

PORTUGUESE LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION CENTRES IN HEALTH CARE

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Institutions in Portugal having libraries related to health care facilities are:

(1) General and Specialised hospitals; (2) Universities, technical schools and training centres; (3) Central and (4) Local health administration centres; (5) Mental health facilities; Pharmaceutical industry; Associations; Non-profit institutions.

To get a better knowledge of the profile of these libraries a survey was conducted by the Associação Portuguesa de Documentação e Informação de Saúde (APDIS) on 232 previously selected, most important institutions. The published results have been analysed and some conclusions are now presented.¹

Data were obtained from 114 libraries, i.e., 49%; reasons for not responding were absence of a library or a complete lack of human resources. In the 114 libraries considered, almost 500,000 monographs and 30,000 periodicals are registered. Even when resources are limited, periodicals are in favour; 11,000 titles of periodicals are still subscribed to and almost all libraries possess them (98% versus 94% for monographs). The results of the survey show that only 55 responding libraries (52%) make use of databases and process their information automatically, which is certainly related to lack of financial resources. Most libraries afford technical services, such as cataloguing (89%), indexing (62%) and classification (60%). The majority uses either national or international rules for cataloguing (Portuguese Cataloguing Rules 71% or International Standardized Bibliographic Description 44%); for indexing (Bireme Health Sciences Descriptors 27% or Medical Subjects Headings 13%) and for classifying (Universal Decimal Classification 42% or National Library of Medicine classification 13%).

Conclusions

* Human resources should be improved and specific technical training should be taken into account in order to face all professional requirements

* Library automation is the most significant drawback

* In spite of limited technical, financial and human resources, a substantial effort is made to provide a wide set of library services to the users

* Most libraries provide technical services and use national and international standards

* Portuguese health administration managers must become aware that medical and health libraries are important and crucial to provide documentation and information, and constitute an essential support for clinical decision making.

Reference

¹ Associação Portuguesa de Documentação e Informação de Saúde. Repertório das bibliotecas e serviços de informação em saúde. Lisboa: APDIS, 1993

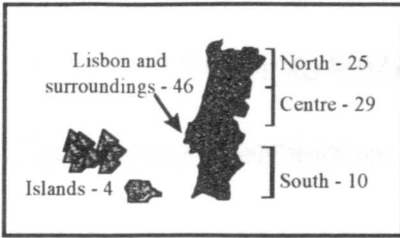


Figure 1 - Geographic distribution of the number of respondent libraries.

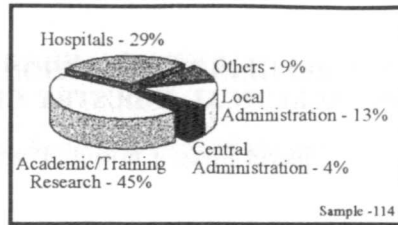


Figure 2 - Percentage distribution of respondent health libraries according to the type of institution.

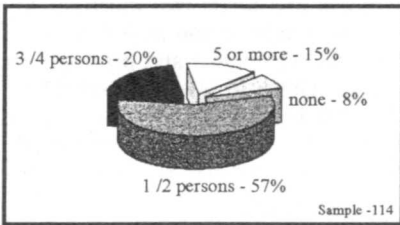


Figure 3 - Percentage distribution of respondent health libraries according to the number of human resources.

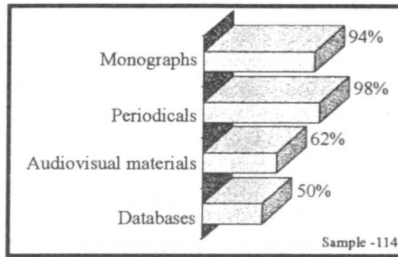


Figure 4 - Presentation of the percentage of respondent libraries using each one of the information resources.

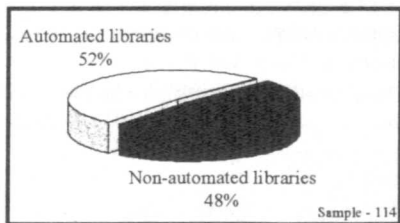


Figure 5 - Percentage distribution of respondent libraries according to automatic data processing.

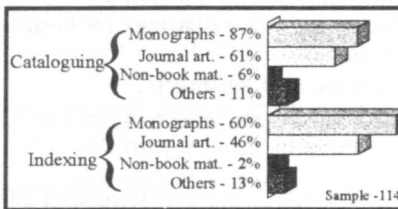


Figure 6 - Percentage of respondent libraries cataloguing and indexing the different information materials.

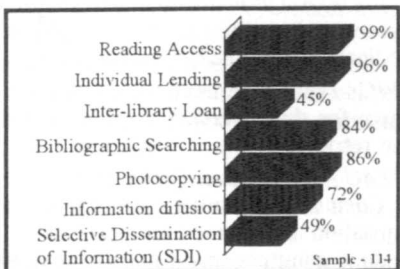


Figure 7 - Percentage of respondent libraries providing each one of the library services.

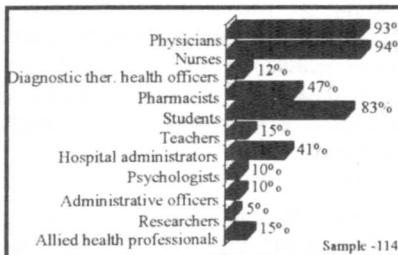


Figure 8 - Percentage of respondent libraries indicating each one of the different professional categories.