Chapter 5
Exploring Opportunities in Health Science Information Instructional Outreach: A Case Study Highlighting One Academic Library’s Experience

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ABSTRACT
The scope of library service in the health sciences has changed dramatically in recent years. Beyond the typical library instruction service which has commonly been viewed as requiem for academic classroom teaching, the advent of distance education in the health sciences and cohorts at hospitals has called for academic health science librarians to explore new opportunities in health science instruction outreach and delivery of instructional service in a multitude of creative ways. This chapter will report on an actual case study of a health science librarian at an academic institution who targeted a specific group of users, designing and offering library instruction to remote students in regional hospitals and online distance education classes. The case study will present the challenges and successes of a new health sciences librarian performing outreach through various marketing and relationship building efforts in an academic library that services health science students in cohorts at six regional hospitals as well as nationally online in a distance education program.

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ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

In January 2016, the Carl S. Swisher Library at Jacksonville University hired an Emerging Technologies and Health Sciences Librarian, a newly created position, to facilitate a seamless user experience for the university’s 1,600 plus health science students when using the library’s resources both on campus and remotely. The university provides not only on the ground classes to health science students, but additionally in collaboration with Bisk an online management company that since 1995, has helped universities advance their commitment to education through the development of online degree and certificate programs. Bisk/University Alliance is a company that partners with universities to help finance, develop and support the university’s online programs. Distance Learning students in areas across the United States were serviced. Additionally, Jacksonville University has cohorts of health science classes at six regional hospitals. Hospitals serviced included: Orange Park Medical Center, Saint Vincent’s Southside Hospital, Baptist Downtown Hospital, The Mayo Clinic of Jacksonville, the Baptist Beaches Hospital, and Baptist South Hospital. Students in fields including Nursing, Medical Informatics, Mental Health Counseling, Orthodontics, Kinesiology, and other such health science fields were all being serviced by the library.

All of these health science students being serviced were in need of intense library instruction in not only how to access the library’s resources remotely, but also in databases such as PubMed, Ovid, Cinahl and the myriad of health science information online resources that are commonly used in health science libraries today. Students were also in need of intensive instruction as to how to conduct literature searches and other health science research as well as general instruction on how to access the library website and use it efficiently. The health science students were in programs that were both undergraduate and graduate with degrees being sought for bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees in areas including nursing, mental health counseling, orthodontics, kinesiology and other related fields. Given the lack of instruction in how to use the library’s resources that had been provided to these remote library users, the library staff were being inundated with questions about how to access the resources from off campus as well as overwhelmed by complaints concerning library access issues, specifically the student’s inability to access, locate, and retrieve the information they were looking for. This was the problem that needed to be addressed immediately upon the arrival of the new health sciences librarian.
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