

# Public Health Outreach Project Description

Title: Public Health Information Access Project

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Organization: School of Library and Information Studies, Texas Woman's University

Date: 1999-2001

## Objectives:

1) To assess current state of information access for public health professionals in Dallas, Denton, and Tarrant Counties region of north Texas. 2) To train public health professionals in region to use electronic information resources. 3) To increase awareness of Internet connectivity and support. 4) To facilitate access to library resources.

## Target Audience:

Public health professionals in Dallas, Denton, and Tarrant Counties region of north Texas.

## Needs assessment (methodology and results):

A baseline data survey was mailed to public health professionals at local public health departments in the tri-county region. A total of 156 completed surveys were returned. Of responders, 110 were female and 46 male. The majority were white (n=79), followed by African American (n=40), Hispanic (n=24), Asian (n=7), and other (n=6). As far as educational achievement, 33 had completed high school, 83 held an undergraduate degree, 37 a graduate degree, 2 a PhD, and 1 an MD. Regarding computer use, 143 responders currently use a computer for personal or job-related purposes and 12 do not (1 non-responder). 101 have access to a computer at their desks, 55 do not. Of the 55 who do not have access to a computer at their desks, 37 do not have access to a computer elsewhere in the office. Concerning Internet access, 35 responders have Internet access at their desks while 120 do not (1 non-responder). Of the 120 who do not have Internet access at their desks, 98 do not have access elsewhere in the office. 108 responders stated that they know how to access the Internet while 44 stated that they do not (4 non-responders). Concerning Internet access frequency, 49 responders stated that they never access the Internet, 37 1-5 times per day, 41 1-5 times per week, 20 on a monthly basis, and 3 annually (6 non-responders). Regarding MEDLINE use, 144 responders stated that they never use MEDLINE or other NLM databases. Frequency of MEDLINE use varied among the other 12 responders with 6 stating that they used MEDLINE more than once per day. Only 4 responders used the ASTHO Web page, 3 used the NACCHO Web page, 2 responders stated using NLM's Web page, and 1 CDC's Web page. 25 responders stated using CDC Wonder with varying frequency; 131 do not use CDC Wonder.

**Intervention:**

A series of resource demonstration and training sessions are being held for public health professionals in the region. Sessions highlight National Library of Medicine databases and relevant Web sites. As of October 1, 2000, 18 sessions had been conducted with a total of 68 participants. Sessions will continue throughout the duration of the project (March 31, 2001).

**Training and other materials developed:**

1 page handout that is distributed during training sessions

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

[http://venus.twu.edu/~l\\_huber/home.htm](http://venus.twu.edu/~l_huber/home.htm): project Web page; maintained by project staff

**Evaluation (methodology and results):**

Each training session was evaluated at the conclusion of the session. An evaluation form was designed and used for the purpose. Evaluation is ongoing.

In addition, anecdotal responses have been encouraged. These have been very positive.

**Poster Sessions/Exhibits/Presentations/Publications:**

Huber, JT, Ward SE. Facilitating information access for public health professionals in north Texas: The Public Health Information Outreach Project. Texas Library Journal, in press.

Huber, JT. Facilitating information access for public health professionals in north Texas: The Public Health Information Access Project at Texas Woman's University. South Central Chapter/Medical Library Association Annual Meeting, El Paso, TX, October 1-5, 2000.

Huber, JT, Ward SE. Providing traineeship experience through multidisciplinary collaboration. 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Medical Library Association/Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Health Libraries Association, Vancouver, BC, Canada, May 5-11, 2000.

**Partnerships:**

The School of Library and Information Studies serves as the primary unit of responsibility for the project. The Department of Health Studies, College of Health Sciences, and Texas Woman's University Libraries are collaborating partners.

**Marketing:**

We mailed fliers describing the project to public health professionals in the tri-county region. We also called local public health agencies to discuss the project and promote resource demonstration and training sessions.

**Administrative issues:**

The project is overseen by staff in the School of Library and Information Studies. However, the Department of Health Studies is an active collaborator. This has proven very advantageous as Health Studies faculty network regularly with public health professionals in the region.

**Challenges Faced:**

The extreme summer heat crippled the project for approximately 4 months.

**Were Project Objectives Met?**

The project does not conclude until March 31, 2001. But, we believe we are on target with meeting the project objectives.

**Sustainability:**

No plans were made for sustainability. We hope project participants will continue to use electronic information resources.

**Anecdotes or Other Observations:**

At the onset of the project, there was a definite perception that public health administrators questioned the utility of the Internet and electronic information resources. This appears to be changing. More and more public health agencies in the area are becoming Internet-connected.