

A Brief History of the Interagency Council on Information Resources for Nursing

"Essential Nursing References" is just one of the services ICIRN provides to the nursing community. This list of references, published biennially in Nursing Education Perspectives, is comprehensive and up-to-date, with reliable resources that have been reviewed by nurses and librarians. ICIRN is committed to helping nurses utilize all information resources available to them. It is interesting to review the history of nursing information resources and how this organization came into being.

In 1859, Florence Nightingale wrote *Notes on Nursing: What It Is, and What It Is Not*. Published by Lippincott, this was the first book written about nursing as a science. In 1888, the *Trained Nurse and Hospital Review Journal* began publication. By 1900, when the *American Journal of Nursing* began publication in the United States, a few nursing textbooks were published and used for nursing education.

The first recorded survey of nursing libraries was completed and published by Alline in 1904. The study indicated that only 56 of the 136 existing schools reported having a separate room for a nursing library. *AJN* published an article in 1916 by Henrietta Adams that outlined how to get a nursing library started, and in the 1920s, Pfefferkorn advocated administrative responsibility for nursing library collections. The *Library Handbook for Schools of Nursing*, published by National League of Nursing Education in 1936, reflected 10 years of committee work dedicated to improving nursing libraries.

To keep this history in perspective, it is useful to note that the National Library of Medicine (NLM) was established in 1942. At the same time, the Council on Nursing Education prepared a statement on standards for nursing school libraries. In 1948, the American Journal of Nursing Company engaged a professional librarian to organize and catalog its growing collection of books,

journals, and reports, later naming this library the Sophia F. Palmer Memorial Library in honor of the first editor of *AJN*.

In 1949, the Committee on the Six National Nursing Organizations Unification of Accrediting Activities formed and began to develop criteria for evaluating the adequacy of nursing libraries. A Joint Commission on Standards, with representatives from the American Library Association, the Special Library Association, and the Medical Library Association, published objectives and standards for nursing school libraries in 1951.

The body of nursing literature was growing, and nursing libraries were becoming more common. At the Yale University School of Nursing in 1952, Leo Simmons conducted a Survey and Assessment of Research in Nursing initiated by the National Committee for the Improvement of Nursing Service. Virginia Henderson was involved in this effort, and, in 1960, founded the Interagency Council on Library Tools for Nursing to address library tools and information issues. Later, the organization Henderson founded became the Interagency Council on Library Resources for Nursing. Finally, in 1995, it was given its present name, the Interagency Council on Information Resources for Nursing, or ICIRN.

Henderson completed a major work at Yale University, *The Nursing Studies Index*

1957-1959. Interestingly, another group was forming at the Glendale Sanitarium and Hospital in California with a similar agenda. This group was responsible for developing *The Index to Nursing* (later renamed *Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature*), covering 13 publications from 1956 to 1960.

By 1961, at the request of the Interagency Council on Library Tools for Nursing, the American Journal of Nursing Company undertook a study to explore the possibility of creating an index to nursing literature. In 1963, there were 16 nursing journals in existence. In 1964, the first computerized database of biomedical literature, MEDLARS (MEDical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System), began operation. The first nursing terms were included in MeSH (MEDical Subjects Headings) in 1965.

In 1966, the *International Nursing Index*, edited by Lucille Notter and sponsored by the American Nurses Association, the NLN, and the American Journal of Nursing Company, was published. Thirty years later in 1996, more than 350 publications were indexed in the *International Nursing Index*. This is the subset of nursing terms used by the NLM.

By 1986, electronic databases began to grow and become available to nurses. At this time, Grateful Med, an interface for searching the Medline database at the NLM, was developed. Now, with multiple ways to access electronic databases via the World Wide Web, ICIRN remains an active organization with its original mission. ICIRN will continue to assess nurses' information needs and meet those needs with products and services that make locating and integrating resources into practice easier. [NLN](#)

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