



**THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS FOR HEALTH LIBRARIANSHIP IN UNIVERSITIES  
OF EAST, CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (ECSA) REGION**

**A Research Report**

**By**

**Maria G.N. Musoke (formerly, Chair of IFLA HBS Standing committee: 2015-2019)**

**With support from Patrick Sekikome, Emma Farrow, Shane Godbolt & C. Kanyengo**

**On behalf of the IFLA Health & Biosciences Libraries Section (HBS) Standing Committee**

**ICML Sub-theme 5.3: Capacity building through Education and Training**

**Extended abstract**

The IFLA Health and Bio-Sciences (HBS) Libraries project was informed by its Open Session theme in 2015 that was “Career-long learning for the health information professional”. A paper, presented from Kenya, highlighted a shortage of African health/medical librarians, the changing health information environment, gaps in the Library and Information Science (LIS) curriculum in most institutions in the East, Central and Southern Africa (ECSA) region, among others.

The HBS Standing Committee (SC) prepared a project proposal and submitted it to IFLA Governing Board; this was approved as part of its 2017/18 Action Plan with the aim of addressing the challenges highlighted in the paper. The proposal was designed with activities that included (a) a research project to identify the education and training needs for health librarianship in the LIS institutions in the ECSA region; (b) presentation of the research findings at the biennial Standing Conference of East, Central and Southern Africa Librarians (SCECSAL) in 2018 and conducting follow up interviews and discussion with key informants during that SCECSAL; (c) preparation of a report focusing on (a) and (b) and submitting it to IFLA; (c) holding a one-day

workshop with Deans and Directors of LIS schools in the region during the SCECSAL 2020 to share the research findings and discuss a way forward; and finally (d) engage LIS institutions in the region using social media to provide support by HBS SC whenever needed. This executive summary is for the report of activities (a) and (b).

After the approval of the project by IFLA, a questionnaire was designed by two members of the HBS SC who later engaged a LIS professional as a research assistant. The questionnaire was pre-tested at Makerere University and the necessary changes were made. The final version was then emailed to 37 institutions within the ECSA region that had been identified from an Internet search. Fourteen (14) institutions responded to the questionnaire which was 37% response rate (the accepted international rate for emailed questionnaire is 10-15%).

The findings revealed that 43% (6) of the institutions that responded were offering a health/medical information and related courses, whereas 57% (8) did not have such courses. One of the six institutions offered the course at a Certificate level, four at a Bachelor's level and one at a Master's level. The LIS institutions running PhD programmes reported that some students' PhD theses/dissertations focussed on health information and related topics and some lecturers do research on such topics. The institutions provided copies of Course outlines for health information and related courses and indicated aspects that needed to be added, for example, Legal aspects of health information, Health Records organisation and storage, Ethics in handling health records, Major information sources on health prevention and promotion. There were challenges experienced by institutions offering the health information and related courses that included shortage of academic staff with appropriate specialisation and learning materials. The Institutions without a health information course generally indicated that it was an oversight that could have been caused by limited demand for the course. Among these institutions, three had plans of introducing the health information course whereas five did not. The institutions expected professional support from the IFLA HBS particularly in terms of guidance on appropriate curriculum for health information and related courses, staff training, establishment of an online platform for sharing information, and encourage LIS schools to have health information and related courses. The key issues identified were the need for staff training and regular review of programmes as an important element of curriculum development. These were discussed with the key informants during SCECSAL, 2018 and the findings are part of this report. Some areas for further research are also outlined at the end of the report.

The full Report is available at: <https://public.3.basecamp.com/p/mbG4nfDuvwkkv8ZLP7mUBMqM>