

## *Around the South*

### A HISTORY OF THE TAMPA BAY MEDICAL LIBRARY NETWORK 1975-2000

By

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To render an informative history of the Tampa Bay Medical Library Network (abbreviated TABAMLN and lovingly pronounced “Ta-bam-lin”), one must first place the organization within the umbrella history of the National Library of Medicine.

In 1818, the first inklings of a national library of medicine began as a few books in the office of Joseph Lovell, who was the United States Army’s Surgeon General. In 1836, John Shaw Billings became the director of the Surgeon General’s office. Billings was also a consultant to the Census Bureau and a friend to Herman Hollerith, director of the Census Bureau. Billings suggested to Hollerith that a machine should be devised that could perform the tabulation of the census data. From this idea, Hollerith invented his first Tabulating Machine. (Hollerith formed the Computing-Tabulating Recording Company in 1911 which was later purchased by Thomas Watson who transformed it into IBM.)

The relatively small beginnings of a national medical library continued after the Civil War. In 1879, Billings began publishing Index Medicus. Index Medicus was originally a monthly classified subject guide to the medical books and journal articles available in Billings’ library. An offshoot of the Index Medicus was the Index-Catalogue of the Library of the Surgeon General’s Office, United States Army, first published in 1889. Under a succession of directors of the United States Army’s Surgeon General’s office, the library grew at a slow pace.

In 1956, the United States Congress passed the

National Library of Medicine Act, which was sponsored by Senators Lister Hill and John F. Kennedy. This act moved the books and journals, which had become the nucleus of a national library, from the U.S. Army to the jurisdiction of the Public Health Department. It also designated a permanent building site for the new National Library of Medicine.

Dr. Frank B. Rodgers, a medical doctor, was sent to library school. In 1958 he became the first director of the National Library of Medicine.

During the 1960’s, the National Library of Medicine hired the General Electric Company to develop a computerized system to enhance the availability of the Index Medicus. MEDLARS, the Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System, became operational in 1964. ELHILL, a system to allow librarians at NLM to retrieve electronically the medical literature on demand, became available in 1968. Medline, MEDLARS Online, was developed in 1971.

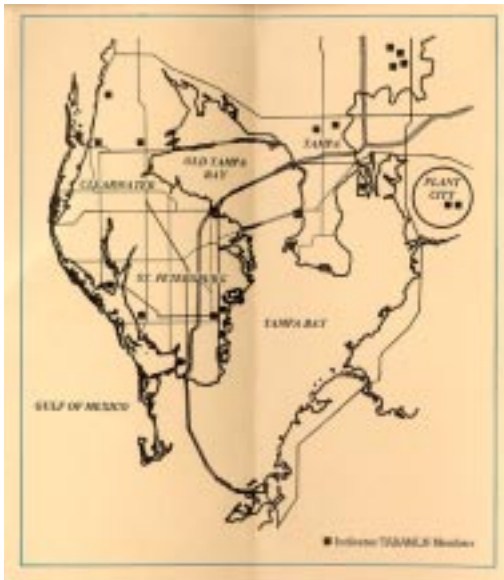
In 1965, the Medical Library Assistance Act was passed. This act helped push forward the development of Medline as well as the Regional Medical Library (RML) Network. One of the goals of the RML network was to improve the delivery of information to health professionals. As such, the Regional Medical Libraries supported (and still support) the development of library consortia.

In 1975, the war in Viet Nam ended with the fall of Saigon. Mitchell, Haldeman and Ehrlichman were sentenced for the Watergate break-in. In this tense atmosphere, TABAMLN was formed. Twelve librarians plus the director of the University of South Florida Medical School Library met and formed the

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first medical library consortia in the Tampa Bay area. The geographical area consisted primarily of the cities of St. Petersburg and Tampa as well as the surrounding bedroom communities on the central west coast of Florida. The founding libraries of TABAMLN were: Tampa General Hospital, All Children's Hospital in St. Petersburg, Bayfront Medical Center in St. Petersburg, the Florida Mental Health Institute in Tampa, Tampa Veterans Administration Hospital, University Community Hospital in Tampa, Mease Hospital and Clinic in Dunedin, St. Petersburg Junior College, Hillsborough Community College, Morton F. Plant Hospital in Clearwater, Bay Pines Veterans Hospital in St. Petersburg, and South Florida Baptist Hospital in Plant City.



### **Tamblin**

In late 1976, TABAMLN applied to the National Library of Medicine for a three year grant to fund itself as an interlibrary loan consortium with a network coordinator based out of the University of South Florida in Tampa. At this point, TABAMLN had 14 member libraries including 2 community colleges and the University of South Florida. Agreements were established to create a union list of serials and interlibrary

loan journal articles and audiovisual aids.

In 1978, the National Library of Medicine awarded TABAMLN a grant of \$118,394 for a three year period. A medical library coordinator's office was established at the University of South Florida Medical Library. The services offered, besides interlibrary loan coordination, included reference, vacation coverage, continuing education, a newsletter, and photocopies of requested information.



### **Tamblin's First Newsletter**

The NLM grant was renewed in 1982 for one additional year. In 1983, no further funding was available from the National Library of Medicine. TABAMLN reorganized with ten participating libraries. Each of these libraries contributed \$4,000 annually for two years to fund the consortium. The coordinator's position was subsidized by TABAMLN and maintained within the Medical School Library at the University of South Florida. Interlibrary loan agreements continued between the TABAMLN members. Continuing education was a priority.

In 1985, the National Library of Medicine introduced Docline. Docline is a computerized system for routing interlibrary loans to libraries using a predetermined table paradigm. Reciprocal borrowing agreements are honored with specific placement within a prescribed routing order. Consortia such as TABAMLN route interlibrary loan requests to each other as first choices within the table. Quicker receipt of interlibrary loans is the goal of the system.

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In 1986, TABAMLN reorganized itself. The network coordinator's office at the University of South Florida Medical Center Library was eliminated. TABAMLN members assumed permanent responsibility for interlibrary loans, the union list of serials, educational programs, networking, and the recruitment of new members. Dues were reduced to \$50 per year. Membership categories were established, including hospital libraries, academic libraries, and special libraries.

Many changes have occurred in medical librarianship since TABAMLN began in 1975: the advent of Docline; Grateful Med as a form of outreach to the medical profession; the Internet and the World Wide Web; PubMed's availability to the general public and electronic journal access, to mention just a few. TABAMLN has grown and changed as well. It is no longer exclusively a "Tampa Bay" organization. We now have 30+ member libraries across most of central Florida from the Gulf Coast to the Atlantic Ocean and as far south as the Everglades. We still maintain our focus: to provide interlibrary loans, continuing education, and networking opportunities to our membership.



**Tabamlin Meeting in Daytona Beach, 1996**

TABAMLN members know that they can depend on each other whether for needed items, back-up coverage, or just moral support.

*Submitted by Karen Roth*

## *Honors and Awards*

### **Nominate SC/MLA Academic Librarian of the Year**

The SC/MLA Academic Librarian of the Year Award was established in 1998, and the first award was presented in 1999.

Criteria: To be eligible, the candidate must have worked in an academic health library setting for five years and be a member of the Southern Chapter of the Medical Library Association. The successful applicant will have demonstrated excellence in research, instruction, and or service in health librarianship. Other criteria should mirror those for MLA's Estelle Brodman Award for the Academic Medical Librarian of the Year.

Nominations should be sent by letter or email to the Chair of the Honors and Awards Committee and must contain the following elements:

Precise description of the nominee's achievements

A current resume or curriculum vitae

Any additional information which may assist the committee in evaluation of the nomination and selection of the recipient (i.e. AHIP membership, etc.).

**Deadline: September 1** of each year, with nominations accepted from January 1. The winner of the award will be announced at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Chapter/MLA, and presented with a plaque and a check for \$250.