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The Outreach Continuum: Expanding the Medical Librarian's Role

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MLA'10 Reflect & Connect

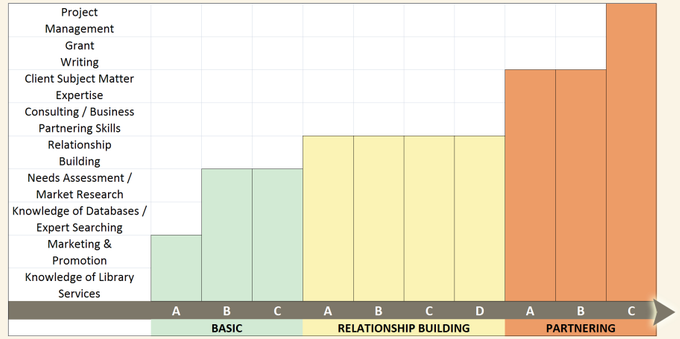
Project Overview

- With the implementation of a single service point, librarians have more time to engage in outreach. However, what does management mean by outreach? What skills are needed to conduct outreach?
- Focus groups were conducted with librarians to gain an understanding of the work currently perceived as outreach. Findings were used to inform a definition of outreach and to develop a continuum of outreach activities requiring increasing skill levels.
- Librarians tracked their outreach activities, mapping them to the continuum for three months. It became clear where activities fell and where to concentrate future efforts.
- The continuum and tracking logs served as a data source for strategic planning and assisted staff with individual goal setting.
- Tracking and categorizing outreach activities raises awareness of the types of outreach activities and identifies areas for skill development.
- In the future, tracking logs will be streamlined and automated; the continuum remains a useful tool for discussion and planning.

Our Definition of Outreach

Embed the library within the institution it supports by engaging, building relationships, and partnering with (potential) client group(s) beyond the initial interaction or their immediate need. The purpose is to understand client work processes and information-related needs in order to suggest and provide ongoing services to enhance their ability to get desired results from their research, education, or clinical-related work.

Skills Needed for Outreach



Outreach Continuum

BASIC

- **A** Promote library services and capabilities via website, email, etc.
- **B** Follow-up to general reference question or literature search to explore other client-related work needs.
- **C** Follow-up to expert technical assistance or training provided to explore other client-related work needs (for acquisitions, services, etc.)

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

- **A** Attend client events open to all, develop contacts, and follow up to explore client-related work needs.
- **B** Pro-actively invite faculty to present at library-sponsored events to learn what is important to faculty.
- **C** Receive invitation to closed client event or committee to represent the library/train/present; identifying contacts for future partnerships.
- **D** Pro-actively obtain an invitation to train/present/act as resource at a closed client event, identifying contacts for future partnerships.

PARTNERING

- **A** Become a virtual member of (embedded in) a closed client group as liaison or business partner who can identify client group needs for library services.
- **B** Invited to assist on a collaborative project by a client.
- **C** Propose collaborative project with clients where library staff plays a key role as content expert

Sample Outreach Log for Long-term Projects

Project Title: Development, Promotion and Assessment of Interactive Web-based Tool for LSL Research & Scholarly Communication Services
Measurable goal or outcome/deliverable: Established web-based resource with usage statistics and other evaluative measures
Outreach Continuum Category: Basic A; Relationship Bldg D; Partnering C (long-term goal)

Task	Target completion date	Actual completion date	Hours	Outcomes/Deliverables
1. Investigate and collect information on various types of tools in use	8/31/2009	9/2/2009	50	List of various options, tools, methods of web-based outreach projects from comparable libraries w/pros and cons outlined for each
2. Decide on best tool for desired purpose(s)	8/30/2009	9/2/2009	20	Choice of LibGuides software
3. Create demo and proposal for MT	9/1/2009	9/22/2009	30	Written proposal including mock site and cost
4. Present proposal to MT (several meetings w/revisions made in between)	10/1/2009	10/20/2009	12	Presentation, edited written proposal, draft procedure and policy manuals

Sample Outreach Log for Short-term Projects

Start Date	Activities	Hours	Tasks	Outcome/Deliverables	Client/Department	Outreach Continuum Category
18-Nov	GSN PhD Student	1	Assist student w/research prep	Librarian/student relationship - ongoing	GSN	Basic A
24-Nov	Faculty Workshop	1	Course on authors' rights	New course for Fac Dev curriculum	Faculty	Basic A
1-Dec	Initial Discussion w/follow-up	2	Discuss LSL's possible role in grant project (Pagoto)	Partnership/role in successful NIH grant	Prev & Beh Medicine	Partnering B
4-Dec	eScience Portal Advisory Bd	8	Group meeting re: layout, policies, etc. of portal project	Initial work for Portal	RML / Region	Relationship Bldg C