTH DEVICES ALERT--the very expensive consumer reports for health equipment!

When my administration wanted to pursue shared laundry services and HOSPITAL LITERATURE INDEX indexed articles from AMERICAN LAUNDRY NEWS I discovered our new Environmental Services Manager had back issues and would give them to the library. Cost containment comes in various guises. (See related article by Rebecca Buckner in this issue.)

For NLN Accreditation we were spurred to take a survey last year of our nursing students to see if the library was a place "conducive to study." Our services came out fine, but two problems of which we were unaware surfaced--the temperature, especially in the evenings, and the occasional noise from the cleaning staff.

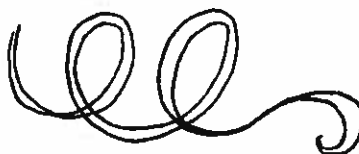
We can not be active in defense of hospital libraries at the federal level unless we are equally active in knowing our own institutions and what is happening. I recall Judith Messerle's admonition to us in the CE class on Literature of Health Care Administration--be part of the institution, including eating lunch with other staff of the hospital, accepting roles on committees, teaching classes or giving in-services for other departments.

I may have to eat my own words next week. Following a good turnout for my three classes on time management, the new head of accounting said he'd call me for he wanted me to give an in-service on filing to "his people." Filing? Accounting?---sure, Dave, just give me a call?

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SYNAPSE is the official publication of the Alabama Health Libraries Association (AIHeLA).

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS



October 19-22, 1983

Southern Chapter - Medical Library Association - Hilton Hotel, Birmingham, Alabama. For more information, contact Richard B. Fredericksen, Convention Chairperson, Lister Hill Library of the Health Sciences, University of Alabama in Birmingham, University Station, Birmingham, Alabama 35294 (205-934-5460).

October 21, 1983

AIHeLA Annual Meeting - Breakfast Meeting - 7:30 a.m.-9:00 a.m. - Hilton Hotel, Birmingham, Alabama. For more information contact Nancy Clemmons, Vice President of AIHeLA, Lister Hill Library of the Health Sciences, University of Alabama in Birmingham, Birmingham, Alabama 35294 (205-934-2230)

November 4, 1983

AIHeLA Executive Committee Meeting - Montgomery, Alabama.

November 4, 1983

MLA Certification Examination. Deadline for application is September 2, 1983. Application forms and an informational booklet are available from MLA Education Department, 919 N. Michigan Ave. Suite 3208, Chicago, Illinois 60611 (Enclose a self-addressed mailing label.).

November 15, 1983

Deadline for December issues of SYNAPSE.

May 25-31, 1984

MLA Annual Meeting - Denver, Colorado

May 24-30, 1985

MLA Annual Meeting - New York, N. Y.

## erratum

Handbook of Clinical Drug Data - 5th Edition

Send for your free copy of "Corrections and New Information" to  
Distribution Office, Drug Intelligence Publications, Inc., 1241 Broadway,  
Hamilton, IL 62341.

from MLA News

# Editor's Corner

Several issues back I asked for your help by submitting articles. You have "come through with flying colors" as evidenced by the length of this issue. My thanks to the contributors--you are making my job much easier. However, our loss of Jennie Kasten, my typist and layout artist, to Tide Country to pursue her Masters in library science, left me wondering where I was going to muster some artistic ability. Jennie is not lost all together--she is still in a medical library working for Lisa Rains. Our loss and Lisa's gain. Best of luck to Jennie and my thanks for all her help.

I will use the ALHeLA NEWS column for any "gossip" you may have. This is your chance to "toot you horn", so send me notices of job changes, new staff, honors, appointments, and yes, babies!

When your phone rings, don't hang up--it will be me asking you to write a short profile of your library, such as Hugh Thomas wrote for this issue. I would like to "spotlight" an ALHeLA library in each issue.

As a follow-up to Mary Ann's marketing thoughts, I will print surveys you have used to gather or distribute information for your library. It doesn't matter how short they are or how long they are. Please send them by the next deadline--November 15.

I look forward to seeing you all in Birmingham in October and hearing from you anytime you have something you want to share with your colleagues in the SYNAPSE.

Pat Rodgers

## ALHELA NEWS

MARA R. WILHELM has accepted the position of Chief, Library Service at the VA Medical Center, Salisbury, North Carolina. She was Chief at the VA Medical Center, Montgomery, Alabama.

RICK FORSMAN was elected Chairman-Elect of the Technical Services Section of MLA at the meeting in Houston.

MARY CLAIRE BRITT was elected Chairman-Elect of the History of the Health Sciences Section of MLA.

NANCY CLEMMONS will act as coordinator of the MLA collection of public services policies to be deposited at the Lister Hill Library of the Health Sciences.

LYNN FORTNEY will serve as Chairman of the MLA Recertification Committee of MLA.

PATRICIA RAMAGE is the new Health Sciences Roundtable Section editor of the Alabama Librarian, organ of the Alabama Libraries Association.

KATHY DEXTER had a little boy, Christopher, on December 29, 1982. He weighed 6 pounds, 13 ounces.

MALTA JONES had a boy, Nicholas Channing, on March 8, 1983. He weighed 6 pounds, 10½ ounces.

JOYCE SIMS had a girl, Madeline Alcine, on April 6, 1983. She weighed in at 5 pounds, 14 ounces.

LISA RAINS is now Chief Medical Librarian at the Health Sciences Library, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama. She was formerly Director of the Medical Library at the Southeast Alabama Medical Center in Dothan.

# Nominating Committee Appointed

"Pat Ramage, Serials Librarian for the University of South Alabama Biomedical Library, will chair the nominating committee for AIHeLA this year," announced Mary Ann Donnell, President of AIHeLA.

Pat's committee members are Mary Ann Knotts, Chief of Library Service, VA Medical Center, Birmingham; Cynthia Klamer, Library Assistant for the Alabama Hospital Association; and Kathy Dexter, former editor of SYNAPSE.

AIHeLA members are encouraged to support the committee's efforts with suggestions and commitments. The slate will be presented at the AIHeLA business meeting October 21, 1983, in Birmingham.

Members of the Association are as follows:

Janette Eileen Bolton  
Mary Claire Britt  
Rebecca S. Buckner  
Geneva L. Bush  
Nancy A. Calkins  
Nancy Clemmons  
Kathy Dexter  
Mary Ann Donnell  
Robert M. Donnell  
Barbara P. Doughty  
Fran Edwards  
Ruth E. Fenske  
Kathleen V. Fetters  
Rick B. Forsman  
Lynn M. Fortney  
Richard B. Fredericksen  
Billie Jean Gramka  
Atha Louise Henley  
Gloria J. Holland  
Susan Hurley  
Annelle Johnson  
Judy F. Johnston  
Malta A. Jones  
Rachel E. Jones  
Cynthia J. Klamer  
Mary Ann Knotts  
Patricia M. Kuther

Philip D. Lawrence, Jr.  
Priscilla Lloyd  
Ruth Sparks McGuire  
Lucy Moor  
Erdeal A. Moore  
Dorothy A. Mueller  
Sara L. Muelling  
Beth Owens  
Mary Giles Peresich, R.S.M.  
Betsy Pertzog  
Julia S. Pfau  
Bobby H. Powell  
Lisa Rains  
Patricia G. Ramage  
Martha Sue Redding  
Patricia M. Rodgers  
Nina Samples  
Barbara Shearer  
Ina R. Sims  
Joyce Sims  
Ann Smallwood  
Ruth C. Steffen  
Hugh Thomas  
Evelyn Tyson  
Willette W. Vaughan  
Judy B. Willmon

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HILDA G. HARRIS  
April 21, 1914 - July 27, 1983

Colleague and Friend

# SPOTLIGHT

JOHN E. MEYER EYE FOUNDATION LIBRARY  
EYE FOUNDATION HOSPITAL  
Birmingham, Alabama  
by Hugh Thomas, Librarian

The Eye Foundation Hospital, located at 1720 University Boulevard (8th Avenue South), was opened in December 1963. The John E. Meyer Medical Library was established in November 1977 in memory of its primary benefactor.

The Hospital's specialty is, as its name implies, Ophthalmology. The Eye Foundation is a non-profit health care, research, and teaching facility working in cooperation with the University of Alabama in Birmingham Medical Center.

The John E. Meyer Eye Foundation Library is a one-man department located in the basement of the hospital. Patrons include hospital staff, University staff and students, and others in the medical profession with an interest in ophthalmology. Services consist of research, literature search, MEDLINE (at this time provided through the cooperation of the VA Medical library), photocopies of requested materials and monograph circulation. We have a growing collection consisting presently of approximately 1,200 monographs, 60 current periodical subscriptions, and 1,200 bound journal volumes. We also have a small historical collection of 27 works dealing with eye related medicine, the oldest published in 1750. We are soliciting donations of monographs or periodicals in ophthalmology published before 1900.

Anyone with a professional interest is welcome to visit the John E. Meyer Eye Foundation Library. I am always happy to answer questions and to show off the library to visitors.

## Librarian to the Rescue!

"The hospital librarian, summoned from home, tracked it down in a matter of minutes," so reported LIFE magazine, May 17, 1962, in an article entitled, "The Tragic Mix-up of Sugar and Salt."

I discovered this while weeding a vertical file at Providence School of Nursing this summer. It seems the tragedy occurred in a hospital nursery in Binghamton, N.Y. when nursing personnel confused salt for sugar in mixing baby formulas.

Even when the error was finally recognized as the source of the tragedy, there was uncertainty about how to treat the sodium overload. One pediatrician then remembered reading an "article somewhere" that talked about it. The librarian found it in a 1960 issue of NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE.

Over twenty years ago hospital librarians were having impact on patient care and probably without MEDLINE, even!

Mary Ann Donnell

# Impressions – MLA/Houston

"MY FIRST!"

Patricia G. Ramage

My expectations were high as I walked into the Shamrock Hilton on Sunday, May 29 at the beginning of my first Medical Library Association national meeting. I was not disappointed. The quality of the programs and presented papers which I heard was consistently high. As always seems to happen at meetings where concurrent sessions are held, I was not able to attend every presentation which interested me, because the most interesting ones are all scheduled for the same time. Topics covered ranged from staff development, how to prepare annual reports, serials evaluation, publishing, to user education and many more.

More than ever before, I was struck by the number of hospital librarians who are active MLA members. We met several people from California who wanted to go to Gilley's so that was our Monday night destination!

There were so many exhibits that I never got around to visiting all those that I wanted to see. While I was walking through the exhibit area, someone called to me. It was Becky, who worked for me when she was a library school student four years ago, now selling an automated system. I ran into several other people I had known when working in Texas, none of us in a medical library at the time.

At this point, it is difficult to pull together a coherent report from my notes. Here is a hodgepodge of fragments from various talks and papers, unattributed, because the best things seem to be those scrawled in the margin of my program and now I don't know who said what!

- Don't let technology obscure the reason for using the technology in the first place.
- Is there a dichotomy between performing library rituals well and meeting patron needs well?
- There are three stages of technology: doing the same things better; doing the same thing in a different way; and doing transformations.
- More and more of the change in medical libraries will be stimulated by the private sector.
- Well run operations encourage innovations.
- When writing your annual report, present facts, solutions, and alternatives. Be logical, grammatical, concise. Not all numeric data kept during the year is appropriate for the annual report. Remember the public relations function of the report.

I left Friday morning tired, but looking forward to the chance to attend "my second" in Denver next year!

"OLD TIMER!"

Robert M. Donnell

The high point of the meeting for me was the address given by Robert T. Riley, Ph.D., of Riley Associates, a management consulting firm in Cincinnati

(and incidently, the husband of MLA President Nancy Lorenzi). Mr. Riley's address "Managing Change in Tomorrow's Libraries" drove straight to the heart of the present situation.

Using the Matheson/Cooper A.A.M.C. report<sup>1</sup> as his point of reference, Mr. Riley pointed out that if we, the librarians, do not move aggressively to change our methods and take command in order to control and manage the electronic information revolution as it interfaces with our patrons, others, outside the library field, will do so. In short, we will become an historical artifact.

One essential step he suggested is that we need to change our attitudes and our actions, or lack of actions in some cases. We can either act or be acted upon. One suggestion was that we should rid ourselves of the imagery that we are a passive repository of dusty tomes; that we are "just librarians." He urged that we would do well to change our names and discontinue using the words "library" and "librarian"; we should adopt some name containing the words "medical" and "information" so as to begin creating new images in peoples minds.

Of course, change is difficult to achieve, but as Mr. Riley stated "there is no change without pain" and "the absence of stress is death."

On a more immediate level, the session sponsored by the Hospital Library Section, "Putting the Byte on the Hospital Library," was especially timely as it dealt with selecting microcomputer software and hardware, cost justification for implementing microprocessing in the small library and one final paper entitled "Possible versus Practical--Reality and the Microcomputer."

Additionally, there was an excellent, unstructured, early evening meeting called "Micromagic" which turned out to be a dozen or so representatives of various libraries who had taken the trouble to bring their microcomputers and software to the conference. This excellent format gave one the opportunity to question and interact with the terminals, the software programs, and the operators. This was exciting and inspirational!

In summary, there was great challenge and opportunity at each session and, upon reflection, I do believe that the annual meetings are improving each year. I would urge anyone to try to attend as the interchange of ideas with ones colleagues is truly food for the mind and imagination. The next meeting will be at Denver, May 25-31, 1984, with the theme "Linkages to the Future--Stages and Strategies" and will be based on the Matheson/Cooper report, addressing the concepts of replacement technology, innovations and transformation in regards to information management as it impacts all health sciences information centers.

<sup>1</sup>Nina W. Matheson and John A. D. Cooper. Academic Information in the Academic Health Sciences Center; Roles for the Library in Information Management. Washington, D. C., Association of American Medical Colleges. Published as a supplement to the Journal of Medical Education, vol. 57, no. 10, pt. 2, October 1982.



# Comparison of On-Line Services

Recently I was asked by a staff physician, who had been confused by the various computer search services, to write up a comparison of the various computer on-line services. Since our library had been investigating the possibility of providing computer searches in-house, this opportunity would benefit both the library and our staff physicians. Physicians learn about the various computers at conferences as well as through salesmen and brochures and with the various acronyms, the differences between the services become blurred. Perhaps, you can adopt what I discovered about the computer lines for your medical staff or your library. Realize prices quoted may vary depending on extent and time of usage. Factors to consider, besides costs (whether one-time or continual costs), are whether the database requires a trained searcher or is "user friendly", the extent and format of information (need printer or video screen).

In outline form, the following is what I discovered.

## I. MEDLARS

- 1) Costs: Prime \$22.00 per hour (10am-5pm est) = per month  
Non-Prime \$15.00 per hour (continual expense)      avg. 7.5 hours
- Terminal - approx. \$2,000. purchase (\$125. a month to lease)  
Paper - \$40.00 per year  
Tools - \$60.00 1st year (four manuals necessary to operate the terminal)  
          \$30.00 subsequent years  
Training - 1 week Washington, D.C. (a 1 time expense)  
          \$410. roundtrip air fare  
          \$400. hotel (6 nights)  
          \$160. meals, tax, etc.  
          \$970. TOTAL
- 2) Features:  
Types of Information:  
-Medline  
-Health File  
-Toxline  
-AVline  
-Cancerlit  
-Chemline - latest drug information  
-PDQ - latest cancer protocol - no charge at present
- 3) Format of Information:  
-printed bibliographic form
- 4) Advantages:  
-comparatively inexpensive  
-exhaustive and comprehensive information through various databases
- 5) Disadvantages:  
-requires trained searcher  
-lag time between when information in journal is indexed into computer (3 months)



## II. BRS (Bibliographic Retrieval Services) (private vendor)

- 1) Costs: Subscription - \$300. annually (continual expense)  
Online Time - \$10. per hour - avg. 7.5 hours a month + monthly Administrative Charge  
Terminal - Same  
Paper - Same  
Tools - ?  
Training - less expensive than MEDLARS - (1 day at various sites - Atlanta, New Orleans)
- 2) Features: Medline  
Health File  
Dow Jones  
New York Times  
Patsearch
- 3) Format: printed bibliographic form
- 4) Advantages:
  - user training - a 1 day training period with training centers all over the country
  - data base wider scope
- 5) Disadvantages:
  - more expensive than federally supported MEDLARS
  - because of wider scope, may be more difficult to get into computer base

## III. AMA/NET

- 1) Costs: Subscription - \$100. (continual expense)  
User fee - \$25-50.  
Online time - \$25-27. an hour (continual expense)  
Terminal - Same (though GTE has terminal/CRT for display screen/ \$750.)  
Paper - Same  
Tools- \$15. set
- 2) Features: Disease Information  
Drug Information  
Medical Procedures Coding (CPT)  
Socio/Economic Bibliographic Information  
MED/Mail
- 3) Format: Quick references for diagnosis and drugs and for clinical reporting.
- 4) Advantages: -costs - less expensive subscription fee  
-more up-to-date and current information
- 5) Disadvantages: -narrow scope (AMA/Net has plans for growth)  
-information is specific, rather than exhaustive review or bibliographic  
-hourly rate is more expensive

The largest factor I felt to consider was the intended use of the designer or company. MEDLARS was intended for research to be done in the library by a trained searcher. AMA/NET and other such lines are intended for a quick answer to a specific question and to be in doctor's offices with little training required by the user. I included these facts in a statement of "personal bias" and as more databases and on-line services proliferate, it will be even more important to evaluate the intended use. It is both an exciting and confusing time evaluating computer capabilities and library services.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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3. Theuson, Judy. "On-line searches net data for administrators." Hospitals June 16, 1979, 103-110.
4. Nathanson, Michael. "Physicians tap into AMA/NET." Modern Healthcare, Nov. 1982, 86-88 and Feb. 1983, p. 159.
5. Kirchner, Elizabeth M. "Let's talk MEDLINE." Dimensions in Health Service, April 1983, 24-25.

Joyce Sims, Librarian  
St. Vincent's Hospital  
Birmingham, Alabama

## 'AIDS' Hotline

On July 5, HHS Secretary Margaret Heckler announced the establishment of a tollfree AIDS hotline, the publication of a biweekly bulletin of the disease, and the release of a new leaflet, "Facts on Aids." In her announcement she called acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) the Department's "number one health priority." Calls from the continental 48 states to the hotline (800/342-AIDS) will be fielded by employees of the Public Health Service from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Eastern Time, with referrals made if necessary. Calls from Hawaii and Alaska may phone collect on 202/245-6867. Copies of the two AIDS publications may be obtained from:

Public Health Service  
Office of Publications, Room 271H  
Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

from Hospital Week

# In-house Journals Union List

One of the most useful tools in the hospital medical library is an in-house journals union list. Upon arriving at Baptist Memorial Hospital I very quickly discovered that at least 60% of my day was devoted to journal article retrieval. The previous librarian had compiled a listing of journals held in the library's collection, which reflected 171 titles, any title changes and the dates held by the library.

With the tightening of budgets due to new Medicaid regulations, it became necessary for me to look at my Interlibrary Loan requests as a possible source of budget reduction. I felt that there were probably journals within the hospital for which I had previously been requesting copies from Lister Hill. I began to informally ask what journals different departments held in their areas and if they would be available to others for copying purposes. The need to update my library's list after renewing the library's subscriptions also served as an incentive for creating a union list, since some journals were added and others deleted at this time, making the library's list obsolete.

At this time I sent a memorandum to all the hospital's departments asking them to send the Medical Library a list of all journals received in their departments with the following information: whether they were free, donated, or by subscription and what dates were held in the departments. All of the lists were turned into the Medical Library within the next two weeks. A list was made by putting all titles in alphabetical order, under each title the location of the journal was listed and if possible the dates held by the departments. If journals in the departments were duplicates of the Medical Library, the union list only reflected that the journal is housed in the library.

Once the union list was typed and ready for binding, I made adequate copies to send to all department heads, administration, and doctors in our Family Practice Residency Program.

The union list is not only a good tool for the Librarian to aid in quick reference but can be a valuable means of promoting your library's collection to the non-user.

Rebecca S. Buckner, Librarian  
Baptist Memorial Hospital  
Gadsden, Alabama

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## WELL WORTH READING

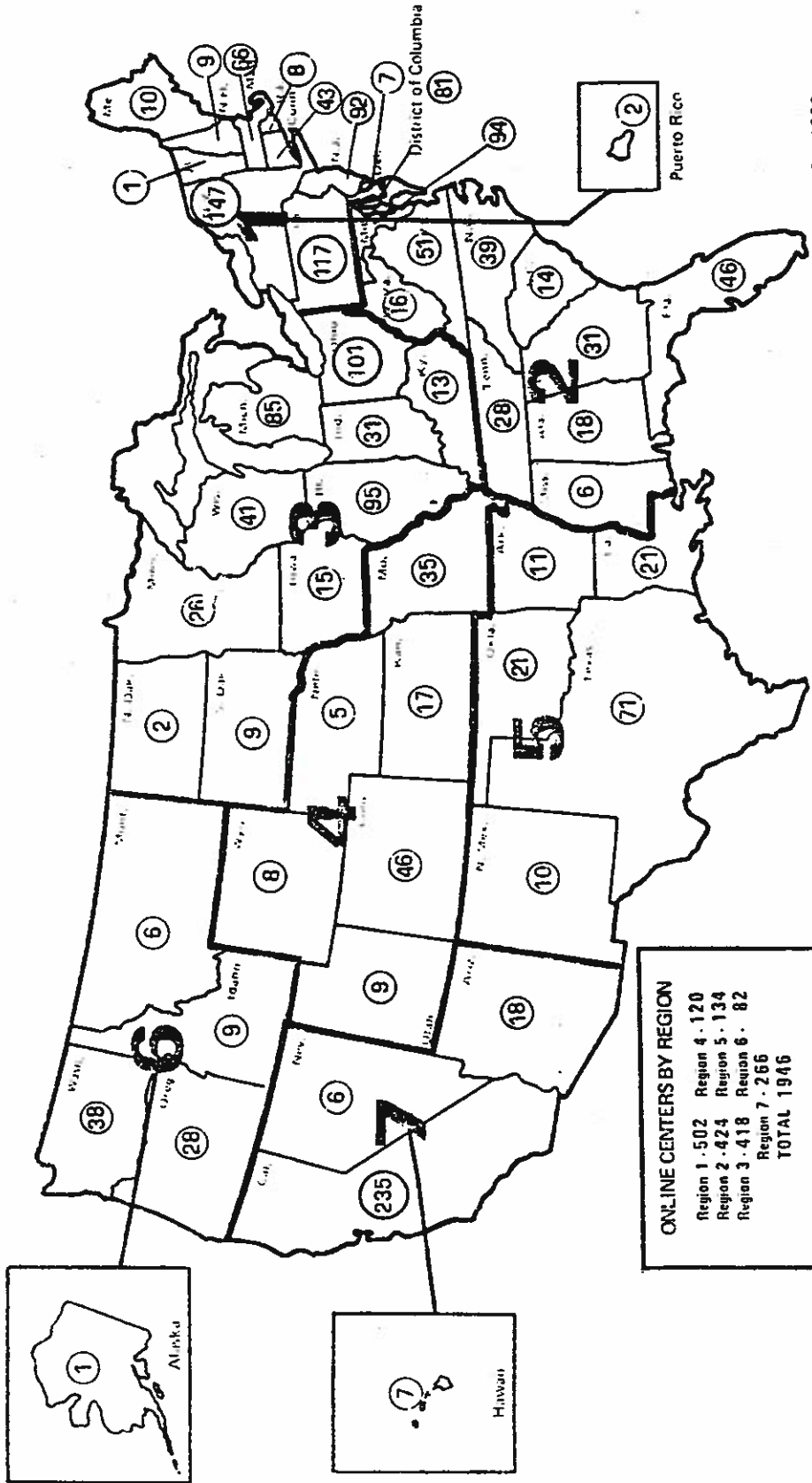
Garfield, Eugene. The Impact of Hospital Libraries on the Quality and Cost of Health Care Delivery. Current Contents Life Sciences 1983 February;8:5-10.

Let me know if you need a copy. I will be happy to send it.

Pat Rodgers

REGIONAL MEDICAL LIBRARY CONFIGURATION  
AND

ONLINE CENTERS IN THE UNITED STATES



MARCH 1983