**Background**

The librarians of the Himmelfarb Health Sciences Library witnessed a number of trends in the past 8 years:

- Traditional focus on meeting the needs of on-site graduate and professional students expanded to on-site health sciences programs.
- Undergraduate programs in clinical laboratory science, emergency health services, clinical leadership and management, and clinical research administration introduced via distance education platforms.
- New user groups emerged: individuals with some or all of their undergraduate training completed who wished to enter or advance in a health professions career.

The Himmelfarb Health Sciences Library initially struggled to meet the needs of these non-traditional students and eventually devised a number of programs and services to support the research and educational needs of these students, including:

- Educational distance education faculty on copyright, off-campus access options, and online resources at the annual health sciences faculty retreat, through the library liaison program, and via the creation of online tutorials.
- Revamping of the Library's web page to emphasize easy use of and access to online resources and highlighting the logistics of obtaining passwords, off-campus access, and on-campus contact information.
- Inclusion of multi-disciplinary databases such as ARL/Inform Complete on the Library's home page to meet general education needs.
- The extension of strictly health sciences resources to the main academic gateway to improve undergraduate exposure to these tools.
- Responsibility for a 1-credit, online course, Foundations of Management Information Systems.
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**University Writing Program**

To promote scholarship, critical thinking, and academic excellence among undergraduates, the University created a seven-credit, mandatory writing program for all students:

- Every freshman takes a 4-credit writing seminar focused on a theme, such as "Shakespeare and Love" or "Conspiracy Theory," which includes three increasingly complex writing assignments.
- During Sophomore and Junior years, students are required to take two 3-credit writing-intensive courses within their respective disciplines.
- Departments providing extensive support to the program include the Writing Center and the Gelman Library, the University's main undergraduate library.

**The Issue of Distance Education Students in the Health Sciences**

Health Sciences distance education students posed a special problem as the University implemented its Writing Program:

- Each student enters the SMHS distance education program with at least 60 credits completed, including 6 credits in English composition.
- Should the University's writing requirements apply to them or should the program be adapted in some way to reflect their advanced status?

The solution: Beginning fall 2007, students working toward a BS in Clinical Management and Leadership and Clinical Research Administration must also complete HSCI 112: Writing in the Health Sciences. In late August, the Library was asked to incorporate a literature research and information skills module with assignments into the curriculum with a one-month deadline.

**Steps to Success**

Librarians initially groaned at the assignment and then moved quickly to seize the opportunity by:

- Identifying topics essential to student writing projects in the health sciences including:
  - Selecting health sciences and general online resources.
  - Steps in the online research process.
  - Analytical skills for evaluating resources.
  - Using research materials to support an argument.
  - Reviewing existing instructional content for repurposing online.
  - On-campus orientations for new students.
  - Specialized research skills classes for Nurse Practitioner students.
  - Evidence-based medicine classes for residents.
  - Informatics modules on evaluation and the web developed in Blackboard to support the HSCL 106 course and Problem-Based Learning.
  - Tutorials on searching MEDLINE.

"Overall, this process was somewhat frustrating. As our reading in the provided links state, sometimes it is difficult to find exactly what I am looking for. I was quite pleased to learn we have access to many different tools in our library and can go to one place to search many databases. I often look at the internet as the easiest place to search, but it is not always the most accurate and for reliable science information I would not use this at all if possible..."

**Student Response and Instructor Feedback**

To say the least, we were overwhelmed with the student response to the assignment. Our impressions were as follows:

- Every student completed the assignment fully.
- Based on the depth and range of responses, most students had clearly completed the tutorials and applied the principles taught.
- No one was shy about providing peer feedback; comments and suggestions from students were voluminous! We had a hard time keeping up with the amount of student-provided reading!
- Students, not surprisingly, were more comfortable navigating the web in general than in searching databases for peer-reviewed articles.
- Most indicated that they had learned new skills and felt that the process had taught them how to research policy issues.
- The instructors reviewed each response carefully and posted feedback online much as the student peer reviewers did. They also posted sample searches and answers online so that students could review suggested answers.

**Future Plans**

The success of this module resulted in the following:

- Creation of a formal online tutorial using this content in Canvas.
- Planning meetings with the Instructional Technology Staff in the Health Sciences Programs to increase the presence of both the librarians themselves and the Library's resources within the curriculum.
- Exploration of additional tutorial topics for students and faculty.
- Participation in live webinars for faculty on incorporating online resources into the curriculum.

"This process gave me many more avenues to go down when conducting searches. I typically have simply used google and yahoo. The information helped me to realize the importance of considering the slants that may be placed on these sources. The text book information was the most solid to me. It was easy to understand and I felt that the information was good. I would use the textbooks and journals in the future. I have been most comfortable with internet searches, but now understand the other valuable tools available..."