

Public Health Outreach Project Description

Title: Outreach Efforts to the Public Health Office of Northwest District of Missouri (1999-2000)
Staff: Peggy Mullaly-Quijas, Ph.D.
Organization: University of Missouri - Kansas City Health Sciences Library
Date: November 28, 2000

Objectives:

(from letter of agreement with the NN/LM-MR Office)

The UMKC library will advertise their availability and services to all 14 city, county and state public health office in the Northwest District of Missouri and will attempt to personally visit each office to assess their needs. After the assessment, assistance and training will be provided in a myriad of information access aspects, including: Internet connectivity; Web searching; database access and searching interfaces, including IGM and PubMed; document delivery options such as Loansome Doc and Ariel, if applicable; reference services via e-mail; and networking among the offices via e-mail.

Target Audience:

The health care professionals working in the fourteen city, county and state public health office in the Northwest District of Missouri.

Needs assessment (methodology and results):

We conducted an information audit on 16 public health professionals administrators in Northwest Missouri using a survey created and maintained entirely with a web survey development tool. Answers were collected over the phone. We were happy - and surprised - to find that almost all the respondents had Internet access, but many needed to share a PC with others. Most had experience with many different information resources, and many indicated needing information from a large variety of resources. This ranged from information on grants and other external funding to health statistics and directory information. However, not all had positive searching experiences with all the resources used. Most felt searching the web and external databases were very hard to do.

A web site was developed that listed resources needed by public health professionals as ascertained in the survey. See: <http://www.umkc.edu/lib/hsl/publheal.html>

In addition to the telephone survey, three targeted professionals were interviewed together at a luncheon meeting.

Several general observations were made, which included:

- _ Hard to know what to ask when you do not know what is available.
- _ PHP very busy and diverse.

- Requesting journal articles may not be the biggest need of this group. What was expressed that PHPs really needed was information right away, and best, get to see it on the computer screen.
- Information needed is beyond what MDs or RNs need.
 - Comments on information services that would be needed or used included:
 - Consumer Health information would be appreciated, especially from authoritative sites.
 - Information on medications, especially latest used in common therapies, would be needed.
 - Information dealing with terrorism with biologicals, would be used, especially symptoms and signs of anthrax and botulism, etc.
 - Preventative care information would also be desired.
 - Information found in Medline, MedlinePlus, Dirline and a web site created especially for PHPs all seemed relevant.

Finally, a presentation at meeting where all the targeted health professionals would be given on this effort, but attendance was quite poor.

Intervention:

Three different training sessions were done, reaching about 55 public health professionals

Training and other materials developed:

Used NLM produced materials. An in-house brochure was also produced.

Website (developed as part of project and how maintained):

<http://www.umkc.edu/lib/hsl/publheal.html> (maintained as part of the library's website)

Evaluation (methodology and results):

A large aspect of the evaluation was increased use of the Health Sciences Library by public health professional in the northwest portion of the state. More requests from this group has been recorded.

Poster Sessions/Exhibits/Presentations/Publications:

A poster session was given at MLA 2000 was given highlighting the use of the telephone survey using a web-based survey tool

Partnerships:

none

Marketing:

none, outside usual reports given at UMKC

Administrative issues:

This project was well supported by UMKC as outreach to the community is a large goal of the University.

Challenges Faced:

Time. The people we were hoping to reach did not have any time to discuss information needs, much less have the time for training.

Were Project Objectives Met?

No, but some positives, including re-establishing ties with the Kansas City Public Health Department was realized. The final report is due to the NN/LM office in December 2000.

Sustainability:

Yes, efforts to serve these health care professionals will continue at UMKC's Health Sciences Library.

Anecdotes or Other Observations:

As the state public health department is taking a leadership role in information technology in public health activity, there is hope that more county and city public health professionals will see the importance of information in their practices.