

One Person Libraries in Healthcare

- Challenges and Opportunities
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*Solo Flying Libraries Group

The Reality: Many Healthcare Libraries

- Are run by ONE person
- That one librarian /assistant manages:
-  Collections
-  Research support
-  Training
-  Digital resources
-  Library space

+ Advantages

- *Autonomy* (to a degree)
- Control over **service direction and priorities**
- Services tailored to **local healthcare staff needs**
- Strong **relationships with clinicians and staff**
- Increased **visibility of library impact**

Advantages: Professional Development

Solo librarians develop broad skills:

- Collection management
- Literature searching & research support
- Training and information literacy
- Digital resource management
- Marketing and advocacy
- Running the physical library

- ➔ Provides a **holistic understanding of library management**

Challenges: 1. Professional Isolation

- Working without immediate colleagues
- Limited **peer collaboration**
- Great Difficulty covering **leave or illness (closure)**
- Reliance on **professional networks** for support

Challenges: 2. Workload and Burnout

Solo librarians/assistants

- Routine tasks (phones, printers and admin.)
- Complex work (systematic, scoping and literature reviews/searches)
- *Local Service Demands*
- National projects and meetings

Risk of **stress, backlog (esp. after leave) and burnout**

Challenges: 3. Geographical distance

- Healthcare libraries often spread across large regions.
(over 100kms)
- Long travel times
- Limited peer interaction
- Difficulty providing *cross-cover*
- **Unequal access** to services

Protecting Library Spaces

- Library spaces support:
 - Clinical excellence
 - Education and Research
 - Staff wellbeing
- ***Protection strategies:***
 - Collect usage statistics
 - Produce impact reports
 - Advocate to senior management

Recommendations

- Provide **institutional support and cover**
- Protect **time for CPD**
- Implement **hybrid service models**
- Strengthen **virtual networking**
- **Protect Library space**

Conclusion

Solo Librarianship/assistant offers:

- ✓ Autonomy (to a degree)
- ✓ Variety
- ✓ Professional growth

But also presents challenges:

- Isolation
- Workload pressure
- Service sustainability

Solo Flying ✈ Libraries Group

- Gabriel Graves, Dymphna Lynch and Dymphna McGettigan, Liz Perkins,
- Liis Cotter, Antje Herzog Gallagher, Tony Linnane (Chair), Jennifer Butler
- and Vita Whelehan

- N.B. 1.5 Librarian posts in Galway