

BUILDING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH IN LIBRARIES

Edited by Kathryn Moore Crowe
and Joanne Hélovry

ADVANCES IN LIBRARY
ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION

VOLUME 43

**BUILDING COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH
IN LIBRARIES**

ADVANCES IN LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION

Series Editors: Samantha Schmehl Hines

Recent volumes:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Volume 1: | Edited by W. Carl Jackson, Bernard Kreissman and Gerard B. McCabe |
| Volumes 2–12: | Edited by Bernard Kreissman and Gerard B. McCabe |
| Volumes 13–20: | Edited by Edward D. Garten and Delmus E. Williams |
| Volume 21–24: | Edited by Edward D. Garten, Delmus E. Williams and James M. Nyce |
| Volume 25: | Edited by Edward D. Garten, Delmus E. Williams, James M. Nyce and Sanna Talja |
| Volume 26: | Edited by Edward D. Garten, Delmus E. Williams, James M. Nyce and Janine Golden |
| Volume 27: | Edited by William Graves III, James M. Nyce, Janine Golden and Delmus E. Williams |
| Volume 28: | Edited by Delmus E. Williams, James M. Nyce and Janine Golden |
| Volume 29: | Edited by Delmus E. Williams and Janine Golden |
| Volume 30: | Edited by Delmus E. Williams and Janine Golden |
| Volume 31: | Edited by Delmus E. Williams and Janine Golden |
| Volume 32: | Edited by Delmus E. Williams and Janine Golden |
| Volume 33: | Edited by Delmus E. Williams, Janine Golden and Jennifer K. Sweeney |
| Volume 34: | Edited by Samantha Schmehl Hines and Marcy Simons |
| Volume 35: | Edited by David Baker and Wendy Evans |
| Volume 36: | Edited by Samantha Schmehl Hines and Kathryn Moore Crowe |
| Volume 37: | Edited by Samantha Schmehl Hines and Miriam Matteson |
| Volume 38: | Edited by Samantha Schmehl Hines and Alice Daugherty |

Volume 39:	Edited by Samantha Schmehl Hines and George J Fowler
Volume 40:	Edited by Samantha Schmehl Hines and Janet A Crum
Volume 41:	Edited by Samantha Schmehl Hines
Volume 42:	Edited by Samantha Schmehl Hines

This page intentionally left blank

ADVANCES IN LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION AND
ORGANIZATION VOLUME 43

BUILDING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH IN LIBRARIES

EDITED BY

KATHRYN MOORE CROWE

University of North Carolina, USA

And

JOANNE HÉLOUVRY

Enoch Pratt Free Library, USA



United Kingdom – North America – Japan
India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2022

Editorial matter and selection © 2022 Kathryn Moore Crowe and Joanne H  louvy.
Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited.
Individual chapters © 2022 by Emerald Publishing Limited.

Reprints and permissions service

Contact: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80382-368-3 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-80382-367-6 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-80382-369-0 (Epub)

ISSN: 0732-0671 (Series)



ISOQAR certified
Management System,
awarded to Emerald
for adherence to
Environmental
standard
ISO 14001:2004.

Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

CONTENTS

<i>About the Contributors</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>xvii</i>
 Library Community Health Outreach: The Role of the Library Manager	 1
<i>Dana L. Ladd, Emily J. Hurst, and Alisa Brewer</i>	
 Building a Library Outreach Program Through Community Engagement	 33
<i>Cinthya Ippoliti</i>	
 Leveraging Community Connections: Project Management Outreach Expertise From Health Sciences Library and Community-Based Organization Leaders	 49
<i>Martha E. Meacham, Tony Nguyen, Tess Wilson, and Abigail Mann</i>	
 Informing the Community Using Data Purposefully	 71
<i>Lauren Rosenthal and Heather Zabski</i>	
 From Peripheral to Essential: The Evolution of Outreach as a Core Archival Function	 87
<i>Erin Lawrimore, David Gwynn, and Stacey Krim</i>	
 Sharing the Same Agenda: The Public Library and the Deaf Community	 103
<i>David Payne</i>	
 Taking Health Information to the Next Level: Strategic Partnerships Between NLM and Public Libraries	 131
<i>April Wright, Brittney L. Thomas, Asih Asikin-Garmager, and Susan M. Wolfe</i>	

Diversity Conversations: Enabling Libraries to Serve New Communities

145

Michelle Brannen, Peter Fernandez, Thura Mack and Molly Royse

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Asih Asikin-Garmager is the Associate Director for the University of Iowa Center for Evaluation and Assessment. She received her BA and MA in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and Spanish from the University of Northern Iowa, and PhD in Educational Policy and Leadership Studies with an emphasis on Program Evaluation from the University of Iowa. Her research and practice focus on the influence of context and culture on evaluation practices, findings, and use; strategies to meaningfully engage diverse evaluation participants; and ways to leverage technology to expand evaluation practices. Asih applies community-engaged and participatory evaluation principles to accurately understand program outcomes and impact within the context of the communities it serves.

Michelle Brannen is the Head of the Scholar's Collaborative at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Libraries. Her work focuses on supporting scholars working with media, design, and digital scholarship tools, and supporting a team of librarians and information specialists who work with scholars across the university community. Michelle received her Master of Science in Information Sciences from the University of Tennessee and a BA in Music Education from Florida State University. Her research interests include exploring how library services impact scholarship and creative work; examining how outreach and engagement programming can foster community, promote diversity and inclusion, and promote student success; and the assessment of library programs and services.

Alisa Brewer, MSPH, is the Director of Community Engagement and Outreach at the Center on Health Disparities of Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) where she also shares a joint appointment for engagement consultation at the Office of Health Equity and Disparities Research (OHEDR) of VCU Massey Cancer Center. In these roles, Ms. Brewer provides coordination and advisory support to community-engaged activity, facilitating community–university strategies for partnership, outreach, and research. Ms. Brewer's expertise in community-based participatory research spans over 15 years in health promotion collaborations with varied audiences including community-, university-, clinical-, faith-, and school-based stakeholders. Working across the VCU community and alongside organizations and individuals throughout the Richmond metro area, Ms. Brewer offers insight to prioritizing community interests, the exchange of feedback and response delivery that promotes understanding, problem-solving, advocacy, and mutual benefit. Ms. Brewer is a graduate of the University of

South Carolina where she earned a Master of Science in Public Health with a concentration in Health Education, Promotion, and Behavior.

Peter Fernandez is the Head of Liaison Programs at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Libraries. He is interested in the effect of technology on patrons' interactions with libraries, particularly the implications of library values on these technologically mediated exchanges. Peter received his Master of Science in Information Science from the University of South Florida.

David Gwynn is Associate Professor and Digitization Coordinator for the University Libraries of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). He has led collaborative digitization projects funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), Library Services Technology Act, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the National Endowment for the Humanities, making thousands of local history resources available online at gateway.uncg.edu. In addition to coordinating digitized collections for UNCG, David is also chair of TriadHistory.org, a collaborative digital history initiative for the North Carolina Piedmont Triad region. Outside the library, David is also responsible for the creation and all content at Groceteria.com, a recognized research project documenting the architectural and geographic aspects of chain grocery retailing in the United States and Canada.

Emily J. Hurst, currently serving as the Deputy Director and Head of Research and Education for VCU Libraries, Health Sciences Library, has over 12 years of experience in health science libraries. She oversees the operations of a diverse group of liaison librarians and ensures that the library meets the information needs of health sciences students, faculty, and staff. In addition, she works closely on health outreach efforts in the Richmond community and supports efforts of the VCU Medical Center Health and Wellness Library to bring health information to the community. She has strong experience in various aspects of librarianship from social media use for promotion to outreach to consumers and health professionals. Emily has been recognized for her achievement in health science librarianship and leadership by the Medical Library Association as well as state and local library associations. Having previously worked as the Technology Coordinator for the Network of the National Library of Medicine, South Central Region, Emily has a strong background in providing access to reliable, high-quality health information resources to practitioners and patients alike.

Cinthyia Ippoliti has been a Librarian for over 20 years and has held roles at a wide variety of academic institutions. Most recently, as Director of the Auraria Library, Cinthyia provides direct administrative leadership for library services, spaces, partnerships, and programming on the tri-institutional Auraria Campus which includes the University of Colorado, Denver; Metropolitan State University of Denver, and Community College of Denver and serves approximately 35,000 highly diverse students in an urban setting. In collaboration with the Library's administrative team, she sets a strategic vision to develop new services, foster creativity and collaboration, and provide professional development and

mentorship opportunities for all library employees. Prior to joining the Auraria Library she was the Associate Dean for Research and Learning Services at Oklahoma State University and Head of Teaching and Learning at the University of Maryland Libraries. Her research interests include leadership, organizational development, and managing change.

Stacey Krim is Assistant Professor and Curator of Manuscripts in the Martha Blakeney Hodges Special Collections & University Archives at UNC Greensboro. She holds curatorship over archival collections devoted to local and regional history, visual and performing arts, creative writing, and women's history, including the UNC Greensboro Cello Music Collection, which provides access to researchers of the musical collections of cellists noted for their distinguished contributions in the areas of composition, performance, and pedagogy. Her responsibilities include overseeing archival processing of these collections, research support, donor relations, collection development, instruction and community outreach, and marketing. Stacey's research interests include interdepartmental collaboration, donor relations, and equity, diversity, and inclusion in archives.

Dana L. Ladd, PhD, is an Associate Professor on the faculty of VCU Libraries and has over 20 years of experience as a librarian. She manages the daily operations of the VCU Medical Center Health and Wellness Library where she provides patients, their family members, and the community with reliable consumer health information. Dr. Ladd has planned, developed, and conducted health information outreach and programming. She regularly teaches health literacy classes including basic health literacy, writing in plain language, identifying misinformation/evaluating health information for reliability, and finding reliable consumer health information. Dr. Ladd earned her Master's Degree in Information Science from the University of Tennessee, and she went on to receive an additional degree as a specialist in library and information science from the University of South Carolina. Dr. Ladd earned a doctorate in social and behavioral science from VCU's School of Medicine. Her dissertation focused on the health information needs of patients diagnosed with rare cancers and where patients prefer to find health information.

Erin Lawrimore has served as University Archivist at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro since 2011. In this role, she is responsible for collecting, preserving, and promoting the history of UNCG from its creation as the State Normal and Industrial School in 1891 through today. She is also the co-creator of Well Crafted NC, a research project focused on documenting the history of beer and brewing in North Carolina. Her other research interests include community-engaged archival practice, archival outreach, and American archives history and development. Erin holds a bachelor's degree in English from Duke University and a masters of science in information studies from the University of Texas at Austin. She previously worked as Assistant Head and Curator of the Special Collections Research Center at North Carolina State University, and as Coordinator for Acquisitions and Processing at the University of Tennessee

Special Collections Library. She has been an active member of the Society of American Archivists since 2001 and served on the organization's Council from 2016 to 2019.

Thura Mack, as Coordinator of Community Learning Services and Diversity Programs at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Libraries, leads the libraries' outreach program that connects to local schools in Knoxville and the surrounding community. Community Learning Services teaches information literacy and library research skills to university-bound students in programs such as CAPS (College Access and Persistence Services) and the University of Tennessee's Project GRAD (Graduation Really Achieves Dreams). CAPS provides college experiences to underrepresented and first-generation students. Project GRAD brings local inner-city high school students to campus for a week-long immersion in college life and coursework. Community Learning Services hosts an annual STEM Conference for high school students interested in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) professions. Thura holds a Bachelor's Degree from Knoxville College and a Master of Science in Information Sciences from the University of Tennessee. Thura is the 2021-2022 Macebearer for the University; she is the second African American to receive this honor. The Macebearer is the highest faculty honor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and is symbolic of the faculty's commitment of service to students, scholarship, and society. Thura also chairs the Libraries' Diversity Committee, which encourages respect and appreciation for individual differences through programs and resources that enhance knowledge and understanding of diversity. The Committee strives to provide leadership for the Libraries by meeting the needs of all its constituencies and special populations.

Abigail Mann spent over a decade as a Professor of English before seeing the light and returning to UNC-CH for her MLIS. As a librarian, she can continue the foundational work she did in teaching information literacy at the general education level, but do so in ways that think about cross-campus initiatives and lifelong outcomes for learners. She is currently the Online Learning Librarian at Illinois Wesleyan University, where she focuses on both creating online learning objects and helping faculty envision and design digital scholarship projects for pedagogical purposes. Her research interests include attitudes toward and beliefs about information among various stakeholders, open scholarship, and the elements and resources librarians bring into creating tutorials, especially in terms of constituent needs related to DEI. Her most recent publication, with Micah Vandegrift, is *Immersive Scholar: A Guidebook for Documenting and Publishing Experiential Scholarship Works*.

Martha E. Meacham is the Project Director of the Network of the National Library of Medicine (NNLM) (<https://nnlm.gov/>), which is part of the National Library of Medicine (NLM) within the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Previously, Martha was the Associate Director of the NNLM New England Region (NNLM NER) within the Lamar Soutter Library at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. She has also managed two VA Medical Center

libraries, worked with Association of American Medical Colleges, and was involved with patient education at Dana Farber Cancer Institute. Martha has a BS in Psychology and was a mental health counselor before going on to earn a Master of Library and Information Science and a Master of Arts in History from Simmons College in Boston.

Tony Nguyen, MLIS, AHIP, is the Executive Director at the Network of the National Library of Medicine (NNLM) in the Health Sciences and Human Services Library at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. Tony oversees the planning, implementation, management, and evaluation of the overall regional medical library program, oversees the day-to-day operations, and identifies regional opportunities to support NLM priorities and NNLM initiatives. Previously Tony served as a hospital librarian and liaised with the Graduate and Continuing Medical Education Programs, worked on the development of a Consumer Health Library, and conducted outreach to support aging adults in the community to use technology to locate and use health information resources. Tony coauthored a publication, *Advancing the conversation: next steps for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ) health sciences librarianship*, that was selected to receive the Ida and George Eliot Prize in 2017 by the Medical Library Association.

David Payne is the Chief of Neighborhood Library Services at Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, Maryland. David was born in England where he gained a BA in Humanities from Teesside University and his first experience of library work at the libraries of University College London. After subsequently moving to the United States he has enjoyed a varied career working at a number of urban public libraries. Starting as a reference librarian in Florida and Ohio, he then served as a branch manager at the Free Library of Philadelphia, Frederick County Public Libraries, and Montgomery County Libraries, both in Maryland. David also holds an MS in Library Science from Florida State University, and an MSc in Management of Library and Information Services from Aberystwyth University in Wales. Research undertaken by David as part of a dissertation requirement for the former provided the basis for much of the content of this chapter. David's interests include outreach to diverse communities, the provision of library services to underserved populations, and public library management.

Lauren Rosenthal brings 15 years of experience in public libraries as well as 9 years in the private sector to her work as the current Executive Director of the Elia Area Public Library District. Her greatest strength is the ability to see what the Library can do, and make it happen. As former Library Director for the Fox River Valley Public Library District (FRVPLD), Lauren worked with OpenGov to provide an online solution to library reporting, making the FRVPLD the first in the nation to integrate financial and statistical data into an online story so the community better understands all the library does and can celebrate successes together.

Molly Royse is an Associate Professor and Humanities Librarian at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Libraries, with liaison responsibilities for the English and Classics departments and the UT's Humanities Center. She has been with the UT Libraries since 2000, with former positions including Humanities Coordinator and Head of Research Collections. Prior to 2000, she held librarian positions at Kansas State University and Berea College, Kentucky. At Kansas State, she served as a Social Sciences Bibliographer and Coordinator of Multicultural Library Services. Molly received her Master of Science in Library Science from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and a BA and MA in English from Samford University. Her research interests and creative work focus on diversity and inclusion initiatives in libraries, the library's role in scholarly communication and open access initiatives, and collection development and management.

Brittney L. Thomas is the Associate Director of the Network of the National Library of Medicine (NNLM) All of Us Community Engagement Center based out of the Hardin Library for the Health Sciences at the University of Iowa. Brittney manages community engagement activities throughout the NNLM network to raise awareness of the National Institutes of Health All of Us Research Program. She received her BA in Art History and Theory from Iowa State University in 2008 and her MLIS from the University of Iowa in 2011. Her background and research interests are in community engagement and outreach, consumer health and public libraries, student success, learning spaces, and digital and media literacy.

Tess Wilson, originally from Kansas, transplanted herself to Pennsylvania to pursue an MFA in Creative Writing at Chatham University. After earning that degree, she spent an AmeriCorps year of service delivering early literacy programming throughout the city of Pittsburgh. Building on this experience and drawing on her time working in an academic library during college, she then earned her MLIS from the University of Pittsburgh. She was a research assistant for the Youth Data Literacy Project and later worked as a Civic Information Services intern at Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, both positions that energized her passion for data literacy. This work led to a position as an Outreach Librarian, after which she was hired as a Community Engagement Coordinator with the Network of the National Library of Medicine. Currently, she is the Program Manager with the Network of the National Library of Medicine's Training and Education Center, where she is especially interested in the intersections of equity, education, and engagement as they apply to the promotion of reliable health information. In addition, she works with a team of librarians to support library interest groups through research and training. Their most recent publication was a United for Libraries planner called *All Ages Welcome: Recruiting and Retaining Younger Generations for Library Boards, Friends Groups, and Foundations*.

April Wright is the Environmental Health Program Specialist with the Network of the National Library of Medicine (NNLM). She joined NNLM in 2018 as an

NNLM/All of Us Community Engagement Coordinator. April earned her BA in English from Morgan State University and MLS from the Catholic University of America. She has worked both in and on behalf of a variety of libraries during the course of her career. Her background includes public libraries management, programming and outreach, and grants management. She is interested in environmental justice and addressing social determinants of health through citizen/community science and community-engaged research.

Dr. Susan M. Wolfe, a Community Psychologist and Consultant, has over 30 years of professional experience. Her expertise includes coalition development and evaluation; health disparities and equity; cultural humility; and community engagement. She serves as an American Psychological Association Health Equity Ambassador; and an Advisor for the Community Tool Box.

Heather Zabski is the Assistant Director of Fox River Valley Public Library District. She has 15 years of experience working in libraries, with most of her experience being at public libraries. Heather has two years of experience working with Open Gov software and is responsible for maintaining the Transparency Dashboard for her library.

This page intentionally left blank

INTRODUCTION

By their nature, libraries of all types are closely engaged with their communities whether it is an academic campus, municipality, health-care organization, or corporation. Many libraries also go beyond their core mission and conduct outreach to additional constituencies, often by partnering with outside organizations and institutions. These collaborations contribute important services and resources that frequently assist underserved populations. The role of library managers and administrators is to provide the vision and leadership to ensure that these outreach and engagement activities are successful. As a first step, managers and their partners should conduct needs assessments to determine what types of programs are needed and desired in the target community. As projects are developed, effective, ongoing communication among partners and stakeholders is necessary for smooth implementation and completion. Once accomplished, outreach programs should be evaluated to make sure that resources are used appropriately and to plan future engagement activities. At all stages of a project, managers and collaborators must provide transparency to all community participants on the impact and success of the programs. The chapters in this book offer theoretical frameworks, strategies, and case studies about outreach and engagement projects for a variety of settings and audiences.

The volume begins with chapters on general management strategies that provide research, methods, and concepts that libraries can follow when considering outreach programs. First, Dana L. Ladd, Emily J. Hurst, and Alisa Brewer from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) describe outreach programs aimed to improve health literacy in their greater community with an emphasis on the role of the library manager in “Library Community Health Outreach: The Role of the Library Manager.” The VCU Health Sciences Library partnered with the Richmond City Health District to offer a variety of health literacy workshops for their community.

In “Building a Library Outreach Program through Community Engagement,” Cinthya Ippoliti from the University of Denver presents a framework for library managers that reimagines their outreach efforts to reflect a community engagement perspective where readers will learn how to solicit community and stakeholder input to plan and implement programs.

Martha Meacham, Tony Nguyen, Tess Wilson, and Abigail Mann from health science and academic libraries offer a foundation for future research on community partnerships in “Leveraging Community Connections: Project Management Outreach Expertise from Health Sciences Library and

Community-based Organization Leaders.” The authors conducted interviews with both library and community leaders to learn what best practices managers can follow for successful collaborations.

The next chapter, “Informing the Community Using Data Purposefully,” describes several specific community engagement programs linked to a mid-sized public library. Lauren Rosenthal and Heather Zabski take a look at how public libraries can use data to inform and engage the library board and the public, impacting funding and public sentiment.

Halfway through the book, the chapters delve deeper into specific settings and applications for outreach. Erin Lawrimore, David Gwynn, and Stacey Krim, archivists at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, in their chapter “From Peripheral to Essential: The Evolution of Outreach as a Core Archival Function,” take a look at how archival outreach has evolved in the past 100 years. At UNC Greensboro, archivists work at building both digitized collections and physical holdings, recognizing the idea of partnership instead of university ownership through community outreach collaboration with churches, the YMCA and a local nonprofit aimed at supporting the needs of the local LGBTQ+ community.

David Payne from Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore in his chapter entitled “Sharing the Same Agenda: The Public Library and the Deaf Community,” closely examines how the needs of the Deaf Community are being met in public libraries with a nationwide survey of members of the deaf community. The survey identified barriers to use of the library as well as pointing out the desirable aspects of a public library.

In “Taking Health Information to the Next level: Strategic Partnerships between NLM and Public Libraries” April Wright and Brittney Thomas from the National Library of Medicine, Asih Asikin-Garmager from the University of Iowa and Susan Wolfe, a community consultant provide a wealth of information about programs and resources available from the NLM. Public libraries can take advantage of staff training and materials in order to provide community workshops to improve digital and health literacy in their communities.

In the final chapter of this volume, “Diversity Conversations: Enabling Libraries to Serve New Communities,” Michelle Brannen, Peter Fernandez, Thura Mack, and Molly Royse look at the University of Tennessee Libraries’ 2019 organizational read program which featured Robin DiAngelo’s book, *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, which helped create diversity conversations to enable personal changes that facilitated more effective engagement. Examples are shared regarding how the program impacted the Libraries’ outreach efforts to three new communities, as well as details for future iterations and plans for the program to continue to expand beyond the Libraries.

Building Community Engagement and Outreach is an important addition to the literature on how libraries can work with their communities to provide critical services and resources. It provides valuable insights about the diverse ways that outreach can be accomplished within and through our communities and serves as a significant resource for both library managers, their staff, and their partners.

Joanne Hélouvy
Kathryn M. Crowe
Coeditors

This page intentionally left blank

LIBRARY COMMUNITY HEALTH OUTREACH: THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARY MANAGER

Dana L. Ladd, Emily J. Hurst, and Alisa Brewer

ABSTRACT

Adults in the United States have low health literacy skills which puts them at high risk for serious health consequences. Libraries have traditionally provided programming on a variety of topics for patrons but barriers such as technology and transportation access may prevent potential patrons from attending. Librarians can help increase the health literacy skills of community members by providing health outreach programming to the communities they serve. This chapter examines strategies and specific examples that library managers can implement to facilitate technology and health literacy skills through programming in communities.

Keywords: Health literacy; community outreach; technology; library management; health literacy; outreach

INTRODUCTION

With only 12% of US adults at a level of proficient health literacy, the US adult population is at a disadvantage for adverse health outcomes and overall increased healthcare costs ([National Center for Education Statistics, 2006](#)). While strategies exist for improving health literacy through the use of clear communication techniques such as writing and communicating in plain language, these strategies are found to be limited “pieces of a process that must be placed in a larger community context” ([National Network of Libraries of Medicine, 2018](#)). Compounding the health literacy problem are disparities in access to health resources multiplied by effects of social determinants of health

such as aging, low socioeconomic status and being part of a minority population. Today's technology rapidly evolves and requires patients to possess the skills to keep pace in order to access online health information and resources (Levy, Janke, & Langa, 2015; Sarkar et al., 2010). Addressing these factors through cultural and community-informed health literacy strategies engages individuals in promoting self-advocacy for health.

Libraries have traditionally provided services and programming aimed at promoting library resources. These educational programming events may take place in the library, at events, or in other common community spaces. Through consumer health (health information and services aimed at the general public) outreach programming, librarians can promote health in the communities they serve through improving the health literacy skills of consumers. Libraries can work to develop programming that will encompass both health literacy skills and technology skills development in the communities they serve. Library managers play a strong role in facilitating the process of developing and implementing programs. In this chapter, our purpose is to demonstrate through the use of two case studies the need for libraries to participate in public health technology and health literacy outreach and the role of the library manager in outreach support. We provide specific examples of the librarian manager's role in successful health outreach to the community and strategies for providing effective health literacy outreach. Working collaboratively to address these issues of improving health literacy and the burden of social determinants of health, the authors of this chapter discovered temporary and sustainable supports and solutions for the community. Each of the project partners brings expertise, knowledge, and access to resources or knowledge. This combination of knowledge, experience, background, and access helped create programs that address specific social determinants of health in a particular community.

LITERATURE REVIEW – OUTREACH

Various programs addressing health topics are provided at numerous public libraries throughout the United States. Popular classes on technology use and skill development are also commonplace. Seeking opportunities to combine health literacy and digital literacy through programming and engagement opportunities provide an intersection for knowledge transfer. Additionally, creating strategic partnerships with community health organizations, hospitals, and even health science libraries also leverages expertise for community benefit. Library and project managers are key to building relationships within the community and promoting programming or expanding services. A manager must be able to oversee both internal and external relationships, as well as aspects of the project or program through strategic leadership. For any outreach activity it is incumbent upon the manager to work closely with partners to create project goals, appropriate strategies, and timelines that are informed by the needs of the community.

A review of the literature finds that sufficient information on the management of outreach programs in libraries is significantly lacking. A 2011 review of support for outreach in academic libraries determined that outreach efforts may be managed informally, through committees, or on an ad hoc basis, varying from library to library. Further complicating the review of literature on this topic is the definition of “outreach.” Outreach is broadly defined and differs from library to library (Carter & Seaman, 2011). The American Library Association defines the role, work, skills, and conditions of the outreach librarian but does not readily provide a working definition for outreach in libraries. Instead, the work description is based on librarians who “serve a variety of people based on the environment and the population which their library seeks to serve.” Outreach librarians also “develop new and innovative services...” and their audience may be those who are “nonusers” of current services or programs (American Library Association, 2021). Within the academic library community, outreach may include the provision of services to specific groups of students or faculty. In public libraries, outreach may be focused on community engagement and working to provide meaningful services to the general public who have access to the library. However, the Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries (AAHSL) defines outreach as “service... to groups or for individuals not affiliated with the library’s parent institution(s)” (Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries, 2021). This definition provides specifics not available from the ALA and which differ greatly from the accepted use of the term in most academic libraries.

The diverse use of the term outreach may be one reason why the management of outreach activities also varies. Often outreach programs evolve to include collaborators from outside the library, in which case the librarian may serve as a project lead or program manager or library staff lead aspects of a specific program or project.

LITERATURE REVIEW – PUBLIC HEALTH/ HEALTH LITERACY

For decades, the public health field has recognized that social determinants surpass genetics, healthcare, health behaviors, and the physical environment to have the greatest impact on health outcomes (Franks, Clancy, & Gold, 1993). Healthy People 2020 defines social determinants as conditions in the environments or places in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2020). These social and economic conditions affect and are affected by where people live. Depending on quality of life, people living in these conditions may require additional support to ensure they have fair opportunities (i.e., health equity). Examples of resources that would increase health equity may include safe and affordable housing, public safety, transportation assistance, availability of

healthy foods, access to educational opportunities including health literacy training, access to the internet and reliable and accurate consumer health information ([US Department of Health and Human Services, 2020](#)).

Understanding the relationship between how population groups experience social and living conditions and the roles these conditions play is not only a public health issue but a library and community-wide concern as well. Because they are fundamental to health, outreach program planning can and should take these factors into consideration. Program participants often contend with unreliable transportation, lack of access to the internet at home, lack of experience using technology to access health information, and lack of access to internet-accessible devices for accessing consumer health information.

Healthy People 2020 examples of social determinants include:

- Availability of resources to meet daily needs (e.g., safe housing and local food markets)
- Access to educational, economic, and job opportunities
- Access to healthcare services
- Quality of education and job training
- Availability of community-based resources in support of community living and opportunities for recreational and leisure-time activities
- Transportation options
- Public safety
- Social support
- Social norms and attitudes (e.g., discrimination, racism, and distrust of government)
- Exposure to crime, violence, and social disorder (e.g., presence of trash and lack of cooperation in a community)
- Socioeconomic conditions (e.g., concentrated poverty and the stressful conditions that accompany it)
- Residential segregation
- Language/literacy
- Access to mass media and emerging technologies (e.g., cellphones, the Internet, and social media)
- Culture

([United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2020](#))

Working to establish policies that positively influence social and economic conditions has, in turn, the capability to support change in individual behavior and health outcomes ([US Department of Health and Human Services, 2020](#)). Librarians should consider which social conditions may impact the health of their patrons and what can be done to address them. It is important to recognize that a library may not have the ability to address a social determinant of health alone. The library may be able to serve as a connector or create common ground or opportunity to collaborate with community partners who can address certain topics more effectively.

In addition to the social determinants of health, health literacy plays an important role and impacts health outcomes. There are varying definitions of health literacy but one standard definition of health literacy is, “the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions” (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2010). As stated previously, only 12% of adults in the United States have proficient health literacy skills. The risk factors for having low health literacy include: age (over the age 65); race (racial groups other than White); education level (below high school grade level); income (level below the poverty level); language (first language other than English); and health status (those who report low health status). Factors such as stress, illness, cognitive impairment, hearing/visual impairments, and medications also impact health literacy level.

Health literacy skills allow people to successfully navigate the healthcare environment and make appropriate and informed health decisions. Low health literacy often leads to medication errors, reduced use of preventive services such as health screenings and vaccinations, and ineffective management of chronic health conditions. These factors can have serious health consequences. Patients with low health literacy are also more likely to visit an emergency room, have increased hospital stays, are less likely to follow their treatment regimen, and have a higher mortality rate than those with higher levels of health literacy (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). Health literacy training aimed at librarians is accessible through professional organizations such as the Medical Library Association, the Network of the National Library of Medicine or other regional or national groups. Using skills developed through training, librarians can develop programs focused on health literacy and partner with community leaders to develop programs on specific aspects of health literacy that would be of benefit to the community.

OUTREACH PROJECT CASE STUDIES

In this section we describe two outreach projects designed and implemented by library management, university, and community partners to reduce health disparities by improving health and digital literacy. We also demonstrate the library manager’s roles through these outreach projects conducted in neighborhood resource centers and public libraries in historically African American, low-income, food, and resource desert communities in the city of Richmond, Virginia.

Background

The Health and Wellness Library is the outreach arm of the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Libraries Health Sciences Library. The Health Sciences Library serves the students, staff, and faculty on the health sciences campus of VCU Libraries. The Health and Wellness Library is a library

located in a large academic medical center for patients, their family members, and the community to find reliable consumer-level health information. The Health and Wellness Library provides health information services, on-site library health and wellness information programs, and outreach to the community.

The VCU Center on Health Disparities (CoHD) is the 2005 response to emerging evidence of barriers to equitable healthcare at the local, state, and national levels. Through concerted efforts and programs initiated to facilitate research, train a diverse and competent workforce, and transform disparate communities through community engagement and outreach initiatives, the CoHD aims to reduce health disparities and improve health across the state. By employing a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach to all engagement activity, advisory, and coalition participation, the CoHD acts as a convener bringing academic and public service representatives together in partnership with local neighbors and communities throughout the greater Richmond metro area, as recognized by multiinvestigator sponsored awards and accolades for successful transference of science into practice (e.g., university-community developed and copyrighted e-learning modules, addressing maternally modifiable risk factor programming named an Association for Maternal Child Health Providers (AMCHP) evidence-based best practice, and digital literacy and consumer health programming selected by the Network of the National Library of Medicine (NNLM) for the Community Engagement Toolkit under Case Studies and Success Stories).

Recognizing the potential of participatory strides and health literacy, partners at VCU Libraries and CoHD combined resources of public health education, library information, health literacy, and project management to facilitate training and community support to benefit advocacy, navigation, and health literacy skills development in the local community. Below are two case studies outlining the collaborative projects.

Case Study 1: Preterm Birth Prevention Project

Preterm birth, a human birth at 37 weeks or less gestation, is the leading cause of neonatal mortality in the United States (Damus, 2008; Tucker & McGuire, 2004). Over the past decade, and despite a 15% decline in infant mortality, the United States leads with the highest rates of infant mortality above all industrialized countries (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017). Of those babies that survive, health risks due to preterm birth are known to persist throughout life with higher rates of chronic illness, shorter life spans, and generational risks for future offspring. Additionally, highest rates of preterm birth are found among African Americans followed by Native American and Hispanics with lower rates in non-Hispanic White and Asian Americans (Tucker & McGuire, 2004). As data suggest the need to investigate complex factors associated with preterm birth and multifaceted interventions to reduce its incidence, community-based participatory approaches may be one such solution (DeWalt, Berkman, Sheridan, Lohr, & Pignone, 2004; Kramer et al., 2001; MacDorman, 2011).

The *Preterm Birth Prevention Project* was a five-year technology and community-based research study to address health literacy as a potential reason for decades of preterm birth disparities (Nutbeam, 2008; Vanderbilt, Wright, Brewer, Murithi, & Coney, 2016; Weiner & Weiner, 2014). Because evidence shows that most prenatal education efforts do not adequately address health literacy or the fundamental literacy levels of many pregnant women, especially low-income and ethnic minority women, project partners believed that computer-assisted instruction could be a promising solution. Using standardized graphics, videos, quizzes, and narrated audio by community-relatable avatars to emphasize plain language and local relevance, this computer-assisted intervention (CAI) aimed to minimize obstacles of written word and patient-provider barriers while allowing participants to proceed at their own learning pace. Funding for this project came from the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD), P60MD002256.

The specific aims of the project were: (1) to conduct a needs assessment to identify the intellectual access factors and information needs of pregnant African American individuals to assist them in making health-related decisions regarding pregnancy and communicating with healthcare providers, and (2) to develop and implement a CAI to increase knowledge of preterm birth prevention behavior. Consistent with the principles of CBPR, intervention specifics were implemented under the guidance of an advisory board of community stakeholders. Project outcomes included the development of e-learning modules to communicate health information and provide access to an online repository of local resources on preterm birth prevention and general health. Five interactive education modules were developed using online storyboard training software (Articul8te):

- *Computer Basics*: This is a crash course on computer use and navigating the training resource. It teaches the first steps to using computers and contains practice activities.
- *Born Too Soon*[®]: The peer health advocate's toolkit to preterm birth teaches what preterm birth is, why it is a problem, and behavior practices to solve the problem.
- *The Internet and My Health*: This module provides information about how and where to search online for reliable information and how to evaluate online information for credibility.
- *Let's Talk*: Provides patients and providers with health literacy and health communication skills.
- *It Takes a Village*: This module contains advocacy and job-readiness skills for community leaders.

Over 250 adults from five local health resource centers participated in the study (Table 1). About 95.2% were African American, 78.4% were unmarried, and 69.2% had household incomes less than \$10,000. The majority of participants identified as female (75.2%). Only 3.6% held a college degree or higher, and most were between the ages of 25–34 years old. Most participants had given birth

Table 1. Distribution of Participant Demographics ($n = 250$).

Variables	Variable Labels	n (%)
Race	American Indian or Alaskan Native	2 (0.8)
	Asian or Pacific Islander	3 (1.2)
	Black or African American	238 (95.2)
	Hispanic/Latino	0
	White/Caucasian	3 (1.2)
	Other (more than two races)	4 (1.6)
Marital status	Single (never married)	196 (78.4)
	Married	28 (11.2)
	Widowed	4 (1.6)
	Divorced	9 (3.6)
	Separated	13 (5.2)
Household income	Less than \$10,000	173 (69.2)
	\$10,000 to \$19,999	49 (19.6)
	\$20,000 to \$29,999	21 (8.4)
	\$30,000 to \$39,999	4 (1.6)
	\$40,000 to \$49,999	2 (0.8)
	\$50,000 and more	1 (0.4)
Gender	Male	62 (24.8)
	Female	188 (75.2)
Education level	12th grade or less (no diploma)	105 (42.0)
	High school diploma	76 (30.4)
	Some college, no degree	44 (17.6)
	Associate or technical degree	16 (6.4)
	Bachelor's degree	6 (2.4)
Age	Graduate degree/professional	3 (1.2)
	18–24	59 (23.6)
	25–34	73 (29.2)
	35–44	47 (18.8)
	45–54	42 (16.8)
Birth giving experience	55+	29 (11.6)
	Yes	157 (62.8)
Preterm birth experience	No	93 (37.2)
	Yes	52 (20.8)
	No	198 (79.2)

(62.8%) of which 79.2% had no experience with having a preterm birth. Results showed an overall increase in participants' knowledge on their assessment scores after the e-learning modules. Differences pre- and postintervention were statistically significant at alpha 0.05 level, supporting the assumption that interactive computer-based instructional modules are an effective means of obtaining health knowledge (Table 2).