

# NCNMLG: 50 YEARS OF CHALLENGE, CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

••• In an era of evanescence, fifty years is a significant milestone in the life of an organization. In 1997 NCNMLG celebrates its quinquagesimal, a year before MLA observes its centennial. A review of the organization's records: correspondence, manuals, minutes, annual reports, newsletters, directories – all preserved in the University of California, San Francisco Library's Special Collections – puts into perspective the concerns, controversies, and achievements of the entity now known as *the* Northern California and Nevada Medical Library Group. Over the last 50 years, NCNMLG has been a microcosm of the larger communities of medical librarianship in California and the United States. The membership represents the categories of health science libraries and librarians (academic, governmental, commercial, hospital and private-non-profit) which compose the profession, and thus its deliberations reveal national preoccupations, as well as local concerns.

••• NCNMLG developed in the heady period following World War II, a time when the federal government began to focus on research in the health sciences. New hospitals were built; the Army Medical Library began to redesign its internal structure and processes as a peacetime purveyor of access to medical information. But a number of years were to pass before it became the National Library of Medicine, and developed electronic bibliographic access to the world's health sciences literature.

••• The Medical Library Association had not met during World War II, but several groups of librarians, such as those in New York and Chicago, had continued to do so.<sup>1</sup> These were reported as “Regional Groups in the *Bulletin* but had no formal organizational links with MLA. Still, the idea was in the air.

••• In the meantime, medical libraries and librarians across the country, many of whom were members of the Medical Library Association, began to address the need for local organizations where they could find collegial association and explore common needs and problems.