

## **Library Frontiers: Disasters, Emergency Preparedness and Emerging Diseases IFLA conference side event 18 Aug 2007**

### **Title**

**Achieving the Medical Library Association's International Agenda: The work of the Librarians Without Borders Task Force**

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### **Abstract**

In 2006, as a result of the recommendations from the Medical Library Association's (MLA) Global Initiatives Task Force and in response to recent natural and manmade disasters, the MLA launched the Librarians Without Borders Task Force.

This two-year task force is charged with:

- Developing criteria for a new MLA award for excellence in international service through which individual(s) or an organization could be honored for contributions to improvement in international health information provision.
- Suggesting sustainable collaborations with groups advocating worldwide health improvement and health literacy.
- Suggesting a mechanism to provide information assistance for persons responding to epidemics and natural and man-made disasters anywhere in the world and/or proposing a mechanism for training in the field of information retrieval and information assistance to people anywhere in the world.
- Preparing content for a new MLA website: "Librarians Without Borders".

This presentation will outline recent accomplishments as well as preview the recommendations that the task force will make to the MLA Board in 2008. It will include the criteria for selecting a core list of institutions and associations for MLA to make initial contact. Part of the recommendation is to advise on follow-through steps for MLA to institutionalize and maintain the viability of the partnerships and web site links. Another important part is to recommend how to measure the success of the fulfillment of the charge.

Quality health information is always critical, and more so during times of distress. Determining the optimal relationship between association-level coordination and on-the-ground grass roots response is difficult. This paper will offer some reflections about how to manage this natural tension, thereby providing an interesting counterpoint to the case studies presented by other contributors.