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## Introduction

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Making consumer health information accessible to the public has enhanced and empowered lives. How do we know this is fact? This unique issue will look at the research to show how librarians have been the change agents who cultivate and maintain a web of relationships and resources needed to be advocates for consumer health information. There are many unique challenges that librarians face to improve health literacy by promoting well-written, easy to understand, reliable, quality health information. There is no special formula for implementing consumer health information services or models, but this issue is dedicated to addressing the imperative topic of translating formal and informal research initiatives into practice. This compilation assembles the best practices for consumer health information services and building healthy bridges through innovative and sometimes surprising partnerships.

In part 2 of the series “Consumer Health Issues, Trends and Research,” contributors address the many facets that comprise consumer health information services. *Applicable Research in the 21st Century* promotes creative partnerships and models between agencies and library institutions and delivers strategies for achieving health literacy in a variety of communities. Nancy Ottman Press and Mary Diggs-Hobson met the health information needs of a faith ministry community by meeting people where they are, not where we want them to be, and by developing an innovative model of health information provision to a new community. Stephanie Weldon discusses the need for collaboration and marketing to ensure the library remains viable to its internal and external audiences—health professionals, hospital

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administrators, and the public. Erica Burnham and Eileen Beeny Peterson were moved by their experiences with patients at the Patient Resource Centre of the Montreal Neurological Hospital and chronicle the international movement to raise awareness of the necessity for health literacy. Angela Ruffin, Keith Cogdill, Lalitha Kutty, and Michelle Hudson-Ochillo's research analyzed fifty-three funded consumer health outreach projects through the National Network of Libraries of Medicine and discovered that as a result of collaborations between health sciences librarians and public librarians, the public library began to perceive hospital and academic libraries as resources for medical information. Michele Spatz tells health information professionals how to formulate strategies for successful partnerships with community agencies such as parks and recreation agencies, social service agencies, and public health departments. Andrea Kenyon describes a pilot project to test the feasibility of bridging the digital divide by placing trained volunteers at Internet access sites in community locations. Gail Kouame, Margo Harris, and Susan Murray capture the perceptions and expectations of library staff members from both sides of the reference desk, both patron and librarian. Mary Gillaspay covers current issues like the number of health news items available in all media and the fact that physicians and nurses are spending less time providing health information and patient education during regular office visits, which impacts the provision of health information in public libraries. Lastly, Candice Smith, Kara Logsden, and Maeve Clark highlight their innovative project at the Iowa City Public Library in Iowa, in which they educated the community on finding and using good health information resources on the Internet.

The authors, representing medical, academic, government, and public libraries as well as library school faculty, have been selected because of their reputation, expertise, and successes in the consumer health arena. I hope that this focused collection of actionable approaches, testimonials, and prescriptions will serve as a valuable resource for librarians with an interest in providing consumer health services at their institutions.

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