

# RETHINKING OUR MOBILITY: SUPPORTING OUR PATRONS WHERE THEY LIVE

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## BACKGROUND

The smartphone is rapidly becoming a common tool in the healthcare environment. Increasing numbers of students began asking for assistance in identifying and loading information resources onto their devices. In

anticipation of the release of a mobile VPN to access the University's wireless network, the Library began developing materials and services to provide support to patrons.

- As more resources become available in a mobile format, they will be added to the website. We anticipate a library catalog update in a few months that will provide access to a mobile-friendly interface.
- From October 2010 to mid-April 2011, the mobile website received 435 hits in its first six months of existence.



<http://www.gwumc.edu/library/mobile>

## MOBILE SURVEY

To get a better understanding of the prevalence and use of smartphones among our students, the library conducted a survey in the summer of 2010 soliciting feedback from medical, public health, and health sciences students regarding their mobile usage and preferences.

- 102 students responded: 46 medical students, 44 public health students, 14 health sciences students
- 34 students reported using some sort of mobile device; 70% reported using an iPhone or iPod Touch; 30% reported using another device such as Android or Blackberry
- 31 students reported envisioning using an iPhone, iPod Touch or other mobile device to access medical or public health resources in the future
- 60% of respondents said they would use their mobile device for library reference assistance (IM, text, email, or phone reference)
- 86% of respondents said they would like to renew books and place holds via the library catalog using their mobile device
- Mobile websites currently used by medical and health sciences students included: PubMed, Dynamed, MDConsult, Epocrates, Skyscape, Google, WebMD, medical texts online, JAMA, PLOS, Science, and NEJM.
- Mobile websites currently used by public health students included PubMed, Health Affairs, Web of Science, New York Times-Science section, Washington Post Science section, and Google Scholar.
- Desired mobile apps included Dynamed, PubMed, the library's catalog, Blackboard, Epocrates, journal searching, e-books, and additional functionality such as room reservations or library book requests.

## MOBILE WEBSITE

Based on the information obtained from the survey, the library developed a mobile web page; one of the first mobile web pages on campus. We wanted to be proactive and have our website ready for use once the University launched its smartphone VPN client.

- The library's mobile website contains sections for databases, calculators, drug resources, library catalog requests, utilities, mobile reference (Ask Us), and basic information such as hours and a campus map.
- The majority of the linked resources are mobile-formatted resources (apps or mobile-optimized websites); however some desired options such as the library catalog are not yet available in a mobile format.

## MOBILE DROP-IN SESSIONS

- As part of the mobile initiatives launch, the library also initially offered four two-hour afternoon drop-in sessions. These scheduled sessions at the library's Technology Help Desk were geared toward providing students with one-on-one assistance in loading apps, accessing the University's wireless network, and resolving any other library-related mobile issues.
- The drop-in sessions proved popular. Additional sessions were scheduled for the fall and continued into the spring semester.
- The session times were staggered with some beginning at noon and others starting later in the afternoon, in order to accommodate various course schedules for students in different schools.
- As of mid-April 2011, attendance at the noon time sessions ranged from 1 to 10 people, and at the afternoon sessions from 0 to 6 people.
- A total of ten sessions have been held, with two more scheduled for June 2011 to accommodate summer session students.
- Common requests during these sessions include assistance accessing the GW wireless network, and account requests for Dynamed and Epocrates Essentials.
- The most popular devices are iPhones, iPod Touches, Android devices, and iPads.
- Since the GW wireless network does not support Blackberry devices, we suspect that may be the reason for the lack of participation at the drop-in sessions by Blackberry users.



**Himmelfarb Library  
Mobile Device Drop-In Hours**

Want help loading apps onto your mobile device?  
Want to learn more about mobile websites or apps for medicine or public health?

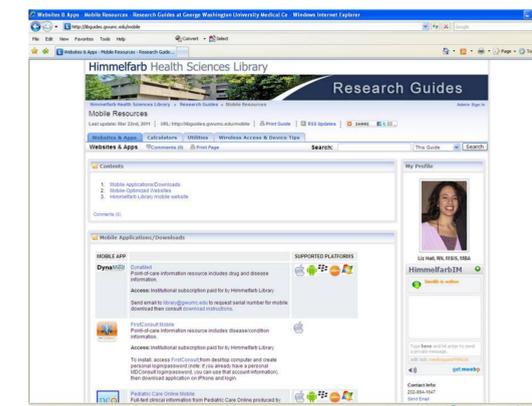
Stop by the service desk on the 3rd floor of Himmelfarb Library.  
Himmelfarb staff will be available to assist you on:

- August 17th from 3-5pm
- September 21st from 3-5pm
- October 19th from 3-5pm
- November 16th from 3-5pm

## MOBILE LIBGUIDE

The Reference Desk receives numerous questions from patrons about smartphones; everything from resource availability to platform and purchase advice. In order to gather all of our mobile information together, the reference staff developed a LibGuide that is available to patrons at all times.

- It includes a section on specific health information mobile-optimized websites and apps; both freely available and obtained via the library's electronic resource licenses. Another section provides links to free and fee-based clinical calculators, and a third section focuses on mobile utilities for GW users.
- From October 2010 to March 2011, the Mobile LibGuide received 965 hits. The majority of viewers visited the Websites and Apps page (609 hits), while Calculators (98 hits), Utilities (99 hits), and Wireless Access and Device Tips (159 hits) received less traffic.
- One section gathers practical information on the various platforms as well as step-by-step instructions on accessing GW's wireless network from a mobile device.



## FUTURE

- The mobile website continues to evolve. A few additional resources have been linked to the site, and some of the category wording has been tweaked to be clearer.
- In early 2011, the University launched their mobile app and a link to the library's mobile website has been included in the app.
- The Mobile Resources LibGuide is also evolving. We realized that the layout we had chosen to display the mobile apps and mobile-optimized websites is not easily viewable on a handheld device, so we are experimenting with new layouts that will display more easily on a mobile device.
- As additional resources become available, we plan to add them to both the mobile website and the Mobile Resources LibGuide.
- Due to the popularity of mobile devices, the reference staff has begun experimenting with QR codes. A QR code is a barcode that can be photographed with a smartphone and then decoded with free software nearly instantaneously. The bar code can be linked to a website or web-based resource. For example, to view the Himmelfarb Library mobile website, photograph and decode this QR code.

