

Public Health Outreach Project Description

Title: Collaborative Development of Public Health Informatics Curriculum and Web Resources for Public Health Faculty, Students, and Practitioners in Texas

Staff: Marty Adamson, UT Southwestern Medical Center Library, Principal Investigator

Organization: Steering Committee, Informatics Instructors, and Web Developers from:

- Texas A & M University Medical Sciences Library (TAMU MSL)
- University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth Gibson D Lewis Health Science Library (UNTHSCFW)
- University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio Library (UTHSCSA)
- University of Texas at Houston School of Public Health Library (UT-H SPH)
- University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas Library (UT Southwestern)

Date: October 1, 1998 - September 30, 2000

Objectives:

Establish and develop relationships with academic public health faculty and students. Better understand the information needs of this audience. Promote public health informatics education in the academic public health setting by generating discussion around a model public health informatics curriculum and supporting web site. Explore connections between academic public health faculty, students, and local practitioner community in order to identify opportunities for further outreach.

Target Audience:

The target population was public health faculty, students, and practitioners in counties where participating institutions are located and wherever participating institutions conduct outreach. The targeted counties contain 42% of the total population of the state of Texas.

Needs assessment (methodology and results):

Project participants conducted 23 interviews with public health professionals during the course of the contract. Using semi-structured interview methodology, interviewers drew from a set of predefined interview questions. Results were reported to the UT Southwestern team for analysis. Needs assessment results were fed back to the curriculum and web site teams in an iterative development cycle.

Intervention:

Outreach Contacts

Public Health Faculty: 112

Public Health Students: 444

Public Health Practitioners: 884

Academic Medical Librarians and Staff: 188

Outreach Impact

Individuals reached in personal interactions: 1,729

Educational consultations and classes: 272

Hours of consultation, instruction, programming delivered: 285

Structured interviews conducted: 23

Videoconference attendees: 290

Web site hits: 2,374

Project evaluations: 81

Training and other materials developed:

- videoconference for staff in participating libraries
- model curriculum and related web resources, archived on web site
- brochure promoting public health informatics
- poster promoting public health informatics

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

The work of the project is documented and archived at: www.swmed.edu/library/public_health/main.html. Each participating library now maintains public health resource links tailored to their customers on their own library web site.

Evaluation (methodology)

A variety of evaluation methods and tools were used during the course of the project.

- The videoconference was evaluated by attendees using a standard Medical Library Association Continuing Education evaluation form.
- Needs assessment took the form of semi-structured interviews conducted throughout the course of the project
- Evaluation of the usefulness of the model curriculum and web site to the target audience took the form of in-person feedback and an evaluation survey completed at the end of demonstrations.
- Project impact was evaluated through quarterly reports from participating libraries. These reports detailed in-person and virtual contacts. The contacts were categorized and stored in a spreadsheet, which serves as the source of the information shown below.
- On August 4, 2000, project participants gathered at UT Southwestern for a wrap-up meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to share and synthesize what had been learned during the project and to discuss future plans.

Evaluation (structured interviews):

Twenty-three members of the target audience were interviewed during the course of the project. Interview questions were drawn from a predefined set, which was distributed to all library staff participants. Interviewers took notes during interviews and formalized their notes into interview reports that were forwarded to the principal investigator. Input from interviews was shared with participants and informed the subsequent evolution of the project. Of the 23 interviews conducted, 19 were with faculty, two with graduate students, and two with practitioners.

Using the interview reports as the source document, comments made by interviewees were coded as to interests, concerns, most useful journals, association memberships, and word frequency. The coding scheme selected to describe "interests" was the subject categorization used to organize the American Public Health Association (APHA) web site's useful public health links. The results of the analysis of structured interviews are presented in the final report and were presented at the SCC/MLA conference in October 2000.

Poster Sessions/Exhibits/Presentations/Publications:

Marty Adamson, "Project Report: Collaborative Development of Public Health Informatics Curriculum and Web Resources for Public Health Faculty, Staff, and Practitioners in Texas", contributed paper, 27th Annual Meeting of South Central Chapter, Medical Library Association, October 2000.

Stephanie Normann, Jeff Meyer, "Establishing a successful health sciences library partnership with community based organizations to provide internet access to health information," contributed paper, 8th International Congress on Medical Librarianship, July 2000.

Martha Portree, Stephanie Normann, "Public health libraries role in distance education," contributed paper, Public Health Informatics conference, August 2000.

Mary Snyder PhD, Nancy Gotcher, Mitch Walters, "A Model Curriculum for Public Health Informatics," poster session at "Partners in the Texas Public Health Community: Improving Access to Public Health Information", February 28, 2000.

Gale Hannigan, Chris Foster, "Accessing Reliable Health Information", Health Education Rural Outreach (Texas Agricultural Extension Service), v.3, no.11, January 2000.

Mitch Walters, Nancy Gotcher, "Partners in Public Health Information Access," contributed paper at 26th Annual Meeting of South Central Chapter, Medical Library Association, October 1999.

Partnerships:

This project was accomplished through a partnership of five academic medical libraries serving public health programs in the state of Texas. The objectives of the project related to establishing partnerships between academic medical libraries and academic public health faculty for the purpose of promoting public health informatics.

Marketing:

- Maintained up-to-date information on project at "Partners" web site at NLM.
- Maintained up-to-date project web site throughout project
- Distributed project fact sheets at each interview or encounter with public health faculty
- Displayed project poster at the five targeted public health schools
- Distributed project brochure at consultations and classes

Administrative issues:

No administrative issues were encountered. The steering committee, made up of the directors of the five participating libraries, provided the leadership needed to make the project a success.

Challenges Faced:

The widespread availability of electronic communications including videoconferencing, email, and shared web development environments helped minimize the challenges inherent in collaboration across a state the size of Texas.

Were Project Objectives Met?

Yes, met and exceeded.

Sustainability:

All participating libraries continue to be more active in public health informatics education than they were before the project began.

Anecdotes or Other Observations:

An underlying assumption of the project was that public health faculty and students can assist academic medical librarians in making outreach contacts with the public health practitioner community. This proved to be the case. Public health faculty often work with and advise local public health agencies. Public health faculty also maintain relationships after graduation with their students entering the public health field. Public health students are often concurrently

employed in public health agencies and carry their classroom informatics education back to their work settings. These relationships lead to teachable moments in which academic medical librarians can deliver public health informatics education in a variety of venues.

Another underlying assumption was that in involving librarians from five academic medical libraries, the project would benefit from the synergy arising from different settings and experiences within a single statewide context. This also proved to be the case. Experienced public health librarians were extremely generous with their knowledge. Curriculum ideas flowed freely. Web development techniques were shared. A positive form of competitiveness drove all participants to maintain focus on the project's objectives throughout the two-year period.