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Collecting to the Core--Online Allied Health Resources for the Classroom and the Clinic

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to craft effective questions, and how to analyze the results. The book's final chapter discusses data presentation including data visualization using various charts and graphs, infographics, and PowerPoint presentations. Turning raw data into a compelling visual with immediate impact for the decision maker is the final, and most important step in the influence chain.

The author includes eight useful appendices such as a survey, focus group, and data presentation checklists. She also includes four sample surveys and their respective results to demonstrate how the data might be analyzed for further action. A comprehensive bibliography and index round out the book.

In the preface, the author identifies her audience as "librarians and managers in school and public libraries." I think it can easily serve a much larger audience. It's a good basic primer on gathering and presenting data, offered in a very succinct, accessible, and practical guide. I know it will be on my office reference shelf, and I would highly recommend it to anyone engaged in the art of advocacy and the practice of persuasion.

Upson, Matt, C., Michael Hall, and Kevin Cannon.
Information Now: A Graphic Guide to Student Research.
Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015.
978-0226095691. 128 pages. \$17.00.

Reviewed by **Katy Kavanagh Webb** (Assistant Professor/Head of Research and Instructional Services, Joyner Library, East Carolina University) <kavanaghk@ecu.edu>

Information Now: A Graphic Guide to Student Research is a full-length graphic novel outlining information literacy concepts from the authors of the viral Internet sensation *Library of the Living Dead* (<http://tropicodellibro.it/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Library-of-the-Living-Dead-Online-Edition.pdf>). **Matt Upson** is the director of Library Undergraduate Services at **Oklahoma State**, and **C. Michael Hall** is a freelance illustrator, community college instructor, and librarian in Kansas. **Hall** was working as a student worker in the small library of **McPherson College** in Kansas when **Upson**, the library director, paired his instructional knowledge with **Hall's** creative skills to design

their first comic book. The comic was meant to help students navigate **McPherson's** physical space and collections. Since then, **Upson** and **Hall** have teamed up to create other community-specific library comics. This is their first project with a broader audience in mind, as well as their first time collaborating with another graphic artist. **Kevin Cannon** is a Minneapolis-based illustrator who works on cartoon cartography projects and illustrated magazine covers. The result is a well-drawn romp through the general information literacy skills needed by college undergraduates to conduct research and framed by the **ACRL Information Literacy Threshold Concepts**.

The book offers a thorough examination of skills needed for undergraduate research led by two unnamed cartoon librarians. The introductory chapter addresses common concerns about the amount of knowledge at the student's fingertips, as well as giving a brief history of information. Chapter 1 delves in to choosing a topic and defines the tools used in libraries to find information, such as the catalog, discovery services, and databases. This chapter also addresses the issue of using Google and Wikipedia in the research process without being too dismissive of a student's natural inclination to use these popular Web-based tools. Chapter 2 instructs the student on the basics of the organization of information using the Dewey Decimal System, Library of Congress call numbers, and metadata. Constructing searches is the topic of Chapter 3, with keyword generation, Boolean operators, wildcards, and breadcrumb searching featured as topics. The rest of the chapters cover journals and databases, searching the open Web, evaluating sources, and using information ethically. At the end of each chapter, there is a section of critical thinking exercises that could be used to lead discussions for a class focused on information literacy or for self-reflection.

Although this is the first time the authors deviate from using a theme such as a zombie attack, Wild West, or monsters, there are still many relevant cultural references in the graphic novel that make it funny and engaging. Reading a graphic novel rather than text draws on a student's imagination and helps with knowledge retention. *Information Now* uses Venn diagrams and comic book renderings of pages found in library databases. The comic book format makes the material fresher and more exciting. However, even if the book relies on drawings to help make meaning and for comic relief, it is still text-heavy on some pages with images all in black and white. The book does a great job of being informative, instructional, and fun without falling victim to the trap of being patronizing or out of touch with today's students. I recommend this book for a semester-long information literacy class, English composition courses, incoming library science students, and librarians who love graphic novels. 🌳

Collecting to the Core — Online Allied Health Resources for the Classroom *and* the Clinic

by **Ann Hallyburton** (Research and Instruction Librarian/Liaison to the Health and Human Sciences, Associate Professor, Hunter Library, Western Carolina University; Allied Health Subject Editor, *Resources for College Libraries: Career Resources*) <ahallyb@wcu.edu>

Column Editor: **Anne Doherty** (*Resources for College Libraries* Project Editor, CHOICE/ACRL) <adoherty@ala-choice.org>

Column Editor's Note: The "Collecting to the Core" column highlights monographic works that are essential to the academic library within a particular discipline, inspired by the *Resources for College Libraries* bibliography (online at <http://www.rclweb.net>). In each essay, subject specialists introduce and explain the classic titles and topics that continue to remain relevant to the undergraduate curriculum and library collection. Disciplinary trends may shift, but some classics never go out of style. — **AD**

Allied health comprises a sizable chunk of the healthcare professions and covers areas including dental assisting; dietetics; medical technology; occupational, physical, and respiratory therapies; radiography; and speech pathology. Allied health professionals undergo highly specialized career training and typically must apply for licensure. As an academic health careers librarian, I care a great deal about the information students in allied health professional programs use in their assignments. However, I worry much more about the information they use (or do not use)

when they become care providers. The practical skills that future practitioners acquire as students carry over to their careers in patient care. The information-seeking skills students learn, together with many of the resources used, should carry over as well. Departing from the standard focus on monographs for this column, this essay features allied health resources available online that are suitable for the classroom and clinical environments.

Websites maintained by the United States government provide some of the most credi-

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ble, least biased, and most directly applicable information for allied health professionals. While I imagine my words will meet a predominantly American audience, these resources are available for use outside the U.S. as well. Government resources are freely available and, since the mid-2000s, primarily online, factors enabling wide access to a treasure trove of general information, multi-disciplinary research, and regulations that had previously been challenging to access.¹⁻² Free is the right price for many under-resourced clinicians who can be easily overwhelmed by the glut of information online or consume little new information outside of mandatory continuing education. *USA.gov*, a search engine administered by the U.S. government's **Federal Citizen Information Center**, provides a one-stop search interface for federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments' online resources.³ *USA.gov* offers an easy-to-search portal to information ranging from crime statistics to taxes. Healthcare practitioners and consumers may find this resource particularly useful. While finding individual articles is crucial in research settings, frontline care practitioners rarely have time on the job to sort through hundreds (or thousands) of articles on a particular topic, discern which publications are relevant to their clinical needs, and then evaluate whether those research findings have serious flaws. When several patients present similar symptoms hinting at a communicable disease, a quick search of *USA.gov* yields the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's** Current Outbreak page and encyclopedic coverage of virtually all known illnesses. In addition to the CDC, there are other standouts among the resources simultaneously searched by *USA.gov*.

One resource of particular merit to both healthcare providers and consumers is the **National Library of Medicine's** *MedlinePlus*.⁴ While *MedlinePlus* is directed at healthcare consumers, its accessible explanations and links to high-quality information sources provide value to care providers as well. This resource (quite different from the soon-to-be-discussed, researcher-focused *PubMed*) pulls together public and private resources dealing with thousands of health issues, conditions, and treatments. All resources are vetted by **National Library of Medicine** (NLM) staff for credibility and are generally accessible to readers at a sixth-grade level. Spanish language options are available for all topics, and most topics include information in multiple languages. *MedlinePlus* does what other consumer-focused resources like *WebMD* do, without advertisements and with the added value of organized definitions, statistics, and patient tutorials from reputable sources.

Another standout is the **Department of Health and Human Services' Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)**, which provides evidence-based, authoritative resources for healthcare professionals and consumers.⁵ AHRQ's *National Guideline Clearinghouse* (NGC) offers free access to

thousands of domestic and international clinical guidelines.⁶ NGC provides syntheses for topics with multiple guidelines, which can be used to reach consensus. Aside from offering treatment recommendations and relevant updates from many of the most influential public and private organizations in the world, the NGC interface enables users to find relevant results whether they use a basic keyword search or advanced, discipline-specific search limits.

When searching for nutrition or food safety information, *USA.gov* yields bedrock resources from the **U.S. Department of Agriculture**. *The USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference*, a free resource that may be downloaded or used online, is "the major source of food composition data in the United States" and "provides the foundation for most food composition databases in the public and private sectors."⁷⁻⁸ In addition to searching government agency information, *USA.gov* offers several curated collections from its main search page. Of particular relevance is the "Health Insurance, Nutrition, and Food Safety" collection for professional and consumer health information and the "Reference Center and General Government" collection, which includes links to current statistical resources (such as those from the **National Center for Health Statistics**) and data repositories (like the public data clearinghouse *DATA.gov*).

Aside from current and credible general information on health issues, *USA.gov* is useful to those conducting more involved research. *PubMed*, NLM's free interface to the large biomedical bibliographic database *MEDLINE*, originates from NLM's own government Website, hence a *USA.gov* search also searches across *PubMed* and *MEDLINE* citations.⁹ While there are better and more efficient ways to search *MEDLINE*, using the simple *USA.gov* interface retrieves results with information on treatment protocols, outbreaks, and help resources, interspersed with article citations dealing with much more specific (and sometimes arcane) aspects of a topic. Future and current frontline care professionals may find these resources much more accessible and, importantly, deserving of greater consideration in making patient care decisions. *USA.gov* acts as a gateway into additional resources available under NLM's *PubMed* umbrella and connects readers with free full-text articles of some research publications indexed in *PubMed/MEDLINE*. Interpreting research articles such as those found in a *PubMed/MEDLINE* search can challenge students and practitioners alike. A work like **Trisha Greenhalgh's** *How to Read a Paper: The Basics of Evidence-Based Medicine* provides straightforward recommendations for deciphering articles, evaluating research quality, and interpreting statistics.¹⁰ **Greenhalgh's** book offers simple descriptions of various research types (quantitative, qualitative, etc.) and explains differences between publication types from case studies to clinical guidelines.

The U.S. **National Institutes of Health** is the world's largest funder for medical research and, since mid-2008, NIH-funded research

must be made freely available through NLM's *PubMed Central*.¹¹⁻¹² The *PubMed Central* digital archive offers freely accessible biomedical research findings along with numerous full-text open access journals.¹³ While this resource does not eliminate the need for institutional subscriptions to healthcare-related journals and databases, it does ensure wide availability to research funded in part by U.S. taxpayers.

For future and current care professionals, evidence-based practice — the art of combining one's patient care expertise with the findings from the best, most applicable clinical research to improve patient care — is an imperative across disciplines. New research streams constantly,



and accepted practices may be found ineffective or even harmful. This impermanence necessitates that healthcare providers remain current in their practice. Busy practitioners, already challenged by daily emergencies, can find it nearly impossible to stay current on best practices. *PubMed* offers the *Clinical Queries* tool specifically for identifying evidence-based practice publications, though much of that information may stem from studies that analyzed overly homogenous populations; received backing from funders with investments tied to outcomes; or suffer from numerous other research failings. Even when credible, applicable research is found, the scientific language employed by authors may seem impenetrable or information may only be available for a price. For these reasons, another freely available online resource requires consideration. The UK-based **Cochrane Collaboration**, known for its *Cochrane Systematic Reviews*, makes detailed abstracts and, best of all, plain language summaries of those same reviews available to all.¹⁴ While only subscribers may access the full text of *Cochrane Systematic Reviews*, the plain language summaries and detailed abstracts are written in such a way as to provide *enough* information for individuals to make initial decisions on overall effectiveness or applicability of an intervention. Systematic reviews hold a place of preeminence in evidence-based practice literature because these "studies of studies" go across multiple research reports and publications to present findings on what the preponderance of the evidence *suggests* for a certain issue. Stringent vetting of review group members, rigorous review protocols, and a commitment never to oversell a treatment make *Cochrane Systematic Reviews* the gold standard among systematic reviews and all types of evidence-based practice literature. Abstracts and authors' conclusions of *Cochrane Systematic Reviews* are, incidentally, indexed in the aforementioned *PubMed/MEDLINE*, and reviews done by the Cochrane Neonatal Review Group are available in near-complete format through the **National Institute of Child Health and Human Development's** Website, both searchable through that Swiss

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PBS Video Collection

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Army knife of resources, *USA.gov*. It is worth noting that one drawback of the *USA.gov* tool is its lack of a “did you mean” suggestion feature like those offered by Google and other search tools, although the accuracy of such utilities varies widely. Misspellings can yield no or wildly erroneous results in a *USA.gov* search and leave users frustrated. A print medical dictionary becomes quite useful in such situations. *Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary* is a long-respected resource that not only provides concise, accessible definitions but also makes scanning for correct spellings fast.¹⁵

The usefulness of the resources described here is not limited solely to allied health practitioners, care providers at underfunded institutions, and healthcare consumers. These Websites do well in meeting the needs of practitioners, researchers, and interested students across disciplines. As with any resource, information from these online sources is not always perfect and should be evaluated with care, especially when used in clinical settings. However, these resources offer applicability, credibility, and reliability that surpass the majority of materials available both freely and at substantial subscription prices. 🐾

Endnotes

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- *Editor's note: An asterisk (*) denotes a title selected for *Resources for College Libraries*.