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5-19-2014

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Recommended Citation

Hoogland, M.A. & Schubert, C. (2014, May 19). Distance support services: defining, discussing, and determining future roles. Poster presented at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the Medical Library Association.

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Distance Support Services: Defining, Discussing, and Determining Future Roles

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INTRODUCTION



Cornick, N. (2011, April 29). Telemedicine.com.

With over 6 million students now taking at least one course online, higher education is significantly shifting educational and outreach approaches (The Sloan Consortium, 2011). This trend is particularly strong in the medical field, as “fully online health sciences programs show higher growth than online programs in other disciplines” (The Sloan Consortium, 2011). To meet these emerging needs, library support must now occur via Learning Management Systems, Guides, Tutorials, and Websites. In parallel with the education trends, telemedicine consultations are becoming options more readily available to patients and practitioners making online learning and collaboration a professional skill.

In early 2013, a Distance Support SIG informally developed a network to discuss issues and professional development around this topic. Informal membership formed around a self-managed listserv. Other Sections with interest in the topic, such as NAHRS and EMTS, were identified. However, a clear profile of participants supporting distance programs, what types of distance programs, and professional development needs were unclear.

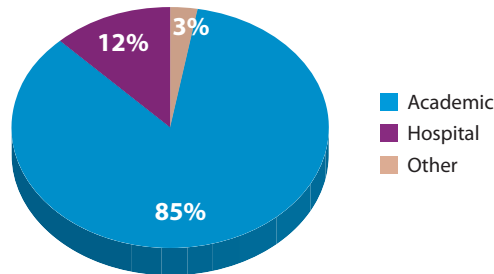
METHODS

To better identify the positions, types of libraries, and needs of SIG participants, the researchers developed a short survey distributed to the informal distance support listserv via Qualtrics. After talks with EMTS and the decision to merge the Distance Support SIG with EMTS, the survey was redistributed to EMTS members via the EMTS listserv. The second survey ran in RedCAP. Given the change in participant pool and the merging of the Distance Support SIG with EMTS, some questions were revised.

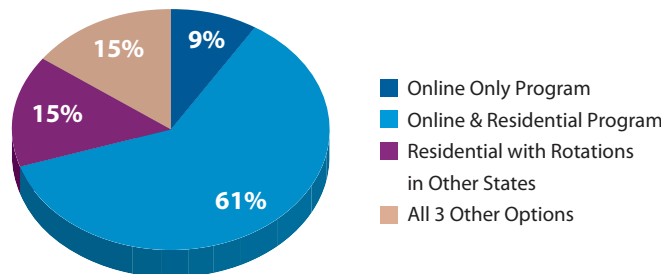
RESULTS

Survey 1 had 10 responses and Survey 2 had 23 responses for a total of 33 respondents overall. Given the low response rate in each survey, data presented here shows the aggregate response across both surveys. The survey respondents included 28 academic librarians, 4 hospital librarians, and 1 other. Responses to other free-text questions of the survey further dropped, creating challenges in identifying trends in the qualitative data.

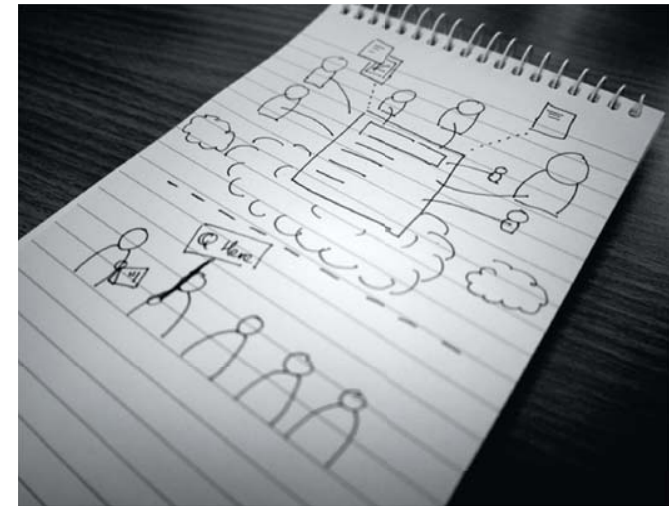
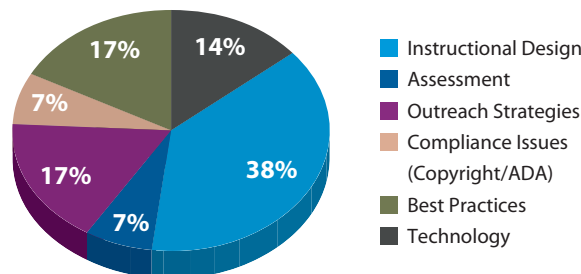
PARTICIPANT BY LIBRARY TYPE



DISTANCE SUPPORT TYPE



THEMES SUGGESTED FOR FUTURE EVENTS



Cornick, M. (2011, June 3). LT - Reading on screen - sharability and connectivity.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, librarians working in academic libraries are most likely addressing these issues related to distance programs. No corporate librarians or association librarians were identified, perhaps given the sample pools of the distance education group and EMTS already pre-eliminated possible participants from those populations. A majority of respondents were supporting an Online & Residential program, but some other people are also supporting online only programs, residential programs with rotations in other states, or a combination of all 3. Instruction and instructional design is the most important theme requested for future instruction events, followed by outreach strategies and best practices.

In response to these survey results, the researchers are developing a webinar in June/July with EMTS to cover these topics.

REFERENCES

The Sloan Consortium. (2011). Going the Distance: Online Education in the United States, 2011. http://sloanconsortium.org/publications/survey/going_distance_2011