



**Meet the Head of UAMS Library Education and Reference Services – Susan Steelman
& Library Research and Clinical Search Services Coordinator – Sheila Thomas**

How long have you worked at UAMS?

Susan – 20 years; Sheila – 6 years

You asked to be interviewed together. How does the overlap between your jobs work?

Since 2011, we have conducted literature searches, taught classes and experienced cancer together.

How would you describe the Library's support of UAMS research?

We are involved in grant proposals and day-to-day opportunities to push research boundaries. We do everything from directing individuals to health resources and performing literature searches, to assisting with on-site (library) computing and providing consultations in the use/selection of databases, clinical tools, and ejournal access.

What is your favorite part of the job?

We are here to help others do their work. Database searches are a high priority and we aim to complete them within two business days. This is not the case everywhere in the United States and we are pleased to be able to offer professional services with a rapid turnaround time.

Are there any challenges?

If we were to name an overarching challenge, it would be the lack of funds for databases. We want to do more and more for our patrons, but like many areas within academic medical centers, costs are increasing.

How does the Library interact with PIs?

We see Principal Investigators (PIs) as colleagues. We take our skills, talent, and services to PIs often having library personnel embedded on research teams from the beginning of a project.

You are also involved on the IACUC. How did that come about?

Sally Kasalko became the first librarian and full voting lay member of the IACUC in December of 1999. Susan has been a full member since 2005 and helps fulfill the 3Rs of animal protocols: Refine, Replacement, and Reduction. Our part includes required literature searches, references, and refinement of techniques (e.g., reducing the number of animals, reducing pain, etc.)

We work in conjunction with veterinarians, biostatisticians, scientists, and lay readers to review every abstract/protocol every month. In fact, 90% of protocol searches are done by librarians.

How many literature searches do you do on average?

A record 312 literature searches were completed during the 2014-15 fiscal year. It was a 7% increase from the search requests for the previous year.

Within the Research & Clinical Search Services section, how does an average search request work?

This free service is open to all UAMS faculty and staff under our subscription databases. We consult with a requestor to clarify the subject and to refine terminology and parameters. Then, the most pertinent databases are identified for the topic. Search strategies are created and results compiled and emailed to the requestor. Results include the search strategies used, citation data and abstracts (when available).

You both faced the challenge of cancer within a few months of each other. How did you handle that tough time?

We both had chemotherapy. Susan had surgery and I (Sheila) had radiation therapy , all between December 2010 and August 2011. We used our job skills to support our decision-making. It was a symbiotic feed-back loop of sorts between job and health. We were exposed to the process and accompanying procedures from a patient's point-of-view. Now we assist others as part of the Survivorship Core Committee.

How about after hours? Besides assisting students, clinicians, and research faculty in furthering their work, what do you do for fun? What personal skill or hobby don't most people know about you?

Susan - My main hobby when I have time is designing and creating jewelry. I also re-captured the fishing bug this summer while at the lake.

Sheila - My main hobby is riding my horse and also enjoying local parks with my two dogs.

Susan Steelman, MLIS

Professor

Head of Education & Reference Services

501-686-6737

SteelmanSusanC@uams.edu

Sheila Thomas, M.A.(LS)

Associate Professor, Librarian

Research and Clinical Search Services Coordinator

501-686-6736

slthomas2@uams.edu