

Planning Award Final Report
January 15, 2008

**Assessment of the Healthcare Information Acquisition Methods
and Satisfaction of Results of Selected Groups in
Benton County, Oregon**

Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center
Murray Memorial Library
3600 NW Samaritan Drive
Corvallis OR 97330

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Medicine
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Overview

Our aims in undertaking this project were several. First, to gather data via this survey that would enable Murray Memorial Library and the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library to enhance services already offered and to look into offering other services that the data indicated would be welcomed by the public. Second, we hoped that the data would endow us with an understanding of how best to construct three workshops that the two libraries will jointly offer in late January 2008 to the general public on the subject of healthcare information. Finally, we hoped to gain a grasp of the awareness among the general public of the existence of the various libraries. All of these goals have been achieved.

Questionnaire Development

The development of the questionnaire was by far the most challenging and time-consuming part of the project. Even though it consisted in the end of only eleven questions and was evaluated pre-distribution by staff members of both Murray Memorial Library and the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library and librarians at other libraries, the results indicated that some of the respondents found several of the questions confusing and so either did not answer the problematic questions or answered them in a peculiar fashion (e.g. indicating that they didn't use a certain resource and then specifying where they used it). Clearly, pilot testing of the survey should have taken place among non-librarians and more time invested in the tweaking of the survey accordingly. Nevertheless, the questionnaire was a serviceable tool and generated useful data. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

Survey Distribution

The survey was distributed as follows:

- 300 copies displayed for roughly one month November/December 2007 in two different locations of the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library (near main circulation desk and in the public use computer area)—respondents being general library patrons
- 150 copies displayed for one week in November 2007 in the mailroom of the Benton County Health Department—respondents being professional staff of that organization
- 150 copies given in November 2007 to manager of the Senior Meals program at the Corvallis Senior Center for distribution at the meal site to diners in the Senior Meals program and by volunteer drivers to participants in the Meals on Wheels program (the latter group's responses were sent by the respondents to Murray Memorial Library in self-

addressed, postage-paid envelopes)—respondents being elderly and/or disabled people participating in free/reduced price meal programs

- 150 copies displayed for approximately six weeks November/December 2007 at Samaritan Regional Cancer Center—respondents being members of the general public
- 150 copies displayed for approximately six weeks November/December 2007 in the waiting room of Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center—respondents being members of the public present for various reasons in the waiting room
- 150 copies displayed for approximately six weeks November/December 2007 in the cafeteria of Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center—respondents being members of the general public and of the staff of Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center

With the exception of those copies distributed through the offices of the manager of the Senior Meals program, most of the displays were set up by the librarians involved in the project. The questionnaires were each one page 8" by 11" with questions on both sides of the one page; they were color-coded by location to facilitate tabulation of results by site. A large placard explaining the purpose and origin of the survey with contact information of the principle investigator was set up next to a cardboard box marked with the logo of Samaritan Health Services. A copy of this placard can be found in Appendix B. Pens were included next to each display. The boxes were secure and emptied only by the principal investigator.

The various sites were chosen because they seemed to offer a fairly representative cross-section of potential users of healthcare information services in Corvallis, Oregon. In our assessment, a significant flaw in selection of distribution sites was that there was no distribution site that was not somehow connected to healthcare or libraries (i.e. no retail shop or off-site restaurant served as a distribution site).

Key Findings

Use of Community Libraries

Survey participants were asked to indicate which local libraries had been used when searching for healthcare information. The Corvallis-Benton County Public Library was used most often. Of the 318 respondents, 66% (n=210) reported that they used the Public Library, 19% (n=60) had used the Valley Library at Oregon State University, 11% (n=36) had used the Murray Memorial Library at Good

Samaritan Regional Medical Center (GSRMC) and 3% (n=10) used the James R. Mol Library at Samaritan Regional Cancer Center. Another 5% (n=17) reportedly used libraries in other locations. (Percentages do not equal 100 because respondents could mark “all that apply.”) A tabulation of the survey results, by question, can be found in Appendix C.

From the perspective of Samaritan Health Services, the discovery that 11% of the respondents had used the library at GSRMC is positive. This suggests that the library provides a service to the general public that could be further developed. The wording of the question did not reveal whether these users actually came on site or had utilized the services remotely. This would be an interesting question to ask in a future study.

Satisfaction with Search Outcomes

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they were very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with their success in finding useful healthcare information. Generally speaking, most respondents were either very satisfied (30%) or somewhat satisfied (45%). A small group was somewhat dissatisfied (11%) and few were very dissatisfied (2%).

Different groups of respondents had different levels of satisfaction. Fifty-two percent of the respondents who filled out the questionnaire at Samaritan Regional Cancer Center rated themselves as “very satisfied” with their success in finding healthcare information. This was remarkable because these respondents evidently obtained their information from avenues other than the Internet.

Professionals at the Public Health Department were the next most likely to be “very satisfied” with the health information they are able to find, with 43% of these respondents checking “very satisfied.”

Patrons of the Public Library and the GSRMC Library would benefit from additional training or assistance in their searches for healthcare information because they were least likely to be “very satisfied” with the information they found. Only 19% of those at the Public Library were “very satisfied.” This finding is very important because it is individuals in this group who are most likely to attend and benefit from the medical literature search workshops that will be offered in January 2008. It is possible that they report such a low satisfaction rate because they are surrounded by rich resources and a helpful staff in that environment and may feel that they are not articulating their needs clearly given the health information gathering conducive setting. We will try to address these matters in our workshops.

It would be fascinating to follow up this survey by trying to determine what accounted for the comparatively high level of satisfaction of the cancer center group compared other groups. Perhaps the cancer center group feels confident

in the information they receive directly from cancer center staff and/or from allied groups such as online or in-person support groups. In retrospect, it would have been illuminating if the questionnaire had been filled out by a similar homogenous patient group (such as patients in GSRMC's diabetes control classes) and whether the results would have shown a similarly relatively low rate of library use by respondents and a fairly high level of satisfaction with their success in acquiring the health care information they require.

Frequently Used Search Tools

The vast majority (81%) of survey respondents uses the Internet. When asked which online resources they had tried, most (74%) said they used Google. In terms of health-specific search engines, 21% said they used MedlinePlus, 17% used PubMed, and 6% used WebMD.

Rather surprisingly, of the answers by respondents who filled out the questionnaire in the Corvallis-Benton Public Library there were only two percentage points difference between the numbers indicating familiarity with both MedlinePlus and PubMed. One would have expected there to be a much greater difference between the results for those two resources, PubMed being widely regarded among medical librarians as "the professional's tool" and unfamiliar to the vast majority of the general public. That there is not a huge difference in awareness of the two resources endows me with the confidence to cover PubMed in some depth in the upcoming workshops sans fear of the audience finding such a discussion intimidatingly, boringly recondite.

The results of the survey also taught me personally what resources I should familiarize myself with and what my Corvallis-Benton County Library co-presenter and I should cover in our upcoming workshops. To wit, six of the respondents at the Corvallis-Benton County Library and five at the Benton County Public Health Department wrote in WebMD under the "other" category in the search engine question. That is a resource I had never even visited and which I will now realize I must master at least the rudiments of.

One of the write-in answers to the question on where respondents accessed online healthcare information was "doctor's office." It would have been interesting to learn the particulars of the interaction between the respondent and the medical provider, what the configuration of computer or other device setup was and what online or proprietary software resources were consulted.

Interest in Training

Respondents were asked whether they were interested in attending a free 90—minute workshop led by local librarians on finding healthcare literature on the Internet. We learned that there is interest in attending workshops in Corvallis on medical searching; 12 of the Public Health Department respondents indicated

interest in attending a workshop as did 55 patrons of the Corvallis-Benton County Library. Given the level of interest at the Public Health Department, it might be worthwhile advertising such a workshop among faculty in public health, healthcare administration and health and human performance, among other departments, at Oregon State University here in town. Unfortunately, there seemed to be no optimal time to schedule such workshops—the responses on that question running the gamut.

Lessons learned and suggestions for others undertaking similar projects:

We highly recommend that medical and public libraries undertake such planning assessments. The advantages are many and include:

- Experience planning such outward-directed projects as opposed to remaining perpetually secluded in the perhaps not very frequented medical library
- Interactions with a wide variety of internal and external actors (in this case, fellow librarians at the local public library, members of the county health department, staff of the local senior center and a wide variety of internal actors at one's own institution including):
 - The head of the organization's marketing/community relations department
 - The head of the newly established SHS center on health research and quality
 - Marketing staffers and their graphic designers
 - The document center staff
 - The many accountants who oversaw the disposition of the award funds
- Experience designing a questionnaire and putting into graphic form its results and analyzing them

The main lesson learned was the need to pilot test the survey on the general public. If we had done this, we could have crafted several of the questions more clearly. Once the results were in, for instance, it was dismayingly clear that some respondents were not sure what some of the terms and phrases used in the questionnaire meant (e.g. "...the online databases of the Corvallis-Benton County Library") and whether they were supposed to write in the words "Yes" or "No" on some questions or to simply place a check mark next to what applied to their own situations.

Next Steps:

The most immediate next step is for the librarians of Murray Memorial Library and the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library to plan their upcoming

workshops, guided by data the survey generated. As noted, there seems to be much greater awareness among the patrons of the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library of PubMed than expected by the staff of Murray Memorial Library. Therefore, the PubMed portion of the workshops will consist of material of greater depth about some of PubMed's more advanced features (e.g. its email alert and RSS tools) than originally conceived.

Additionally, the workshops will include coverage of WebMD and the two libraries' staff members will determine what terminology to use when describing the online offerings of Corvallis-Benton County Public Library given the confusion registered by the survey.

Once the workshops are completed and the demographics and reactions of the attendees noted and compiled, the staff of Murray Memorial Library will work with the leadership of Samaritan Health Services to develop a vision of just how much and in what fashion to extend its mission into the community as opposed to its current primary focus on the medical staff of SHS and to some extent non-SHS medical providers and develop short and long-term plans for a possible broader community/consumer aspect. Those are practical, financial and philosophical questions the answers to which will take time to take shape.

Conclusion

Despite the glitches in the design of the questionnaire, the experience was all together a worthwhile one and is highly recommended to librarians new to a community or just starting out on their careers. The planning project is an excellent way to get to know one's potential patron pool and to determine whether one should position one's medical library to be more consumer-oriented or to remain primarily or even solely a medical provider-focused entity.

Appendix A: Survey
Appendix B: Poster
Appendix C: Survey Results
Appendix D: Expense Report for Survey Project