

Searching for Best Practices in Collection Management: Case Studies of Institutions Without a Medical School

Marilia Antunez, MLS, AHIP, Science and Allied Health Librarian, Appalachian State University Library, antunezmy@appstate.edu



INTRODUCTION

Allied health and nursing programs are increasing at traditionally liberal arts/undergraduate institutions. The libraries must then address the needs of these programs by expanding their health sciences collections and services. This study focuses on academic libraries at state-funded, medium size institutions without medical schools. Typically, these academic libraries do not provide the same level of specialized resources (i.e., point of care resources) and services as do health sciences libraries or collections at institutions associated with a medical school. General academic libraries instead tend to have strong coverage of multidisciplinary and general resources.

The recent formation of the Health Sciences Interest Group within the American Library Association's Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) may reflect the growing needs of librarians employed at general academic libraries supporting allied health and nursing programs (ACRL, 2010). The majority of these librarians are not members of the Medical Library Association (MLA), the largest non-profit educational organization for professionals in the health sciences information field (Devin, 2009; MLA, 2010). In addition, in a 2008 MLA survey, about 34% of MLA members reported working in specialized health sciences libraries and 10% reported working in other academic libraries (C. Funk, personal communication, June 22, 2010).

From this exploratory study, the investigator will attempt to get a snapshot and identify successful strategies for collection development practices employed in health sciences collections at academic libraries without medical schools (Booth, 2004; Plutchak, 2003). From this data, the investigator hopes to identify and apply these strategies at Appalachian State University (ASU) Library.

Literature Review:

There is a lack of literature in medical/health sciences librarianship that focuses on academic libraries without medical schools. The investigator located only one article specifically on this topic. Devin (2009) compared four public and private academic libraries of various sizes without a medical school and concluded that their collection coverage differed significantly.

Research Questions:

- What are some best practices in collection selection and evaluation?
- What are some common trends and issues?
- What are some common differences and challenges?

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STUDY PARTICIPANTS

The investigator recruited five librarians. Each case study represented one or more librarians per institution. One institution was represented by two librarians. All of the participants have collection development responsibilities or serve as library liaisons to health sciences programs in four public, medium sized universities. All libraries were classified as public, 4 year or above and had a Master's College and Universities I Carnegie Classification Code in 2008 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). Other inclusion criteria included institutions that offer nursing or allied health baccalaureate and master's degree programs, and do not have a medical school. All four institutions are peer of Appalachian State University based on similar attributes (Appalachian State University [ASU], 2010).

RESULTS

Self-reported and collected data indicated that all libraries had successful strategies in collection management practices and that resources available at these institutions were not significantly different. Librarians reported using standard selection (e.g., core title lists) and evaluation strategies to monitor their collection management practices (e.g., circulation statistics).

Most libraries had a structured selection process with specific guidelines and policies. Surprisingly, all libraries offered at least one specialized resource, including evidence-based (e.g. Cochrane Library and Micromedex) and point of care resources (e.g. Gale Nursing Resource Center) to meet the research and instructional needs of their users. All libraries reported cancellations of resources due to recent cuts in their collection development budgets.

Health Sciences Materials	California State University-Fresno	University of Wisconsin-La Crosse	West Chester University of Pennsylvania	James Madison University
Journal Packages/Aggregators	Sage, ScienceDirect, SpringerLINK Online, Wiley	ScienceDirect, Sage, Elsevier, etc.	Wiley-Blackwell, ScienceDirect, etc.	ProQuest, OVID/LWW (nursing component), NaturePalgrave, etc.
Point of Care Databases	Gale Nursing Resource Center	OT Search (AOTA), Nursing Consult (Elsevier), MD Consult (Elsevier)	Gale Nursing Resource Center	Micromedex
Audiovisual Materials	Faculty recommendations	Building DVD/video collection	Faculty recommendations	Faculty recommendations or selector's choice
Evidence-based Resources	NA	Cochrane Collection Plus	Cochrane Library	Cochrane Library
Resources Used the Most	Academic Search Complete	OT Search, Cochrane, PubMed, Academic Search Complete, Micromedex	CINAHL Plus with Full-Text, MEDLINE, Natural Standard, Cochrane Library, Global Health, Credo Reference, STATRef	PubMed, CINAHL, Scopus, Cochrane Library
Uniqueness	NA	Uses one platform for most databases	ComDiaDome	Anatomy.tv, Scopus

METHODS

Telephone interviews took place in 2009 and 2010 and were held at the investigator's office at Appalachian State University. The investigator received exempt status from the University Institutional Review Board and conducted telephone interviews using a survey instrument consisting of open ended questions. Followed-up questions were conducted via e-mail or telephone. The investigator took notes and interviews lasted 30-45 minutes.

Criteria for Selection	California State University-Fresno	University of Wisconsin-La Crosse	West Chester University of Pennsylvania	James Madison University
Benchmarks/Standards and Other Best Practices	Collection Development Policy, book reviews, publisher's catalogs, faculty/student's recommendations and liaisons' requests	Collection Management Policy, LibQUAL Service Quality Survey, Circulation statistics, Reviews, publisher's catalogs, faculty/student's recommendations and liaisons' requests	Collection Management Policy, LibQUAL Service Quality Survey, book reviews, publisher's catalogs, faculty/student's recommendations and liaisons' requests	Collection Development Policy, LibQUAL Service Quality Survey, Circulation reports, Choice book reviews, publisher's catalogs, faculty/student's recommendations and liaisons' requests
Other Factors in the Selection Process	Gobi alerts	New and changing programs, core title lists, have budget formula	NA	Approval plan covers most of the health sciences funding
Tools to Analyze Collection	NA	Library Dynamics	OCLC WorldCat Collection Analysis	Reports from Integrated Library System (ILS)
Policy for Adding New Resources (e.g. have a process to cancel journals and order new ones)	Purchases on demand titles not in the collection	Generally, for journals: must cancel a journal to add a new journal	Generally, for new journal subscriptions: must cancel a journal to add a new journal	Must be approved by Subject Cluster and Collection Development Committee

Overview of Collections	California State University-Fresno	University of Wisconsin-La Crosse	West Chester University of Pennsylvania	James Madison University
Approval Plan/Vendor(s)	Baker & Taylor	No Approval Plan; Rittenhouse, Baker & Taylor	Baker & Taylor	Coutts
Patron Driven Acquisitions (e.g. purchase after several uses)	Under consideration	No	Purchase after frequent ILLiad requests	Under consideration; Coutts and ILLiad purchases
Resource Sharing	California State University system, LINK+	UW system including UW-Madison	Access Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Academic Libraries Cooperative, Inc. (PALCI)	Virtual Library of Virginia
Institutional Repository	Under Consideration	Yes	No	Yes
Facilities: Remote Storage	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Collaboration with Faculty or Students	Liaison program	Proactive liaison program with faculty, informal surveys, etc. Reach 55% of students.	Send "request card" to faculty, liaison program	Liaison program
Successes	Popular IM reference service, EBSCO's Ask a Librarian link within databases	Maintenance and ongoing evaluation of materials.	Collaboration with library's information literacy program	NA
Challenges	Furloughs, short-staffed, cancellations, budget	Cancellations	Cancellations	More holistic understanding of needs and input from users; cancellations

CONCLUSION

Despite continued limited resources and staff, these general academic libraries attempt to provide current, balanced health sciences collection to meet the needs of their nursing and allied health users. All four libraries are able to provide a wider selection of resources, including clinical resources, through resource sharing.

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