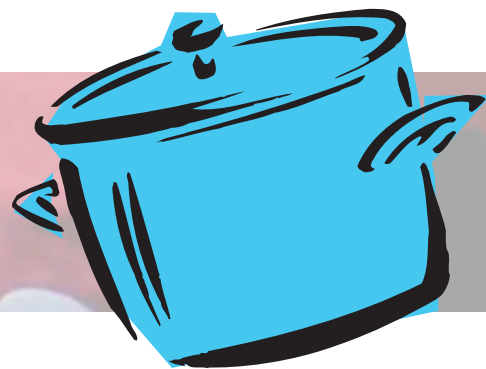


# Crab Pot

The Maryland Library Catch of the Day



## Office of Minority Health Research Center Knowledge Center

### *Mary Mannix, Frederick County Public Library*

In 1985 the Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Margaret Heckler, released a report detailing the findings of her Task Force on Black and Minority Health. The Hackler Report “documented significant disparities in the burden of illness and mortality experienced by Blacks and other minority groups in the US population.” One of the outcomes of these findings was the founding of the Department’s Office of Minority Health (OMH) a year later. The Heckler Report was a watershed moment in the dissemination of information on minority health. In over twenty-five years since the Report’s release the publication and dissemination of material relating to minority health has increased tremendously.

In 1999, in partial response to the expanding literature base, the Office of Minority Health founded a Knowledge Resource Center. The Center services the information needs of the OMH’s staff, as well as guides outside researchers to appropriate literature, whether these researchers are medical professionals, students, or consumers. They do not, of course, offer medical advice. The Knowledge Resource Center is part of the Office’s Resource Center.

The Knowledge Center has a diverse collection of approximately 40,000 articles, government documents, gray literature, books, audiovisual resources, and instructional materials. Due to the broad nature of the study of minority health, publications cut across a variety of medical and social science disciplines, along with some popular literature. Thirty five different languages are represented in the holdings.

One of the most fascinating features of the Knowledge Center is that it maintains its own thesaurus, the Minority Health Information Terms. Original cataloging is performed for every item added to the Knowledge Center’s collection. The Center applies its own controlled vocabulary to increase the accessibility of every item. These in-house descriptors reflect the information needs of the OMH’s staff and patrons. The thesaurus has its origins in the National Library of Medicine’s Medical Subject Headings (MESH), but it has grown and diversified. The staff also attempts to maintain information in their database about the publishers of the items they hold. This can be especially useful for gray literature and material from small publishers. The catalog is maintained using an Inmagic database.

Researchers who regularly uti-

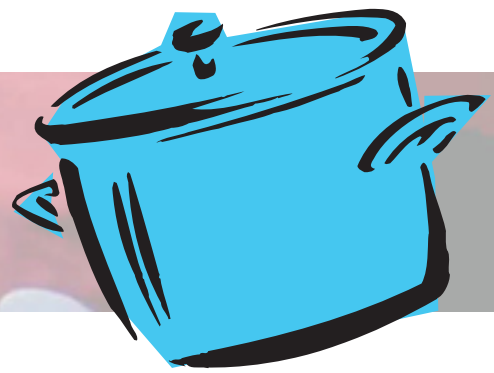
lize Medline, other relevant subject databases, and the OPACs of the major health libraries can still benefit from consulting the Knowledge Center’s catalog. The application of the Minority Health Information Terms leads to the identification of sources that would not be uncovered using other search strategies. The catalog will soon be available online. Researchers can now search the catalog at the Knowledge Center. The staff is also happy to assist distant researchers and are also willing to compile bibliographies and run specialized literature searches on minority health topics.

Regular visits to the OHMRC Knowledge Center website can greatly assist librarians involved in healthcare collection development, as well as benefit reference librarians who regularly interact with patrons interested in minority health topics. It can be especially instructive for those who do not have any formal training in the various relevant fields. The webpage includes monthly lists of “Selected New Acquisitions”. This is an easy way to take advantage of the staff’s knowledge in the field. Also, these lists can easily serve as collection development tools.

Looking at just one month clearly demonstrates the broad spectrum of subjects of interest to

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the Office of Minority Health and the interdisciplinary nature of the Knowledge Center's collection. The October list, which consists of 39 book titles and 12 journal articles, includes: *Childhood Obesity: Its Everyone's Business*, (National Business Group on Health of the Center for Prevention and Health Services, 2009); *Healing from Violence: Latino Men's Journey to a New Masculinity* (Spring Publishing Company, 2008); *Meeting the Medicine Men: An Englishman's Travels among the Navajo* (Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2008) and *Race, Place, and Environmental Justice after Hurricane Katrina: Struggles to Reclaim, Rebuild, and Revitalize New Orleans and the Gulf Coast* (Westview Press, 2009). The Knowledge Center also collects material that can assist minority health researchers in identifying potential funding sources.

It is possible to subscribe to the Monthly Library Acquisitions List, along with New Resource Announcements, via an e-mail update or an RSS feed. At the OMH homepage, <http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/>, simply click on the link for "Join Our Mailing List." Besides the Knowledge Center, the Office also offers other updates on the following topics: publications, events, campaigns and initiatives, capacity building, and funding. Librarians and their patrons may be especially interested in the "Data by Health Topic" update; fifteen different categories are offered.

The Knowledge Center is in the early stages of a digitization project to increase access electronic materials directly from their catalog database. At this point, the catalog is linking to items the Center has access to through subscription databases. The next step is to provide digital access to the articles in the catalog from the CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. As the project advances the Center hopes to obtain permission to save copyrighted article to their server and link to them.

The Knowledge Center catalog also serves as a national community information database of data on local agencies and organizations who deal with minority health across the country. Utilizing the Knowledge Center as a referral source can be a quick, and more importantly, a reliable way to find contact information for patrons. The Office of Minority Health also provides contact information for Federal Health Information Centers and Clearinghouses on its webpage. A complete hardcopy list can be obtained from the Knowledge Center.

Librarians should also be aware of the Resource Center's Information Services Team. The team answers telephone, e-mail, and mail inquiries relating to minority health resources and concerns. Consumer requests are very welcome. The Resource Center can be reached at 1-800-444-6472 or via [info@minorityhealth.hhs.gov](mailto:info@minorityhealth.hhs.gov). The

number for the hearing impaired is 301-251-1432. The desk is manned from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday. Services are available in both English and Spanish.

The Knowledge Center is easily accessible at 1101 Wooton Parkway, Suite 650, in Rockville, Maryland. It is minutes off of I-270's Exit 5. The building stands alone and is easily identifiable by the "Bank of America" sign atop it. Parking is free, but an exit token must be obtained to leave. The library is non-circulating and is open to the public. An appointment, however, is required, so that staff can guarantee to be on-site, confirm that the reading room is available for researchers, and make any needed preparations for the researcher's arrival.

The Knowledge Center is staffed by two librarians. They regularly seek student interns. For further information about the Office of Minority Health Resource Center Knowledge Center please contact Faye Williams, Library Services Manager, at 800-444-6472, extension 231 or via e-mail at [fwilliams@hmrc.gov](mailto:fwilliams@hmrc.gov). Amy Bodine serves as Technical Services Librarian.

More information about the Knowledge Center can be access online at: <http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlID=62>