

### US Medical Library Association report for EAHIL



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#### **MLA 2015: Austin, Texas, 15-20 May 2015. Conference report.**

As you all know from my previous columns, MLA 2015 was held this year in Austin, Texas and closed earlier today. This is the third time it has been held in Texas over recent years (with MLA 2002 being held in Dallas and MLA 2005 being held in Phoenix) but it had a different feel from either of those meetings.

When I arrived in Brisbane for ICML in 2009, I was told I that I had brought rain, as Brisbane had been suffering from drought until my arrival. (Wherever you are in the world, as a “Brit” you can never escape remarks about our British weather). Well, if it was true in Brisbane, it was certainly true in Austin! The heavens opened with thunder and lightning and we had major storms that went some way to alleviating the drought which has persisted here in Texas since 2008 and has been described as the worst on record. We did not mind, however, as we were, of course, indoors all the time!

The conference went under the title and theme “Librarians Without Limits”, which is wordplay based on a long-running TV music programme entitled “Austin City Limits”, known across the US (and, possibly, beyond?). We were told to expect lots of live music entertainment – and bats – but neither in the Convention Centre, I should add! (Apparently, Austin is the home to the largest urban bat colony in North America. The Congress Avenue Bridge, just a few minutes’ walk from the Convention Centre, is home to c. 1 million bats at this time of year and they generally fly out from under the bridge at dusk, creating a magnificent sight across the river).

The conference started, as ever, with a wide range of Continuing Education courses on the Friday and Saturday and ended with additional courses on the Wednesday afternoon. This year there were 25 CE courses with over 300 participants. A colleague and I presented two courses, which regrettably meant that I was not able to attend anyone else’s courses! Topics ranged from setting up a clinical librarian programme, mobile technology, data analysis, bioinformatics, advanced search techniques, evidence-based-medicine and systematic reviews. Many of the courses were very popular and some were sold out.

For the conference itself, there were c. 2,000 registrants from 18 countries. Thirty registrants were from Europe. In total there were 85 people from outside the US. More than 100 papers were presented and c. 200 posters. As ever, the conference was supported by an exhibition with about 100 exhibitors.

The key opening plenary speaker this year was Mae Jemison. During her career she has not only been a physician and a NASA astronaut, as I mentioned in my last column, but has also featured in Star Trek! She was the first African American woman to travel in space when she went into orbit on the Space Shuttle Endeavour in 1992.

The two closing plenaries were also inspiring. Ann McKee, a neurologist / pathologist spoke about the dangers of sports-related brain injuries arising from football, rugby and soccer and the implications of young people engaging in these sports. She ended with the words of encouragement to us all that exercise is helpful in preventing many brain diseases, that is, if one chooses one's form of exercise with caution, I imagine? Finally, Eszter Hargittai gave a very interesting closing address based on her research on the Web Use Project and advised us that the myths that young people are all computer savvy and the elderly are not are just that – myths! Her research had indicated a stronger correlation between web skills and socioeconomic status than age. All the above plenaries are available as part of the e-Conference package, see below.

During the main part of the meeting, Betsy Humphreys (Acting Director, US National Library of Medicine (NLM)) opened the annual NLM Update with a tribute to Donald Lindberg, who had retired recently as the Director of NLM, a post he had held for over 30 years. Many of his predictions for the future of medical information became reality including predicting a time when “the book or journal on the shelf will become increasingly too remote for immediate patient-care decisions,” and computers will become increasingly useful; and that “medical informatics will emerge as a formal research field and academic discipline”.  
<http://infocus.nlm.nih.gov/2015/04/14/the-end-of-an-era-director-lindberg-retires-after-31-years-leading-nlm/>

NLM also had a booth, as usual, with a vast range of presentations on NLM and related products and services. Many of these presentations easily compete by way of quality and relevance with the oral sessions in the main programme. This year topics included PubMed, PubMed Health, MedlinePlus and Public Access / PubMed Central. Recordings of these presentations and / or recordings made prior to the meeting are now available:

[http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/techbull/mj15/mj15\\_mla\\_theater\\_presentations.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/techbull/mj15/mj15_mla_theater_presentations.html)

Please note that the “e-conference” registration is still available post-conference. The cost for “Individual e-Conference Registration’ is 139 USD (the reduced rate for EAHIL members). Please note that this is an individual rate, not be shared with your colleagues. If you wish to obtain an institutional subscription, please contact MLA. Once you have registered for the “e-Conference”, you can listen to recordings and follow the slides of the plenary and parallel sessions as well as the oral sessions and other content.

As ever, this was a very successful and well-organized meeting at all levels and thank you to all MLA staff, the National Programme Committee, the Local Assistance Committee and others who contributed to its success.

### **Future MLA annual meetings - dates for your diary:**

MLA 2016, Toronto, Canada 13-18 May 2016

MLA 2017, Seattle, Washington, 26-31 May

MLA 2018, Atlanta, Georgia 18-23 May 2018

MLA 2019, Chicago, Illinois 3-8 May 2019

### **Membership of MLA**

MLA offers International Membership to individuals at a reduced rate for those health information professionals who live outside the United States or Canada. The current annual subscription rate for International Membership is 130 US dollars. For details of what this includes, see the link below.

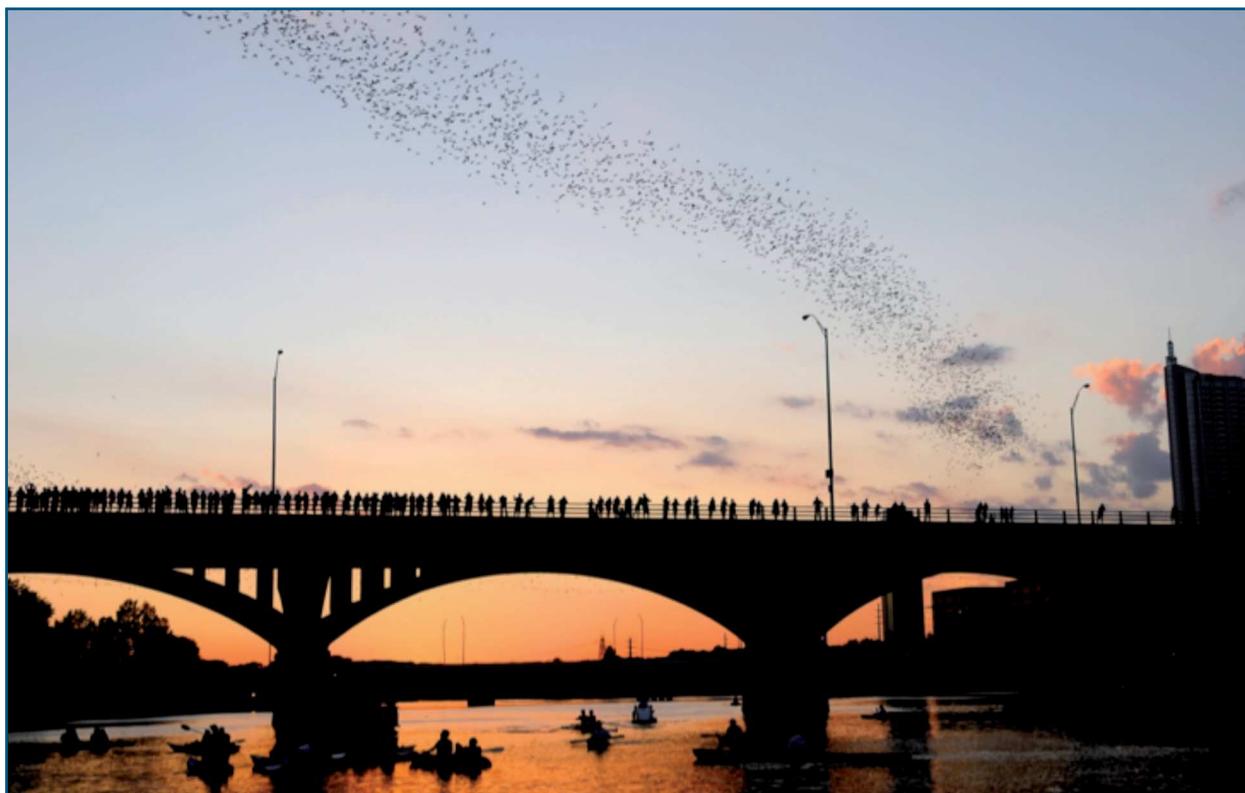
<https://www.mlanet.org/about/membership>

**News and publications from MLA**

The latest issue of the Journal of the Medical Library Association (JMLA) (Volume 103(2) April 2015) is now available on open access together with open access to back issues of the JMLA (and its predecessors back to 1898) from:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/journals/93/>

Preprints of forthcoming issues of the Journal of the Medical Library Association (JMLA) are available (for members only) by selecting JMLA Preprints under the Publications option when you login with your username and password. MLA News and the current edition of MLA-FOCUS (the fortnightly electronic newsletter (both for members only) are also available when you login with your username and password.



*Photo credit: "365 things to do in Austin, Texas"*

<http://365thingsaustin.com/2010/06/08/158-kayak-bat-watching-tour/>