

Academic Assistance and Information Management Roles of Medical College Librarians: Overview

Dr. Ananthnag. K

Chief Librarian, Mandya Institute of Medical Sciences, Mandya

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51583/IJLTEMAS.2026.150900097>

Received: 26 September 2026; Accepted: 01 October 2026; Published: 19 October 2026

ABSTRACT

Medical college libraries have evolved from traditional repositories of printed books and journals into dynamic academic and information-support centres that contribute to education, research, evidence-based practice, scholarly communication, and lifelong learning. Medical college librarians increasingly function as information professionals, research partners, educators, knowledge managers, and facilitators of digital information services. This overview examines the major academic assistance and information management roles performed by medical college librarians. The article discusses support for undergraduate and postgraduate medical education, information literacy, literature searching, evidence-based medicine, systematic reviews, research assistance, bibliographic management, scholarly communication, plagiarism awareness, institutional repositories, database management, digital library services, and emerging technologies including artificial intelligence. The changing role of librarians requires continuous professional development, collaboration with faculty and clinicians, knowledge of biomedical databases, research methodology, information technology, and responsible use of artificial intelligence. Strengthening these competencies can enable medical college librarians to become active partners in teaching, learning, research, and evidence-based healthcare.

Key words: Medical Information Management, Digital Library Services, Evidence-Based Medicine (EBM) Support, Literature Searching, Database Management

INTRODUCTION

Medical college librarians play a vital role in supporting medical education, research, and clinical practice. As information specialists, they serve as a bridge between vast medical knowledge and the students, faculty, and healthcare professionals who rely on accurate, up-to-date information for learning and patient care.

In modern medical institutions, librarians are not only custodians of books and journals but also active partners in academic and clinical environments. They manage access to essential resources such as print collections, e-books, online databases (e.g., PubMed, Scopus), and evidence-based tools. By organizing, curating, and updating these resources, they ensure that users can quickly locate reliable information.

Medical college librarians also play a key role in developing information literacy skills. They train students and faculty in literature searching, reference management, research methodology, plagiarism awareness, and proper citation practices. Through workshops and one-on-one guidance, they help users navigate complex databases and critically evaluate scientific literature.

In addition, librarians support research activities by assisting with systematic reviews, bibliometric analysis, and publication tracking. They help faculty identify appropriate journals, understand impact metrics, and comply with institutional and funding agency requirements. With the rapid growth of digital technologies, medical librarians adapt to emerging trends such as digital repositories, open access publishing, and data management services. They contribute to institutional knowledge preservation and promote ethical and effective use of information.

Core Responsibilities

Collection Development & Resource Management

- Select, acquire, and manage print and electronic medical resources (textbooks, reference books, journals, e-books, databases).
- Evaluate and update collections to ensure relevance to current medical curricula and research needs.
- Manage subscriptions to medical databases and online resources.
- Weed out outdated or obsolete materials.

Information Services & Reference Support

- Provide reference and research assistance to students, faculty, clinicians, and researchers.
- Conduct literature searches using medical databases such as PubMed, Scopus, and Cochrane Library etc.
- Support evidence-based medicine (EBM) by retrieving high-quality research evidence.
- Offer current awareness services and selective dissemination of information (SDI).

User Education & Information Literacy

- Conduct training sessions and workshops on database searching and research tools.
- Teach information literacy, citation styles, and plagiarism awareness.
- Guide users in using reference management tools (e.g., EndNote, Mendeley, Zotero).
- Assist in developing research skills among undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Research & Scholarly Communication Support

- Assist with systematic reviews and meta-analyses.
- Provide support for research impact analysis, bibliometrics, and citation tracking.
- Guide faculty on journal selection, indexing, impact factors, and open access publishing.
- Support institutional repository management and research archiving.

Library Administration & Management

- Supervise library staff and coordinate daily operations.
- Prepare budgets, annual reports, and policy documents.
- Maintain library automation systems and digital catalogues.
- Ensure compliance with accreditation standards (e.g., NMC, NAAC, etc.,

Digital & Technology Services

- Manage library software and integrated library management systems (ILMS).
- Oversee digital library services and remote access systems.
- Maintain institutional repositories and digital archives.
- Implement emerging technologies to enhance user services.

Collaboration & Academic Support

- Collaborate with faculty in curriculum development and research projects.
- Participate in academic committees and institutional planning.
- Support continuing medical education (CME) and academic events.

Ethical & Legal Responsibilities

- Ensure copyright compliance and fair use of information resources.
- Promote ethical use of information and prevent plagiarism.
- Maintain confidentiality of user records.

Supporting Medical Education and Clinical Practice

Medical librarians are not passive custodians; they actively support the core mission of medical institutions:

- **Curriculum Support:** Ensuring library collections align with the National Medical Commission (NMC) and university curricula.
- **Clinical Librarianship:** In some settings, librarians collaborate with clinicians to deliver timely evidence during rounds or at point of need. This supports clinical decision-making and quality patient care.
- **Research Enablement:** By providing literature search expertise and access to research tools, librarians accelerate research output and scholarly productivity among faculty and students.

Professional Development and Associations

In Karnataka, medical librarians often participate in professional associations such as the Karnataka Health Sciences Library Association (KHSLA) (formerly the Karnataka Medical Library Association) which works to improve library services, provide continuing education, and foster professional growth of health science librarians across the state. These associations regularly organize conferences and training to keep librarians updated with the latest trends and technologies in health information management.

Challenges and Future Directions

While medical librarians in Karnataka play a crucial role, they face challenges common in academic libraries:

- **Keeping pace with digital transformation** and ensuring consistent access to costly e-resources.

- **Need for ongoing training** in advanced search methods, health informatics, artificial intelligence tools, and specialized databases.
- **Integration with clinical teams** and perceived visibility among clinicians can be improved to fully realize added value.

A medical college librarian plays a crucial role in strengthening both medical education and clinical practice by ensuring timely access to accurate, evidence-based information. Their contribution directly impacts the quality of learning, research, and patient care.

Supporting Medical Education

Curriculum Support

- Align library resources with the medical curriculum for undergraduate, postgraduate, and super-specialty programs.
- Provide access to prescribed textbooks, reference books, e-books, and core journals.
- Assist faculty in identifying updated learning materials and teaching resources.

Information Literacy Training

- Conduct orientation programs for new students on effective use of library resources.
- Train students in literature searching using tool such as PubMed and other medical other databases.
- Teach critical appraisal of research articles and evidence-based practice concepts.
- Provide guidance on citation styles and plagiarism prevention.

Research Skill Development

- Support students in thesis and dissertation work.
- Assist with systematic reviews, literature reviews, and research proposal development.
- Provide training on reference management software and research metrics.

Supporting Clinical Practice

Evidence-Based Medicine (EBM) Support

- Help clinicians retrieve high-quality evidence for diagnosis, treatment, and patient management.
- Conduct advanced literature searches for case discussions and clinical decision-making.
- Provide access to clinical guidelines, systematic reviews, and point-of-care tools.

Current Awareness Services

- Alert faculty and clinicians about newly published research, guidelines, and updates in their specialties.
- Offer selective dissemination of information (SDI) based on individual research interests.

Access to Reliable Clinical Resources

- Ensure availability of authoritative resources such as the World Health Organization guidelines and databases like PubMed etc
- Facilitate access to clinical decision-support tools and medical reference platforms.

Support during Clinical Rounds and Case Discussions

- Provide rapid literature search services when needed.
- Assist in preparing presentations, case reports, and clinical seminars.

Enhancing Institutional Excellence

- Collaborate with departments to improve teaching-learning processes.
- Support accreditation requirements and maintain documentation of academic resources.
- Promote ethical use of information and adherence to copyright regulations.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, medical college librarians are indispensable pillars of academic and clinical excellence within medical institutions. Their role extends far beyond managing books and journals; they serve as information specialists, educators, research partners, and technology facilitators. By ensuring access to accurate, current, and evidence-based resources, they directly support medical education, research advancement, and informed clinical decision-making.

Through training in information literacy, guidance in research methodology, and assistance with evidence-based practice, medical college librarians empower students, faculty, and healthcare professionals to become competent and ethical users of medical information. Their contribution strengthens the quality of teaching, enhances research productivity, and ultimately promotes better patient care.

In an era of rapidly expanding medical knowledge and digital transformation, the expertise of medical college librarians remains essential. They are not only custodians of knowledge but active contributors to the growth, innovation, and success of the medical education system.

REFERENCES

1. Brettle, A., & Maden, M. (2016). What evidence is there to support the role of the librarian in systematic reviews Health Information & Libraries Journal, 33(4), 255–258.
2. McGowan, J., & Sampson, M. (2005). Systematic reviews need systematic searchers. Journal of the Medical Library Association, 93(1), 74–80.
3. Rethlefsen, M. L., et al. (2015). Librarian co-authors correlated with higher quality reported search strategies in systematic reviews. Journal of Clinical Epidemiology, 68(6), 617–626.
4. International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). (2019). Guidelines for continuing professional development.
5. <http://khsla.org> Karnataka Health Sciences Library Association (KHSLA)
6. <http://kalaonline.com> Karnataka State Library Association (KALA)
7. <http://kscla.in> Karnataka State College Library Association (KSCLA)
8. <http://ilaindia.co.in> Indian Library Association (ILA)