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Revisioning the library - Adapting organizational structure to a changing information landscape

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Introduction

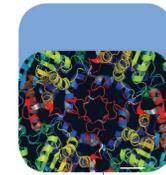
The current shift toward a “bench-to-bedside-to-community” approach to research and clinical practice has created a new environment at academic medical centers. This new environment encourages multidisciplinary collaborations between clinical and basic scientists, requires broader dissemination and availability of scientific information, and emphasizes the goal of rapid translation of research findings into clinical practice to improve health outcomes in the community and address health disparities. Programs such as the National Institutes of Health’s Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) have driven this shift and brought transformational changes to the way many medical schools are conducting research and clinical practice.

By adapting their expertise to creating programs and services that target the unique needs of translational scientists and clinicians, libraries have many opportunities to enhance and expand their institutional role. Adapting their organization to fit this strategic approach is one way that libraries can integrate themselves more closely with their institutions’ changing priorities and strategic objectives and create a future-directed structure more attuned to changing user needs.

Methods

In 2007, the Bernard Becker Medical Library at Washington University in St. Louis School of Medicine reorganized its operational and administrative structure to create a “Translational Research Support” (TRS) division. This division brought together staff specialists with expertise in areas related to the school’s translational medicine activities to cover four program areas including:

- **Library-based bioinformatics support** – two bioinformaticists offer instruction, expertise, and services to support the application of specialized research tools and information resources to biomedical research along with supporting initiatives and tools to enhance collaboration among research faculty.
- **Scholarly communications and publishing** – a scholarly communications librarian supports authors in adapting to the technological changes in academic publishing, complying with public access mandates, understanding issues related to copyright, and exploring new methods of evaluating and disseminating research information.
- **Community outreach** – a public health librarian partners with clinicians, clinical researchers, and community organizations to develop customized training to improve health information literacy in the St. Louis metropolitan area.
- **Patient education and consumer health information** – a consumer health librarian from Becker Library works alongside a staff of nurses at the St. Louis Children’s Hospital Family Resource Center offering a variety of resources, including customized packets of information, books, pamphlets, videos, and online resources to patient families and the general public.



Library-based Bioinformatics Support

• Over a dozen courses developed covering NCBI and other genomic information resources and tools. Since its inception, over 1,500 students, faculty, trainees and staff have participated in Bioinformatics@Becker training events.

- Consultation service for research-related resources and specific research questions.
- Coordination and administration of site licenses and training for core statistical and genomic analysis software tools.
- Development and coordination of an educational seminar series focused on research topics in genomic medicine customized for clinical researchers with material delivered by campus experts.
- Customized computer workstations established in the library to provide WUSM researchers, staff, and students with free access to specialized software tools and resources.



Support for Collaboration Tools

As an extension of the Bioinformatics@Becker program, a bioinformaticist is serving as the outreach coordinator for Washington University in the development of VIVO, an open source semantic web application that enables the discovery of research and scholarship across disciplines. VIVO was developed at Cornell University and is being expanded through a \$12.2M stimulus grant from the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). WUSM is one of seven institutions participating in the project.

Bernard Becker Medical Library - Translational Research Support Division



Scholarly Communications

• Partnership with the Office of Vice Chancellor for Research in development and support for the NIH Public Access Policy compliance. Development of comprehensive resource website, over 75 presentations to various campus groups, and launch of third party submission services.

• Extensive collaboration with WU CTSA administrators on knowledge management issues including tracking of CTSA output, assessing the research impact of investigators, providing presentations for CSTA scholars, and assistance with NIH PAP compliance.

• Programs and services to measure the impact of research including development of a framework to provide guidance for investigators to help assess the impact of their research studies. A website “Assessing the Impact of Research” was launched in March 2009.

• Partnership with the university General Counsel in creating a Copyright Taskforce to develop “best practices” resources for tailored for WU investigators.

• Launching of a new institutional repository platform to showcase scholarly output of department and research groups.

• Partnership with the Office of Vice Chancellor for Research Program for Ethical and Responsible Conduct of Science and Scholarship (PERCSS) to promote responsible conduct of research (RCR) practices.



Community Outreach & Consumer Health

• NN/LM award to fund training program for area K-12 librarians in using credible health information resources.

• Collaborations with WU community-based research groups to promote health literacy and the dissemination of research findings back to communities.

• Partnerships established with hospital-based school outreach program and local media literacy organization to promote health information education.

• Provide consumer health information training as part of WUSM “Mini-Medical School” program.

Conclusions

- Establishing an organizational unit focused on translational support can help the library stay forward-thinking and responsive to the changing needs and interests of our users.
- By emphasizing support for translational activities and, in particular, the work of our CTSA affiliated faculty, the library is more closely integrated with the medical school’s priority initiatives and programs.
- Establishing effective partnerships with groups on campus and community-based organizations is critical to success.
- Opportunities were created to establish partnerships with groups that were previously outside the library’s traditional user community such as research administrators, core facilities, community-based researchers, and community organizations.
- Partnerships have directly led to identification and development of new program areas.
- Programs and initiatives have enhanced the image of the library among user community.
- Translational medicine encompasses a wide range of activities and disciplines. Every library has skills and expertise that can lead to meaningful contributions to its institution’s unique efforts.