

Boston AIDS Information Outreach Project

Project Description

The Boston AIDS Information Outreach Project is funded by the National Library of Medicine (NLM) through the New England Regional Medical Library. The Alumni Medical Library, Boston University Medical Center, in collaboration with the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC), facilitates access to biomedical information on HIV and AIDS by providing information skills training to staff from the approximately 60 Title I and City of Boston Prevention, Education, and Care funded programs.

The Alumni Medical Library serves the faculty, staff and students of the Boston University Medical Center, including the schools of Medicine, Public Health, Graduate Dentistry, and the hospitals of the Boston Medical Center. The AIDS Service of the Boston Public Health Commission provides funding and monitoring of AIDS Service Organizations/Community Based Organizations (ASO/CBOs) programs in Eastern Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire.

The Boston AIDS Information Outreach Project provides the Boston Public Health AIDS Service and ASO/CBO staff with training in accessing Internet-related and other AIDS information resources, and in searching the National Library of Medicine's databases (MEDLINE, AIDSLINE, AIDSTRIALS, AIDSDRUGS, and others) via Internet Grateful Med. The Boston AIDS Information Outreach Project also provides document delivery via Loansome Doc and Alumni Medical Library Interlibrary Loan, facilitating document delivery during the period of the project by providing the service at reduced, in-house rates.

Additionally, AIDS-focused Web pages have been developed on the Alumni Medical Library's Website, providing training materials, Web links, and other information useful to the BPHC and ASO/CBOs.

Staff

Primary project staff members are as follows:

David S. Ginn, Ph.D., Director	Principal Investigator
Kathy Schilling, MLS, Head of Information Mgmt. Education	Project Director
Joseph J. Harzbecker, Jr., MSLS, Head of Interlibrary Loan	Instructor
Mary McKeon, MSLS, Information Services Librarian	Instructor
Alumni Medical Library, Boston University Medical Center	
Richard Stevens, MPH	Co-Investigator
Director, Boston Public Health Commission AIDS Service	

An Advisory Committee was established to develop policies and procedures for grant-related library services, prepare an informational brochure and mailings, plan training sessions, and evaluate Project progress. The Advisory Committee is comprised of key staff from both the Alumni Medical Library and Boston Public Health Commission AIDS Service. Members are:

Alumni Medical Library

David Ginn
Mary McKeon
Joseph Harzbecker
Kathy Schilling

Boston Public Health Commission AIDS

Richard Stevens
Peter Goodwin
Michael Goldrosen
Linda Noel
Rhoda Johnson-Tuckett

Organization

Alumni Medical Library, Boston University Medical Center
Boston Public Health Commission AIDS Service

Date

The Boston AIDS Information Outreach Project grant runs from October 1999 - May 2001.

Objectives

The broad goal of the project is to improve access to HIV/AIDS information by providing information skills sessions to the staff of Eastern Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire AIDS Service Organizations/Community Based Organizations.

Project objectives include:

1. Agency staff will participate in sessions designed to improve their abilities to search Internet-based HIV/AIDS information resources and AIDS-related databases, specifically, the National Library of Medicine's Internet Grateful Med databases.
2. Agency staff will have improved and increased access to HIV/AIDS information, including access to training materials, information, and links to quality-filtered HIV/AIDS information resources, via the HIV/AIDS -focused Web pages, developed on the Alumni Medical Library's Website.
3. Agency staff will have improved and increased access to printed materials including book and journal literature through Loansome Doc and the Alumni Medical Library Interlibrary Loan document delivery services.

Target Audience

Extensive geographic areas, including Eastern Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire are covered by this project. This area has the highest rate of HIV/AIDS infection in the New England region. The Boston Eligible Metropolitan Area (EMA) AIDS case total ranks the region 12th in Title I Metropolitan Areas in the United States and its territories. As of April 1, 1998, there were 11,550 cases of AIDS reported to the CDC within the Boston EMA. Additionally, it is estimated that another 21,000 in the Boston EMA are HIV infected. The Boston EMA has a cumulative incidence rate of 201.6 cases per 100,000 population, and accounts for 83.6% of the total cumulative number of AIDS cases for both Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

When considering which groups to approach for the Boston AIDS Information Outreach Project, the primary criteria for the Alumni Medical Library was to achieve a broad effect in reaching organizations, health professionals, and staff who have direct responsibility for delivering AIDS services. The key to implementing this strategy and developing an instruction and service program with the potential to reach a wide range of service providers has been achieved by partnering with the Boston Public Health Commission AIDS Service.

The mission of the Boston Public Health AIDS Service is to ensure that all residents of the city of Boston and Boston EMA at risk for HIV infection and/or with HIV infection and AIDS have equal access to comprehensive health care across a continuum of care, from prevention to treatment. Public Health AIDS works to develop and implement area-wide strategies to stop the spread of HIV infection and to enhance the capacity of Boston Department of Health and Hospitals and community-based organizations to provide care for people with AIDS. Through an area-wide network of partnerships, the Boston Public Health AIDS Service works with more than 150 community-based agencies to achieve its mission. Services provided by Public Health AIDS can be broadly categorized as 1.) education, prevention, and outreach activities, 2.) community-based services, including the oversight of funds to community-based programs, and 3.) client services, counseling, testing, and support services.

Additionally, the Boston Public Health AIDS Service administers the Title I HIV Emergency Relief Grant under the CARE Act of 1990. The Boston Public Health AIDS Service at the Commission is charged with the actual implementation of Title I funds, based on the priorities and service category allocations approved by the Planning Council.

The targeted population for the Boston AIDS Information Outreach Project included staff of the 60+ Title I and City of Boston AIDS Service Organizations/CBO programs funded by the Boston Public Health AIDS Service. These service providers offer services related to housing, drug reimbursement, primary medical care, transportation, substance abuse, food/meals, case management, mental health, peer support, client advocacy, alternative therapies, dental care, day care, ob/gyn, respite care, adoption/foster care, evaluation, and other services.

Needs Assessment

By providing the Boston Public Health AIDS Service and other agencies with improved access to HIV/AIDS-related information, the Boston AIDS Information Outreach Project has the potential for significant impact on the region's ability to identify, retrieve, evaluate, and use information in support of their programs.

In 1998, the Boston Public Health AIDS Service developed a computer needs assessment survey that sought to determine the system upgrade needs of Care Act and City of Boston funded HIV/AIDS programs. Based on the results of this survey and the subsequent funding for system upgrades, it is known that all of the organizations have the equipment, software, and connectivity necessary for access to the Internet. In addition to providing funding for system upgrades (for 31 agencies to obtain/upgrade hardware, software, licensing, and/or consulting), support provided by Title I funds included the requirement that all providers must be able to access the Internet and learn to use the new technology.

The client-based organizations targeted for participation in the project provide a wide range of services to the HIV/AIDS and general community. Many of the Directors/CEO's of these organizations recognize that the information their clients need is also significant and wide-ranging. This was demonstrated in comments in their letters of intent/support for this project.

Intervention

The Alumni Medical Library of the Boston University Medical Center, in collaboration with the Boston Public Health AIDS Service, has developed and implemented a program of HIV/AIDS information skills training, supplemented by a document delivery component and an AIDS information Web page, sponsored by the Alumni Medical Library.

The Project Coordinator and instructors developed training materials in the first three months of the project period. Materials are supplemented, when possible and appropriate, by those provided by the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM) New England Region or the National Library of Medicine.

A cover letter and flyer from the Principal and Co-Investigator describing the workshops and other resources and services provided through the project were mailed to targeted programs and select staff in the second month of the project, and intermittently thereafter. Additionally, the Co-Investigator has further publicized and encouraged participation by area agencies by announcing the program at the monthly Planning Council meeting, which is attended by many of the Title I and City of Boston Executive Directors.

HIV/AIDS Information Skills Training Sessions

The primary components of the project include information skills training in searching the Internet and NLM databases for relevant HIV/AIDS-related information. Training takes a broader approach than focusing on a single or limited number of sources, focusing instead on recognizing and communicating that effective information identification, retrieval, evaluation, and use require an understanding of the context of the information sources and the resources.

It is estimated that the HIV/AIDS-focused staff of the Boston Public Health AIDS Service and affiliated organizations comprise a total of 1,000. Approximately 200 of these individuals were targeted to attend one or both of the AIDS information skills training sessions on the Internet and NLM databases provided as part of the Boston AIDS Information Outreach Project. Thirty five of the staff of the Boston Public Health AIDS Service were also targeted to attend training sessions. A total of 22 sessions have been held to date. To achieve maximum flexibility, the sessions have been offered in half-day sessions focusing on either NLM databases or Internet resources, as well as some full-day sessions that provide training on both.

The first workshop, Introduction to Database Searching: MEDLINE & AIDS-Related Databases, focuses on teaching agency staff to locate HIV and AIDS information in the medical literature using bibliographic databases, including MEDLINE, AIDSLINE, AIDS DRUGS, and AIDSTRIALS on Internet Grateful Med. Included are an overview of the literature searching process, using MeSH, and learning to create a researchable question and effective search strategies. In-class exercises and practice time are included.

The second workshop, Introduction to Finding and Evaluating HIV/AIDS Resources on the World Wide Web is designed to familiarize participants with a variety of HIV and AIDS resources on the World Wide Web. This workshop focuses on understanding the organization and structure of WWW sites, and using the WWW as a tool for patient care, professional development, health care practice, and research. A variety of search engines are examined, compared and demonstrated. The basic principles of search engine functions and utilities are discussed. Participants have the opportunity to learn to manipulate Web search tools to their maximum potential, and evaluate search results more quickly and accurately. In-class exercises and practice time are included.

All of the workshops are three hours long, and take place in the Alumni Medical Library Computing Laboratory Classroom, a computing classroom with 20 student workstations and one teacher workstation, complete with full Internet capabilities, and a SmartBoard projection system.

Training and Other Materials Developed

Workshop I:

Introduction to Database Searching: MEDLINE & AIDS-Related Databases

- * PowerPoint slide show with 71 slides
- * Four in-class, hands-on exercises
- * MeSH Fact Sheet
- * MEDLINE Fact Sheet
- * Boolean Logic Fact Sheet
- * Search Terminology Glossary

Workshop II:

Introduction to Finding and Evaluating HIV/AIDS Resources on the World Wide Web

- * PowerPoint slide show with 72 slides
- * Four in-class, hands-on exercises
- * Search Engines Fact Sheet
- * Medical Searching Tools Fact Sheet

These materials have been modified as-needed for differing audiences. In July 2000, for example, a group of Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals attended both training sessions during a full-day workshop. All class materials and slide shows were modified for this group.

Website

The Alumni Medical Library has extensive experience in Website development and the use of the Web to supplement and support its informational skills educational programs. As part of the Boston AIDS Information Outreach Project, the Library developed an HIV/AIDS site on the Web at <http://med-libwww.bu.edu/library/baiop.html>

The HIV/AIDS site provides a variety of information resources, training materials, and links to relevant government, association, public, and commercially available information resources on HIV/AIDS. The Website also provides a resource for area agencies which helps to reinforce the workshop training, as well as providing an option for a central jumpstation to quality-filtered,

needed information. The Website has been developed, implemented, and maintained by the Project Director, who is currently responsible for the Library's Website.

The Website has been heavily utilized to date, reflecting agency staff members' needs and desires to access relevant HIV/AIDS information. Usage statistics indicate that the site has been utilized over 1500 times to date:

Website Usage Statistics

2 nd quarter	597 uses
3 rd quarter	672 uses
4 th quarter	493 uses

Evaluation

The Project seeks to provide staff of the ASO/CBOs with better information support for their individual and group activities, and to improve their electronic database access, information retrieval skills, and document acquisition. The Project also seeks to improve the likelihood that organizations can more effectively meet their health care information needs to support decision-making, and that staff will be better able to support their information needs for the range of services they offer.

A combination of evaluation methods attempt to gauge the success of the Project:

- 1.) Data identifying the participants/organizations attending the sessions has been gathered. The sessions target those most directly responsible for identifying, retrieving, providing and using information.

Two additional training sessions have been added to the schedule for the upcoming 5th quarter to accommodate staff from agencies that the Boston Public Health AIDS Service have determined to be under-served.

Two additional training sessions targeted specifically for health consumers have also been added to the 5th quarter schedule.

- 2.) Usage statistics are kept by the Alumni Medical Library to determine the number of and nature of accesses to the HIV/AIDS Information Website.
- 3.) Evaluation methods have been used to assess satisfaction with the training sessions.
- 4.) The Advisory Committee also recommends that follow-up evaluations, and feedback regarding participants' use of library resources and services should be distributed some time after the training portion of the grant program is completed. An attempt will also be made to determine whether participants'/organizations' abilities to find and evaluate information have been positively impacted. Surveys provide some useful data in assessing the impact of the project on the information seeking/retrieval/usage process, but may need to be supplemented through focus groups or the critical incident technique.

Evaluation Results to Date

Compilation of Evaluations for MEDLINE & Database Searching Classes

1. Please provide feedback regarding the quality and effectiveness of the workshop:

	<u>Not Effective or Inadequate</u>			<u>Very Effective or Excellent</u>			
a. Were the slide show and course materials useful learning aids?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Number of responses to each option and percentage ranking:						
			1	4	13	28	26
			1.4%	5.6%	18%	39%	36%
b. Did the instructor cover the material in a clear, concise way?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Number of responses to each option and percentage ranking:						
			1	6	6	33	27
			1.4%	8.2%	8.2%	45.2%	37%
c. Did the workshop cover the areas/issues that you wanted to learn about today?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Number of responses to each option and percentage ranking:						
	2	1	2	3	11	28	26
	2.7%	1.4%	2.7%	4.1%	15.1%	38.3%	35.6%
d. How effective was this workshop in helping you improve your skills & knowledge?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Number of responses to each option and percentage ranking:						
		2	2	3	11	21	32
		2.8%	2.8%	4.2%	15.5%	29.6%	45.1%
e. Overall, how would you rate the instructor?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Number of responses to each option and percentage ranking:						
				4	6	24	38
				5.6%	8.3%	33.3%	52.8%
f. Overall, how would you rate this workshop?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Number of responses to each option and percentage ranking:						
		1		4	9	29	29
		1.4%		5.6%	12.5%	40.3%	40.3%

Compilation of Evaluations for Internet Classes

1. Please provide feedback regarding the quality and effectiveness of the workshop:

	<u>Not Effective or Inadequate</u>			<u>Very Effective or Excellent</u>			
a. Were the slide show and course materials useful learning aids?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Number of responses to each option and percentage ranking:						
			1	4	11	24	25
			1.5%	6.1%	17%	37%	38.5%
b. Did the instructor cover the material in a clear, concise way?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Number of responses to each option and percentage ranking:						
				4	9	25	29
				5.9%	13.4%	37.3%	43.4%

c. Did the workshop cover the areas/issues that you wanted to learn about today?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Number of responses to each option and percentage ranking:						
				4	9	29	25
				5.9%	13.4%	43.4%	37.3%
d. How effective was this workshop in helping you improve your skills & knowledge?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Number of responses to each option and percentage ranking:						
			1	3	8	29	26
			1.5%	4.5%	12%	43%	39%
e. Overall, how would you rate the instructor?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Number of responses to each option and percentage ranking:						
				1	7	24	33
				1.5%	11%	37%	51%
f. Overall, how would you rate this workshop?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Number of responses to each option and percentage ranking:						
			1	2	11	24	28
			1.5%	3%	16.6%	36.4%	42.4%

Poster Sessions/Exhibits/Presentations/Publications

The Alumni Medical Library is planning to submit this project for inclusion in the American Public Health Association's Annual Meeting in fall 2001. Plans also include reporting on this project at the Annual Meeting of the Medical Library Association in spring 2002.

Partnerships

The Boston AIDS Information Outreach Project is a combined effort of the Alumni Medical Library, Boston University Medical Center, in collaboration with the Boston Public Health AIDS Service. This collaboration is an important aspect of the Boston AIDS Information Outreach Project, because the Boston Public Health AIDS Service is the key HIV/AIDS funding and oversight organization in Eastern Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire, making this a project with potential for significant impact.

Marketing

Publicity and marketing to the targeted organizations during the project period have been provided through mailings to announce the workshops and overall program, and through announcements at Title I and City of Boston funded program meetings, such as the Planning Council. Publicity and reporting of the results of the program will be provided at the end of the project period. Descriptive information, statistical data on attendees, and the results of the evaluations conducted throughout the project period have been collected, and will be communicated through the Library's electronic newsletter and at national conferences.

The Advisory Committee and Boston Public Health AIDS Service have been instrumental in marketing this project. Based on recommendations of Boston Public Health AIDS Service advisors, the informational letter and three copies of the brochure were mailed to directors of over 60 Title I and City of Boston Prevention, Education, and Care funded programs. The directors were asked to distribute the brochures to agency staff best served by access to

information resources and training. The letter and brochure have been periodically updated and re-mailed to select agencies or staff based on recommendations of the advisory committee. In addition, brochures have been distributed at meetings and events at which targeted agency representatives have been in attendance.

The Advisory Committee also continues to evaluate Project progress, and to review workshop curriculum and the Website, recommending modifications as necessary.

Administrative Issues

As indicated above, the Boston AIDS Information Outreach Project Advisory Committee and Boston Public Health AIDS Service have been instrumental in implementing this project, developing policies and procedures for grant-related library services, preparing an informational brochure and mailings, planning training sessions, and evaluating Project progress.

The Advisory Committee met twice in the first quarter, and once in the fourth quarter to establish and finalize mechanisms for ASO/CBO staff to access library collections, reference staff, document delivery services, and the Project Website.

Challenges Faced

A variety of challenges were faced during the implementation of this project:

- * Scheduling time for more than twenty half- and full-day workshops in the computing classroom was difficult. Contention for the facility left a limited number of convenient vacancies during which to schedule training.
- * Scheduling participants was also occasionally challenging. Although most sessions were conducted for one half-day, several full-day workshops were added for those who could not take off two half-days, or for those who were driving long distances or from New Hampshire.
- * Training participants who possess variety of skill levels and interests is also an ongoing challenge. Within one session, there may be one participant who has never used a mouse, one participant who is quite proficient at using a computer, another who does not speak English as a first language, etc. Two instructors have been present at each training session to provide one-on-one assistance and to circulate around the room answering questions and troubleshooting problems.
- * Two of the training sessions in July were held for Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. All workshop slide shows and materials were modified for this group. Two interpreters, as well as two librarian-instructors, were present at both sessions.
- * Although long-term evaluation of the Project is planned, it remains difficult to gather long-term feedback from workshop participants.

Were Project Objectives Met

To date, all project objectives have been met. Nearly 200 individual from 45 HIV/AIDS agencies have been trained to search MEDLINE and AIDS-related databases, and to find, use, and evaluate Internet resources more effectively and efficiently. Use of the Website indicates that it is a popular resource, providing quality-filtered links to Web sites and HIV/AIDS

resources. At the end of the grant period, a more detailed analysis of Project success will be undertaken.

Sustainability

After the period of the grant has ended, the Project Website will be merged into the Library's general HIV/AIDS Website, which is periodically updated and modified for use by all primary clientele, including those who have participated in the Boston AIDS Information Outreach Project workshops.

Document delivery has not been utilized to date, and is not expected to continue beyond the period of the grant.

Teaching activities will be sustained if additional funding is available. The Alumni Medical Library is currently seeking other funding opportunities, including a proposal for consumer access to health information as part of the University of Massachusetts Regional Medical Library proposal for 2001 - 2006.

Library memberships are also available to agencies that wish to be eligible for continuation of services and resources.

Anecdotes or Other Observations

- * Several agency staff who attended workshops have since requested that the Project include Spanish-language training sessions.
- * Participants' workshop evaluation results indicate that participants value hands-on computing practice time, and appreciated having independent exercises built-into the training sessions.
- * Class participants' feedback also indicates that most class participants were not formerly familiar with MEDLINE, AIDSLINE, and other biomedical databases. Many participants commented on their workshop evaluation sheets that they appreciated having the opportunity to learn about MEDLINE and other bibliographic resources for health care professionals.