

## INTRODUCTION

Previously published literature in the field of health sciences librarianship notes that quality and rigor in research is indicative of a profession's maturity (Dimitroff, 1992). The purpose of this study is to examine research articles published in the Journal of the Medical Library Association between 1991 and 2007 to determine if and how the field has developed as a profession as defined by these characteristics.

## METHOD

Perform a content analysis of research articles published in the Bulletin of the Medical Library Association and Journal of the Medical Library Association during the time span of 1991-2007.

The subject, research method, and analytical classification schema used throughout the study are based on the work of Alexandra Dimitroff (1992).

**Research** is an inquiry which is carried out, at least to some degree, by a *systematic method* with the purpose of eliciting some *new* facts, concepts, or ideas. Clearly, this definition carries no implication of quality, relevance, or generality. Research could be bad, irrelevant, or of only local interest. (Peritz, p251)

## RESEARCH QUESTION

To determine if the profession of health sciences librarianship has matured over recent years as defined by the level of sophistication found in the published research in its leading peer-reviewed journal.

### Research Methods

- Bibliometrics
- Content Analysis
- Delphi Method
- Experimental
- Historical
- Observation/Description
- Operations Research
- Secondary Analysis
- Survey
- Multiple

### Subject Classification Scheme

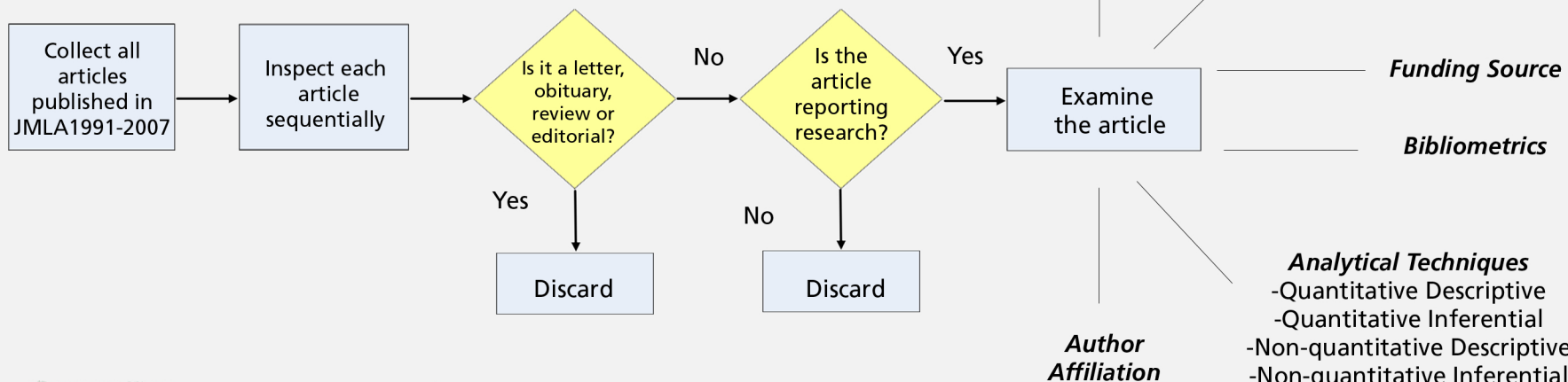
- General
- Professional Concerns
- Theoretical
- Applied
- Related fields

### Author Affiliation

- Analytical Techniques
- Quantitative Descriptive
- Quantitative Inferential
- Non-quantitative Descriptive
- Non-quantitative Inferential

### Funding Source

### Bibliometrics



## PRELIMINARY RESULTS (1991-1997)



Total Articles Reviewed 378  
Total Research Articles 184 (49%)

Survey 57%  
Bibliometrics 15%  
Experimental 13%

### Common Research Methodologies

Academic HS Lib 67%  
Other Institution 13%  
Library School 11%  
Academic Library 9%

### Common Author Affiliations

Users Attitudes & Behaviors 29%  
Public Services 15%  
Materials or Collection Development 13%

### Common Research Subjects

Quantitative Desc 57%  
Quantitative Infer 15%  
Non-Quant Desc 13%

### Common Analytical Techniques Employed

None Reported 67%  
Government 17%  
Association 7%

### Common Funding Sources

## CONCLUSION

The Research Policy Statement of the Medical Library Association, originally put forth in 1995 and reconfirmed in 2007, declares the importance of using scientific research for the advancement of the profession. This current study seeks to examine trends in health sciences library research to see how well the profession is meeting this imperative. A comparison of preliminary results (1991-97) with previously published findings (1966-1990, Dimitroff) reveals that survey remains the most commonly used research methodology, quantitative descriptive techniques the most often employed form of analysis, academic health sciences librarians the most prolific authors, and that most studies report no source of research funding. New areas of research observed to date include consumer health, outreach, and the Internet; an emerging research method is focus groups. Additional review and analysis will help provide evidence as to how well MLA's goals and commitment to research are reflected in the Journal of the Medical Library Association.