

# SALIS: A Trusted Source of Information in Addiction Science

By Judit Ward, PhD, MLIS, and William Bejarano, MA, MLIS '15 (Rutgers Center of Alcohol Studies), and Deann Jepson, MS (Advocates for Human Potential, Inc.)

**H**ow often do you turn to Google as a professional? How do you know whether or not you can trust the sources that you have found? How do you separate authoritative and reliable information from sales pitches? *How about asking a librarian?*

The library of the 21st century is not the one you remember from grade school. Often thought of as outdated book repositories, libraries and information centers are presently in the unique position to follow trends involving the ever-changing needs of their users. Librarians and information specialists with expertise in the field of substance use and mental health disorders can serve as a bridge to scholarly resources, popular material, government publications, grey literature, and more. Information professionals can help navigate through the overwhelming amount of resources available in the public domain and subscription databases. An entire network of these experts, called the Substance Abuse Librarians and Information Specialists (SALIS), is involved in the dissemination of information and linking research to practice in the behavioral health field by means of using both old-fashioned and cutting-edge methods of library and information science.

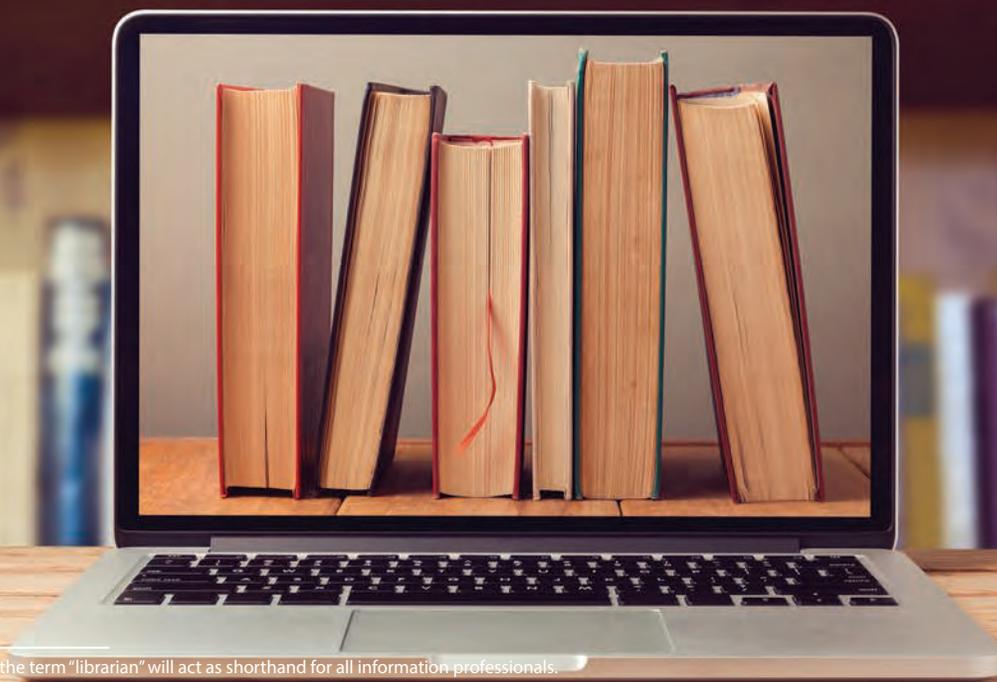
## Why a librarian?

Librarians and information specialists<sup>1</sup> have been trained to retrieve and organize information on specific topics from reliable sources as well as follow and monitor trends in the field of their subject expertise and information science. Librarians can provide guidance while navigating the

maze of hard-to-find and/or potentially contradictory information. Librarians who, behind the scenes, are negotiating and licensing online subscriptions to journals and databases and integrating free and licensed resources have developed valuable subject expertise and experience in finding information efficiently (Mitchell, Lacroix, Weiner, Imholtz, & Goodair, 2012). Librarians can help passive recipients of unfiltered information transform into practitioners actively seeking and finding the right information at the right time (Wheeler & Goodman, 2007). Librarians can assist practitioners to improve their skills in information retrieval and evaluation in order to find quality information in a timely manner and better bridge the gap between theory and practice.

## What gap?

The gap between the work of researchers and the application of evidence-based practice is a topic of many conversations. Scholars who work in academic institutions do not necessarily call on practitioners to critically examine evidence-based practice models. Similarly, the current education and practice framework does not encourage addiction practitioners to work closely with researchers. Professionals who are expected to carry out empirically supported practices without being involved in research can be supported by librarians and information specialists, who are well versed in the current practices of information literacy, and can help them find and translate evidence-based research into day-to-day practice (Wheeler & Goodman, 2007).



<sup>1</sup>From this point forward, the term "librarian" will act as shorthand for all information professionals.

## What is Information Literacy?

Information literacy refers to a set of skills and competencies required to retrieve, analyze, and use information in the era of information overload (Pinto, Pulgarín, & Escalona, 2014). The significance of information literacy for practitioners has been well-documented (e. g., Cullen, Clark, & Esson, 2011; Schardt, 2011). Information literacy is exceptionally crucial in the behavioral health field, since easily accessible information may introduce bias into the practice of evidence-based medicine (Pittler et al., 2011). There is a strong correlation between the information literacy competency standards in libraries and the principles of evidence-based medicine (Nail-Chiwetalu & Bernstein Ratner, 2007). As an example, information literacy and critical thinking were suggested as crucial components of social worker education (Mirabito, 2012). Case studies prove the importance of discipline-based information literacy integration (Gordon & Bartoli, 2012; Lampert, 2005; Marshall, 2014; Pendell & Armstrong, 2014).

## What is SALIS?

Librarians add their unique approach based on their own settings and circumstances to provide quality information by linking research to practice (Marshall, 2014). Founded in 1979, SALIS is an international association of individuals and organizations with special interests in the exchange and dissemination of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug (ATOD) information. A diverse group spanning from academic librarians to information and other professionals in various organizations, SALIS is represented all over the United States and beyond in institutions such as academic and research centers, universities and colleges, prevention centers, government agencies, and non-profit organizations. To locate the nearest SALIS member, you can consult the SALIS members list, located on the organization's website at [www.salis.org](http://www.salis.org). The key aim of SALIS is to promote and improve the communication, dissemination, and use of objective, accurate, and timely information about ATOD.

## What is SALIS doing?

SALIS provides a network for information professionals in the ATOD field. The organization encourages collaboration and connections among its members and serves as an advocate on matters of common interest. One of its main activities is supporting professional development programs, culminating in an annual conference on topics relevant to information management, research and documentation (Ward, Bejarano, & Geary, 2014).

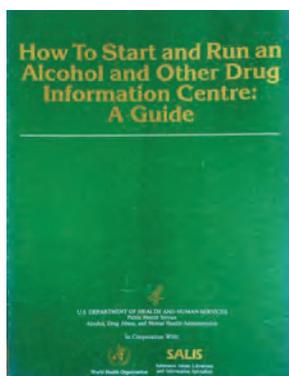


Fig. 1. An early SALIS publication

to organize and operate ATOD information centers to be used by researchers, practitioners, and librarians (Rolett, V. & Kinney, J., 1990; Rolett, V. & Kinney, J., 1995). Currently SALIS is spearheading a project that involves major preservation and digitization endeavors, the latest of which is a significant contribution to the downloadable e-book collection

A major source of information exchange, the SALIS listserv, helps daily communication. The members-only newsletter, published quarterly, also includes a list of “new books,” hand-picked by an experienced librarian, from the latest publications in the field. You can find a sample of the newsletter on the SALIS homepage.

SALIS has made substantial contributions to the entire field. For example, the organization was instrumental in developing guidelines (Fig. 1) on how

provided by the Internet Archive on ATOD topics called *The SALIS Collection: Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs*.

## What can SALIS do for NAADAC members?

SALIS has been offering information services for NAADAC members since its inception. The resources section of the SALIS website (Fig. 2) is a treasure trove of information, including:

- a serials database with more than 350 journals, newsletters, and monograph series in addictions;
- a new books section compiled from extensive web searching, publisher catalogs, book reviews, advertising, and “insider” information;
- selected web links presented in both categorical and alphabetical order;
- a curated list of 80 bibliographic, statistical, and related ATOD databases; and
- other member-developed resources.

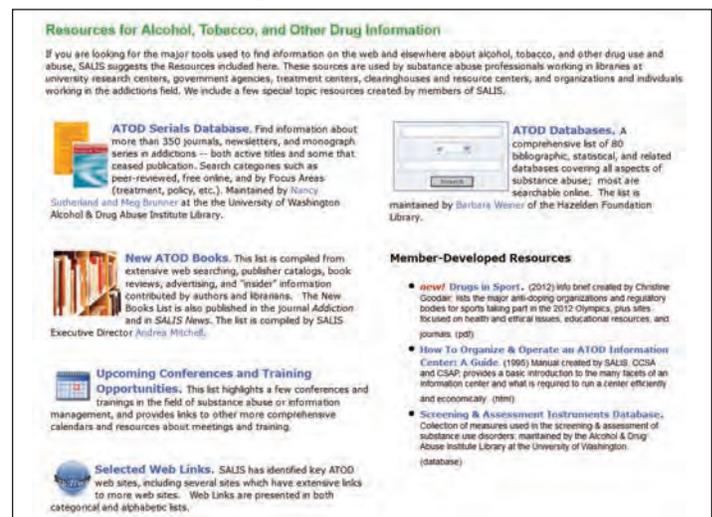


Fig. 2. ATOD resources on the SALIS website

From the SALIS page, NAADAC members can also navigate to an abundance of valuable resources on the respective websites of the member libraries and information centers. This can provide an opportunity to build virtual and face-to-face relationships with SALIS members with common interests. In addition, NAADAC members can benefit from the professional development activities of the host institutions of SALIS members.

## What more?

As a specific example of what our collective expertise can bring to NAADAC members, consider the emerging field of alternative metrics. With the changing landscape of the publishing field in the past few years, open science has considerably transformed information evaluation (Rinaldi, 2014; Weller, 2015). Alternative ways of sharing science resulted in the acceptance of unorthodox forms of scholarly communication (Giglia, 2011; Mendez et al., 2009), such as the scholarly social media platforms of ResearchGate and Academia.edu (Thelwall & Kousha, 2014a; Thelwall & Kousha, 2014b), as well as blogs and more (Bik & Goldstein, 2013).

Open access journals, previously viewed as products of predatory publishers lacking academic credentials, have developed into an accepted venue of publication. Traditional metrics are no longer the sole providers of guidance in the quality of scholarly information, and a new field has emerged called altmetrics (Bornmann, 2014; Piwowar, 2013; Priem et

al., 2012; Priem, Piwovar et al., 2012). SALIS has members who are proficient in alternative metrics and can help evaluate and interpret these resources.

## Where is your proof?

A prime example of bringing evidence-based practice (EBP) to the field of substance use and mental health disorders by libraries is an Australian project, which assisted particular members of the ATOD sector to improve quality and the transfer of research into practice, through information literacy training using the evidence-based practice process (Shelling, 2009).

SALIS members had the privilege of conducting several information literacy sessions with practitioners and addiction researchers for their affiliated institutions. These included information sessions and workshops relating to searching the scholarly literature, evaluating information, navigating academic social media, and fulfilling the brand-new requirements of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant submission process. The instructional endeavors on these topics indicate a potential role for SALIS librarians and information specialists to step up and connect practitioners with the needed information.

## What is the takeaway?

Providing a network diverse in geography and expertise, SALIS is uniquely positioned to serve as a link between research and practice. More specifically, SALIS members can help clinicians identify and translate evidence-based research into day-to-day best practice, and ATOD librarians and information specialists are well suited for this work. With this goal in mind, SALIS looks forward to a continuing relationship with NAADAC members and building a strong network with the common goal of improving the quality of behavioral healthcare. The members of SALIS are available and happy to share the benefits of their network to providers. For more information, visit [www.salis.org](http://www.salis.org).



William Bejarano, MLIS, MLER, is the Senior Information Specialist at the Rutgers Center of Alcohol Studies (CAS). He has been working in academic libraries for the past 15 years. In his current role at CAS, his work entails instruction and research support on topics in addiction and information science. His current focus is to build and maintain a critical framework of information literacy in addiction science. Related is his research on scholarly communication, including academic social media and emerging assessment and evaluation techniques. Bejarano also devotes time to the preserving, digitizing, archiving, and displaying of material related to alcohol and addiction history. He is currently serving on the executive board of the Substance Abuse Librarians and Information Specialists (SALIS).

Deann Jepson, MS, is a Program Associate at Advocates for Human Potential, Inc. (AHP). Since 1998, she has responded to the needs of the behavioral healthcare field and led many initiatives to improve the knowledge and skills of the workforce. She currently leads multiple teams in simultaneous product development on SAMHSA's Homeless and Housing Resource Network (HHRN) contract. Jepson has a distinctive portfolio derived from a diverse background working with nonprofit, corporate, media, government, and educational organizations. Prior to AHP, she served as Program Manager and Workforce Development Specialist for the Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC) National Office. Jepson received a MS in Health Communication from Boston University and a BS in Business Administration from San Jose State University. She is Chair of SALIS.



Judith H. Ward, PhD, MLIS, MA, is Director of Information Services at Rutgers Center of Alcohol Studies. Her current focus is on conceptualizing and developing a critical framework of information literacy in addiction science. Her current research interests include digital libraries, instructional technology and the evaluation of information in the electronic environment, human information behavior, and cross-cultural research methods. During her 30+ years in academia, Dr. Ward has presented and published extensively, including keynotes at international conferences, and scholarly articles on emerging topics. She serves as Field Editor of the Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, is Adjunct Faculty at the School of Communication and Information at Rutgers, and is past-chair of the Substance Abuse Librarians and Information Specialists (SALIS).

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