TWENTY YEARS AND BEYOND: A BACKWARD GLANCE

The Hill-Burton Act of 1946 provided federal funds for constructing hospitals across the nation, including seven new facilities in Albuquerque during a period when the city's population soared from 35,500 in 1940 to nearly 97,000 ten years later. (1) Santa Fe's St. Vincents Hospital was built with those funds, as were a score of others in even smaller New Mexico communities. The following year a temporary library committee composed of Bernalillo County Medical Society members embarked on the first in a series of arrangements for housing and financing that is reflected in today's multimillion dollar medical library. Begun with a collection of books and journals acquired by way of gifts and donations in the amount of $2,000, the fledgling library opened for business on the top floor of St. Joseph's Hospital:

"for use by members of the County Medical Society, residents and interns of the hospital staff, and all other physicians in this area, as well as allied professionals and scientific workers, and students and faculty of UNM, particularly the College of Nursing." (2)

Volunteer help came from Albuquerque's Junior League under the energetic direction of Librarian Raymond L. Young, M.D. A permanent committee named in 1949 assessed each Society member $15 for book purchases and library maintenance, a practice that—with sporadic interruptions and fluctuating fees—continued for nearly a quarter century. The Society opened a branch library at Presbyterian Hospital in January 1962.

After seven years, operations shifted to the first completed wing of the fully accredited Bernalillo County Indian Hospital, where the library was a support base requirement for a newly established two-year intern/residency program. Sharing in the benefits of this new facility were an unlikely conglomeration of county and state indigents along with reservation and pueblo Indians from New Mexico and adjoining states. Through a contract held with the U.S. Public Health Service, these earliest of all Southwest residents occupied 100 of the 214 available hospital beds, while their kinfolk silently paced the halls in traditional, often colorful dress. (3) Several additions have since enlarged this initial structure built in 1954, when the University's North Campus was only a barren and rocky hill cut through by Stanford Drive heading due north from Lomas.

It was there that a Joint Library Advisory Committee emerged under the dual aegis of the Bernalillo County Medical Association and the UNM School of Medicine Library of the Medical Sciences. Meeting over the noon hour in the hospital cafeteria on February 20, 1963, a formal merger agreement creating the tripartite committee structure was signed by Drs. James Wiggins, Library Committee Chairman, Stuart Adler, President, Bernalillo County Medical Society, Reginald H. Fitz, Dean of the UNM Medical School, and Edwin Herring, M.D., Secretary, in the presence of University Attorney William Sloan and David King, Attorney for the Bernalillo County Medical Association. (4) Members hoped that supplies and equipment would come from Medical School coffers so that most funds contributed by the Association could go toward purchasing books and journals and to defray binding costs.

While financial and other benefits accrued to the library and its users as a result, some Association members viewed the turn of events with something less
than enthusiasm; they felt the "Society Library had lost its identity through merger with the Medical School Library." (5) Although in 1963 "only a very small minority of the Association members was opposed to giving continued support to the Library," (6) the clouds of conflict were gathering. Four years later, when University officials threatened to impose a fee on Association members for library reference service, interlibrary loan, and xerox copying contrary to terms in the agreement that specified service to Association members on the same basis as to school faculty, they swiftly retaliated. Gathering their forces, the members voted to reduce the library assessment from $25 to $10. (7) The original agreement was altered in September of that year. Rather than providing future income from annual library dues of Association members "at least to the same extent as its support of its own Medical library," future library income was limited to "annual library assessments on members of the Association." (8) Even though animosity among them ran high, members of both committees recognized as their common goal to provide the best possible medical library services to Albuquerque.

The Space Problem

Increasing use by physicians of this "stored knowledge of the past and present for the benefit of the patient" prompted library committee members to plan for a new and larger facility. Although they visited several medical libraries in the U.S. and Canada searching for a suitable prototype, by meeting's end on June 26, 1963, members "were invited to see the New Library Building at 900 Stanford Drive, N.E." Purchased by the University for $85,000 it was, in fact, an abandoned 7-Up bottling plant awaiting condemnation proceedings—the only building in that desolate landscape other than the County Morgue (later to house the UNM Department of Psychiatry). After minimal repairs, the library's meager holdings were transferred to this "temporary shelter" during the 1963 Thanksgiving holiday by Robert T. Divett, newly appointed Chief Librarian. An influx of additional materials taxed the structure's 11,000 square foot capacity; all student nursing materials were moved from Zimmerman Library along with 1,000 volumes of Public Health Service materials. A donation of more than 500 bound and unbound volumes valued at nearly $4,000 came from Drs. Margulis, Smith, and Wylsee in Santa Fe. (9) This donation, added to increased purchases made possible by $25,000 in grant monies received from the Regional Medical Library Program in 1968, compounded the problem of already severely limited quarters. In 1960 the library owned 5,000 bound journals and monographs and 160 journal titles; four years later combined holdings of both the Bernalillo County Medical Association Library and the Library of the Medical Sciences of the UNM School of Medicine totaled approximately 40,000 volumes...periodical subscriptions numbered 1,300. (10)

Undaunted, the two committees (meeting separately but concerned with the same library through a Joint Advisory Committee) forged ahead, dealing with such issues as selecting a bookplate from among contest entries to meet criteria for National Library of Medicine classification, personnel policies, assessment fees, the legality and ethics of restricting use of a cramped but nonetheless tax supported facility, and smoking in the building. Then as now, committee members battled against the age-old problems of recalcitrant borrowers and outright thievery.

In the face of rapidly dwindling shelf and work space, the dream of occupying new and more spacious quarters persisted, and in 1965 Medical School Dean Fitz presented plans for a library building containing some 40,000 square feet.
With an eye to the future, however, Committee members reluctantly but

"...unanimously recommended that Dean Fitz reconsider the projected size in
view of expansion to a four year school and library needs for an expanding
postgraduate education program, and in light of the fact that this library
will provide state-wide or even regional services." (11)

Few compensations rewarded their patience. Office space on the building's
second floor became available in October 1967 when Medical School Adminis-
tration moved to more spacious quarters in the new Basic Sciences Building; a
meager 5,000 square foot annex added to the building's north side in 1968
brought short-lived relief.

That same year bids were let on a massive building expansion program, presaged
by the welcome news that Stanford Drive would close between Lomas and Marble.
Encouraged by these obvious signs of progress, library committee members began
a program of persuasion aimed at Medical Center administrators. An Ad Hoc
Committee for Planning the New Health Sciences Library Building presented an
11-page Justification of Need to University Vice President Robert S. Stone
detailing the building's deplorable condition:

"Heavy boxes of books must be carried up and down stairs because there are
no elevators or book lifts. There is no shipping/receiving room. A former
restroom functions as the reserve book shelving, placing an untenable load
on the other men's restroom...The building is heated and cooled by a
hodge-podge of roof-top units which frequently break down. A leaking roof
has caused damage to books and disruption of services many times." (12)

The report pointed to recommended "Guidelines for Medical School Libraries
prepared in 1968 by the Joint Committee of the Association of American Medical
Colleges and the Medical Library Association governing, among other things,
adequate staff, shelf and seating space for a facility whose burgeoning growth
rate would end up, they warned "eventually strangle the library on its own
resources unless a new facility is possible." (13) The campus building boom
threatened to engulf the library, making it "inaccessible to faculty housed at
other medical centers who must travel to the campus," including Bernalillo
County Medical Association members, whose full rights to use—and to access—
were carefully spelled out in the 1963 merger agreement. Two rather grim
prospects appeared in the Justification document: 1) although the Library Bond
Act of 1972 designated financial support for library resources, no space
existed to house those materials; and 2) ignoring this critical space problem
would, according to Guidelines recommendations, jeopardize accreditation of the
School of Medicine, College of Nursing, and College of Pharmacy. In view of
these rather ominous threats, plans were under way two years later for
construction of a new library building to be completed by June 1976.

A Permanent Home

Two outside authorities were consulted as a first step in the planning
process. Dr. Frank Rogers, Director of the University of Colorado Biomedical
Library, visited on January 31, 1974; scarcely ten days later Dr. Robert O.
Kelley, newly elected Library Committee Chairman, wrote to thank Dr. Martin
Cummings, Director at the National Library of Medicine, for his advice on grant
applications received during a February 11 visit. (14) When asked about
sharing OCLC terminals with Zimmerman Library, Dr. Rogers advised that while it
might benefit a general college library, such a plan was not feasible for a
medical library. Cummings agreed with Rogers, noting that the proposed NLM databank to OCLC could provide more relevant service to medical libraries.

Among other issues, Cummings advised placing the library, along with instructional Media and Medical Illustrations (though not necessarily its production process) in one facility. He saw no obstacle to housing the Drug Information Center there as well, adding that each library "has its own unique character and what best serves a community should be considered." Cummings thought a 100,000 volume collection was adequate for a community the size of Albuquerque; he recommended employing at least eight professional staff members. Cummings thought Albuquerque's mountain views should be considered in planning window placement in the new facility, adding that "books don't need windows but people certainly do." (15)

The Library Committee's usual weekly meetings during this planning stage were interspersed by frequent joint sessions with the Ad Hoc Planning Committee, where a multitude of questions were hammered out, such as selecting a suitable architect, dealing with what committee members saw as a lopsided budget that allocated more funds for salaries than for purchasing periodicals, books, and binding costs (16) and determining an acquisitions policy for both the Library and the Instructional Media Facility (IMF). Several weeks were spent in discussion with Dr. Frank Steiner, Director of Biomedical Communications, and outside consultants on details involved in relocating the latter facility from the Basic Sciences Building, as well as with Dean Bliss at the College of Pharmacy on the most feasible means for housing the Drug Information Center on the building's second floor. As part of these preliminary plans, office space also would be needed for Vice President Kugel, three assistants, and adequate secretarial help, that would require 2,500 square feet. (17) Committee members considered placing the library director under an administrative "umbrella" of the Office of Education along with the IMF director; since both were equal, autonomous units acting in concert, they might logically report to the same agent. After a lively discussion during which Dr. Kelley "eventually saw the Medical Librarian reporting to the Vice President for Health Sciences," and Dr. Loftfield warned that such a revised hierarchy would "certainly alter" the existing close working relationship with Nursing and Pharmacy, members recommended to the Dean of the School of Medicine that

"In the absence of a Vice President for Health Sciences, the Librarian of the Medical Sciences be placed under the administrative direction of the Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education."

At the same time, the Committee recommended that it "continue to advise the Dean on matters of academic and budgetary policy for the library and to serve as the principal committee for development and planning of the Health Sciences Learning Resources Center." (18)

Although the School of Medicine Library Committee opted to serve in an advisory capacity during planning and development of the new facility, "members felt somewhat uneasy about the actual scope of their authority." (19) By August 1, 1974, the grant application for a new library building was approved in the amount of $2.24 million by HEW's Division of Resource Development and, acting on advice from the Campus Planning Committee, University Regents appointed Harvey Hoshour as building architect. Committee concern over its advisory role eased somewhat when Dean Napolitano approved travel expenses for Drs. Kelley, Loftfield and Architect Hoshour (who formed the nucleus of yet another Health Sciences Learning Resources Center Planning Committee) to visit a number of eastern libraries in an attempt to obtain information on such issues as:
1. orientation for people entering the library
2. noise level
3. environment
4. lighting
5. verbal movement systems
6. supervision of public areas (shelf layout, theft, human behavior)
7. traffic flow
8. flexibility for expansion
9. site selection
10. exterior/interior design

Hoshour presented the following timetable at the end of August 1974:

September 15  completed program
November 1   schematic drawings
January 15   preliminary drawings
June 15     working drawings and specs
July 31     advertise for bids (19)

When an alternative plan for the new building was introduced at the September 27, 1974 meeting, members evaluated the options in terms of priorities:

Plan A - Library and Instructional Media Facility

Plan B - Plan A plus
a) auditorium for Continuing Education (medium priority)
b) offices for Vice President of Health Sciences (high)
c) bookstore (high)
d) cafeteria and dining commons (medium)
e) expanded library and Instructional Media Facility (high)

Although all but the last of these options failed to materialize, considering such ambitious building plans on a limited budget meant cutting corners, one of which would have far-reaching consequences. A proposed humidification system costing a mere $6,000 was scrapped because monthly operating expenses in excess of $500 "were a luxury we could not afford." Despite assurances that this was a "working library containing a collection that could be put on microfilm as it aged," (20) a five-year plan for the building issued seven years later listed air exchange and humidification as "unsatisfactory for creature comfort and woefully inadequate in terms of preservation of library materials." Estimated cost for capital improvement of the physical plant to correct this "critical" lack: $75,000—with installation alone. (21)

The Winds of Change

With the building nearing completion, members of the School of Medicine Library Committee concurred in a decision to wipe the slate clean by appointing a new director to deal with the complex set of problems inherent in managing a project of such wide dimensions. A search committee appointed to implement this task interviewed an impressive number of candidates for the position before a decision was reached, and in February 1977, Erika Love assumed this formidable task. A highly qualified librarian, Love's credentials included, among others, four years as Librarian at the Bowman Gray School of Medicine, Winston Salem, North Carolina, and six additional years as Deputy Associate Director for Library Operations at the National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Maryland.
High on the list of duties handed Love scarcely one month after her arrival was a move to the new building, a chore she promptly accomplished in cooperation with Richard Plyler, then Physical Plant supervisor, directing a squadron of students who, on a typical work day, wheeled some 10,000 volumes in pre-marked crates on dollies along specially rigged tracks across the Medical Center plaza from the old bottling plant (now housing the North Campus cafeteria) to their designated shelf area in the new library. At the same time, Love began to develop an efficient and dedicated staff of librarians and technicians "loyal to this institution and the cause it serves," and ready to support its "education, research, and health care programs." (22)

Today, seven years later, a remodeling project in the Library's Technical Services and Reference area has finally overcome the inconvenience of poorly demarcated workspace and obsolete office furnishings due to yet another cost-cutting when the expense of installing a $70,000 sprinkler system in accordance with an HEW mandate took precedence over initial completion of that busy work area.

Among the many innovative and service-oriented programs set in motion by the current library administrator perhaps none exemplifies the important emphasis placed on New Mexico's unique heritage more than the Library's recently launched Medical History Project. This program, designed in cooperation with the State's Medical Society has as its main goal to document and preserve in the Library's Archives Room the history of medicine and health care in New Mexico and environs, including the birth and growth of the University's School of Medicine. One objective of this effort is to "preserve through an oral history approach selected physicians' and allied persons' firsthand knowledge of important events and issues influencing development of medicine and public health in New Mexico." (23)

Conclusion

Early planners who sensed the need for change and recognized the forces necessary to bring it about fought their toughest battle against economic odds. That effort continues today in this, the Medical Center's 20th year, as rising costs and budget cuts present challenges and opportunities to search for better ways of doing things, to strengthen cooperative ties, and to pool resources for greater progress tomorrow.

Theresa Gervais Haynes
Editor, New Mexico Medical History Program
FOOTNOTES

1) Albuquerque's population in 1940 was 35,449; by 1950 that figure stood at 98,815. According to the New Mexico Health Systems Agency, Albuquerque's Hill-Burton funded hospitals and special centers include: 
   BCMC (now UNM Hospital/BCMC)  St. Josephs 
   Lovelace-Bataan  University Heights 
   Presbyterian  Vista Sandia 
   Rehabilitation Center

2) Nina B. Duncan, "A County Medical Library, Retrospect and Prospect." Unpublished mss. 1960, p. 3. All material cited in this document prior to 1974 may be found in UNM Medical Center Library Committee Archives.

3) Duncan, op.cit. See also undated 4-page publicity brochure announcing the new facility.

4) Minutes, Bernalillo County Medical Society Library Committee Meeting, September 15, 1964.

5) ibid., February 21, 1963.

6) ibid., September 18, 1963.

7) For a chronology of these events, see memo to Drs. Reginald H. Fitz, and Edwin B. Herring, from R.T. Divett, August 28, 1967.


9) See Margulis Inventory file.


12) Attachment to memo addressed to Vice President Sherman Smith from R.T. Divett dated November 16, 1972, p. 5-6. Ad Hoc Committee members charged with producing the document were: B.L. Murray, College of Nursing; C. Bliss, College of Pharmacy; W. Wiese, J. Levchuk, G. Omer, School of Medicine; along with S. Jones and R.T. Divett.

13) ibid., p. 3.


15) Minutes, Joint Meeting Health Sciences Library Planning Committee and School of Medicine Library Committee, February 11, 1974.


17) Minutes, September 27, 1974.
18) Ibid., April 18, 1974.
19) Minutes, SOM Library Committee, April 26, 1974.
23) New Mexico Medical History Project, Statement of Goals and Objectives presented for review to the NM Medical History Committee on May 6, 1982, p. 1.