

# Public Health Outreach Project Description

Title: Information Access for Public Health Professionals: Miner Library Electronic Circuit Librarian Program

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Date: 1999-2001

## Objectives:

- 1) To gain a clear understanding of the information tools valuable to public health professionals and facilitate improved access to and use of these resources in the Greater Rochester Area.
- 2) To train appropriate county health department staff to make local public health information available to other agencies and consumers on the World Wide Web.

## Target Audience:

Staff of county health departments in the Greater Rochester Area (Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Wayne, and Wyoming Counties).

## Needs assessment (methodology and results):

The project coordinator met with a liaison and often more administrative staff from each county health department to discuss information needs and to discuss a draft of a survey to be distributed to health department staff. The project coordinator revised the survey, and county health liaisons distributed it either to their whole county health department or to selected staff.

The survey assessed staff members' experience with the World Wide Web and work-related Web resources, problems they experienced when using the Web for work information, what kind of Internet related training they would like, their current use of library services, and what library services they would like to use.

Results of the survey showed that 78% percent of the respondents have used the Web, and that 81% of Web users have searched for work-related information. 85% percent of the Web users had taught themselves how to use the Web. 89% of the respondents said they would use training about using the Web for work-related information. 63% wanted training in Internet basics, 74% wanted training on using Internet search engines, 72% on medical databases, and 68% on finding articles online. 75% wanted training on Web resources for specific topics in their job areas, such as nursing information, statistics, or environmental health. A majority of the respondents had not used any library services through the Web in the last year, but responded that a variety of proposed library services would be somewhat useful or very useful.

## Intervention:

From March to October 2000, onsite hands-on training or training in computer labs near each health department was held for five of the seven health

departments (One health department dropped out of the project and further training sessions are still being planned for the other health department.)

In total, twelve 3-hour workshops were held on Internet Basics (World Wide Web overview, Web browser basics, search engine basics, search directories, electronic discussion groups, evaluating Web resources, using Miner Library's Web pages and services for public health staff). A total of 86 county health staff participated.

A total of eight 3-hour Medline workshops (Internet Grateful Med & PubMed, Loansome Doc) were held for 38 county health staff.

In addition, three staff members from two county health departments attended Miner Library's training sessions about making Web pages. Further training sessions are being planned for Monroe County and Livingston County health departments.

Miner Library began providing these services through the Web and by phone:

- Reference service
- Interlibrary Loan, both through Loansome Doc and through online ILL request forms
- Database searches
- Online access to *JAMA* and *MCN: American Journal of Maternal Child Nursing* through Ovid

### **Training and other materials developed:**

PowerPoint slides:

- Internet Basics (also available on the Web at <http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/miner/nnlm/Internet/Basics4/>)
- Medline & Other Databases

Online tutorials:

- Netscape Navigator Walkthrough for PCs (<http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/miner/nnlm/Internet/netscapewksheet.html>)
- Internet Explorer Explorer Walkthrough for PCs (<http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/miner/nnlm/Internet/Explorerwksheet.html>)

Other guides:

- Internet Grateful Med Exercise
- PubMed Exercise
- Loansome Doc

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

Edward G. Miner Library Services for Public Health Professionals: Electronic Circuit Librarian Program (<http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/Miner/nnlm/>)

This site includes Web-based training materials, library services, such as Interlibrary Loan, reference question and search request forms, access to two online journals (*JAMA* and *MCN: the American Journal of Maternal Child Nursing*) and directory of public health Web resources. Miner Library is maintaining the Web site for the duration of the grant.

Health Action Web page for Monroe County Health Department (<http://www.healthaction.org/>). Miner Library is maintaining it for the duration of the grant.

**Evaluation (methodology and results):**

Workshop participants completed evaluation forms for each workshop (full evaluation forms are attached.) Generally, 79% of the responders found the Internet Basics Workshop very useful, and 74% found the Medline Workshop very useful.

We plan to redistribute the original survey to county health departments in January to compare their current level of experience with the Web, use of work-related Web resources, needs for further training, satisfaction with library services, and needs for future library services with their responses last year.

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

Articles about the project in the Spring 2000 issue of Miner Library's Newsletter, *The Source*. As the project is completed, we will prepare other articles and presentations.

**Partnerships:**

Each county health department appointed a liaison person to work with the project coordinator. Monroe County Health Department staff worked with the Miner Library Web Services staff to develop the Health Action Web page.

**Marketing:**

Personal contacts are made with each county health department by phone, email, and visits. News items and updates are distributed by email. The Web page might also be considered a marketing tool.

**Administrative issues:**

We originally intended to write legally binding letters of agreement for providing library services for each county. Since we are not yet requiring payment for these services, we provided an outline of what services we would provide for each county instead.

**Challenges Faced:**

- Most work on the project started six months after the planned start date, because the original project coordinator left. Since the project cannot be extended beyond July 2001, the project has a shorter time span than originally expected.
- Most county health departments were not equipped for onsite training. Two health departments were able to call on their county systems departments to set up temporary equipment for training. We were able to find training places nearby for other counties, although in one case it was necessary to pay a fairly large fee to rent a training facility. The project budget did not include money for facility rental.
- Generally, county health department liaisons were very cooperative. High staff turnover at several counties slowed down the process, as did the fact that most county health staff are very busy with other priorities.

**Were Project Objectives Met?**

The project is still active. We have met some objectives, but not all, at this point. We've evaluated information needs, completed most of the training, provided Web pages and Web services. We would like to see use of library services increase and plan to spend more time on "advertising" in coming months.

**Sustainability:**

We will work on plans for continuing the successful elements of the project and for finding funding for these services.

**Anecdotes or Other Observations:**

County health staff are generally very enthusiastic workshop participants. Their information requests have been wide ranging and quite different from the usual questions received at an academic medical library reference desk. It has been a pleasure to work with them.