

Chapter 47

Exploring Opportunities in Health Science Information Instructional Outreach: A Case Study Highlighting One Academic Library's Experience

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ABSTRACT

The scope of library service in the health sciences has changed dramatically in recent years. Beyond the typical library instruction service which has commonly been viewed as requiem for academic classroom teaching, the advent of distance education in the health sciences and cohorts at hospitals has called for academic health science librarians to explore new opportunities in health science instruction outreach and delivery of instructional service in a multitude of creative ways. This chapter will report on an actual case study of a health science librarian at an academic institution who targeted a specific group of users, designing and offering library instruction to remote students in regional hospitals and online distance education classes. The case study will present the challenges and successes of a new health sciences librarian performing outreach through various marketing and relationship building efforts in an academic library that services health science students in cohorts at six regional hospitals as well as nationally online in a distance education program.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

In January 2016, the Carl S. Swisher Library at Jacksonville University hired an Emerging Technologies and Health Sciences Librarian, a newly created position, to facilitate a seamless user experience for the university's 1,600 plus health science students when using the library's resources both on campus and remotely. The university provides not only on the ground classes to health science students, but additionally in collaboration with Bisk an online management company that since 1995, has helped universities

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-6915-2.ch047

advance their commitment to education through the development of online degree and certificate programs. Bisk/University Alliance is a company that partners with universities to help finance, develop and support the university's online programs. Distance Learning students in areas across the United States were serviced. Additionally, Jacksonville University has cohorts of health science classes at six regional hospitals. Hospitals serviced included: Orange Park Medical Center, Saint Vincent's Southside Hospital, Baptist Downtown Hospital, The Mayo Clinic of Jacksonville, the Baptist Beaches Hospital, and Baptist South Hospital. Students in fields including Nursing, Medical Informatics, Mental Health Counseling, Orthodontics, Kinesiology, and other such health science fields were all being serviced by the library.

All of these health science students being serviced were in need of intense library instruction in not only how to access the library's resources remotely, but also in databases such as PubMed, Ovid, Cinahl and the myriad of health science information online resources that are commonly used in health science libraries today. Students were also in need of intensive instruction as to how to conduct literature searches and other health science research as well as general instruction on how to access the library website and use it efficiently. The health science students were in programs that were both undergraduate and graduate with degrees being sought for bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees in areas including nursing, mental health counseling, orthodontics, kinesiology and other related fields. Given the lack of instruction in how to use the library's resources that had been provided to these remote library users, the library staff were being inundated with questions about how to access the resources from off campus as well as overwhelmed by complaints concerning library access issues, specifically the student's inability to access, locate, and retrieve the information they were looking for. This was the problem that needed to be addressed immediately upon the arrival of the new health sciences librarian.

SETTING THE STAGE

Developing students' health information literacy skills in the vast wilderness of health information today has become more challenging than ever for practitioners in the field, especially those Academic Health Science Librarians who serve students in remote areas through online distance learning and health science and nursing students on the ground at cohorts in remote area hospitals. New opportunities exist that offer creative pedagogical approaches for academic health science librarians to cultivate active learning of health information literacy skills in their students that are not physically on campus. Forward looking academic librarians and health science library liaisons who desire to harness the full potential of outreach programming for their students off campus are considering outreach initiatives that leverage their libraries online resources, increase student usage, and improve health information literacy through active learning strategies. Health information outreach instructional programs such as the one that will be presented in this chapter grant academic health science librarians the unprecedented opportunity to meet students on common ground, where they are and to offer quality information literacy instruction integrating the technology that students are already using in places they already are.

Academic health science librarians and liaisons need to ensure that the health information their library provides remains competitive with what is available in open online resources. Additionally, librarians must enable all faculty, staff and students to connect with the information in their library from anywhere on the planet and not only to make this information available, but to instruct the end users on how to access the information seamlessly for the ultimate positive user experience. A positive user experience (UX) is crucial to get buy in from the faculty and students as well as the stakeholders at the academic

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