Learning Resource Center (LRC) Project
American International Health Alliance (AIHA)

Outreach Activities

Dear Information Coordinators,

In your everyday LRC practices you are organizing different types of events and provide services that are called outreach activities. This message is aimed at describing some of the possibilities of outreach and providing examples that can be useful for effective and sustainable LRC work.

Although the word "outreach" is used frequently in library and information science, it is difficult to find a concise definition of the term. Usually it means specific activities that are undertaken by information professionals and librarians to reach beyond or surpass the boundaries of their traditional on-site services.

In the LRC project, outreach can include different types of activities, like one-to-one conversations with staff at your organization, presentations at meetings, or distribution of handout materials. These outreach activities vary in format and content depending on the goal of the particular activity and the target audience.

In general, the main goals of each outreach activity are to make your LRC resources and services more accessible to your users and to make your audience aware of the possibilities of modern information technologies in health care and medicine.

The follwoing was stated in the report of the AIHA staff about their visits to LRC in the countries of the former Soviet Union:

"During the recent site visits, we very much liked the way one chief physician explained how he sees the work of the LRC: it has its primary and secondary users. The primary users are the people who come to the center, use the computer, Internet, CD-ROMs, etc. and benefit from the LRC directly. Secondary users are the people who read the materials disseminated by the LRC. When the LRC produces educational brochures, bulletins, print-outs from different sites, etc., its reach and impact becomes far greater. Institutional staff, patients and the public who don't have the time or necessary skills to get on the computer are still able to benefit from its resources."

The content of your oral and printed messages also depends on the level of "computer / information literacy" of your audience. Many of info coordinators have provided training in computer and Internet literacy for their staff and believe that after that they can use computers and search the Internet on their own and don't need any further support or attention. But this is only partly true, as every day the Internet provides new possibilities for information retrieval and dissemination, search tools and databases are constantly changing their user interfaces, and new Web-based initiatives are started by and for medical professionals. In this situation you have to work out ways to continually update your colleagues on the latest developments.

Many information coordinators produce printed brochures, leaflets, and lists of Web sites that contain information about these new resources – either available through the LRC or in general on the Internet. These printed materials are distributed at meetings, posted on the bulletin boards outside LRC, and disseminated to other organizations (health care institutions, medical schools and other educational institutions, public libraries). In large institutions, LRCs may send regular updates to personal e-mail addresses provided for the staff and also regularly post the new information on the institution's Web site.

Here are a few examples:

• A printed and electronic bulletin, "Navigator for the Medical Internet," was regularly published by the LRC of the Scientific Center of Pediatrics and Children's Surgery in Almaty, Kazakhstan.
• Leaflets about LRC resources were distributed to other health care organizations of the city by the LRC at Minsk Policlinic#36 in Belarus.
• CD-ROMs with lecture materials and links to Internet resources were distributed after lectures provided by the LRC in Kurgan Maternity Hospital #1 (Russia) for high school students interested in the medical profession.
• International medical news was presented at morning conferences on a regular basis at the Scientific Center of Pediatrics and Children's Surgery in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Because the production of an LRC bulletin or newsletter on a regular basis can be very time-consuming, info coordinators may want to consider sharing the responsibility for producing a bulletin with other info coordinators or colleagues. For example, you could try to find info coordinators from other institutions who are interested in cooperating with you in these activities.

Another type of outreach activity is to produce and/or disseminate information materials targeted for non-professionals – patients, their families, and the general public. This type of activity is very important since the ultimate goal of every healthcare institution is the development of healthy citizens. The LRC can help support this objective by supporting information dissemination on health promotion-related topics to the public. LRCs can help with their special outreach activities in several ways. For example:

• In some departments of the Schuche Central Regional Hospital (Russia), the information coordinator provided appropriate materials for customized patient information bulletins – based on topics selected by the patients themselves

One more type of outreach activity involves reaching out to other organizations and institutions within your region. You can give presentations to other health care or related institutions to let them know about the LRC model and how it has helped your own institution. This kind of outreach will help to replicate the best practices of LRC project and thus increase the impact of your LRC on providing health care in the region. For example:

• The information coordinator from Kharkiv Oblast Student Hospital (Ukraine) was invited to the Kharkiv Politechnical University (where they have an information center for staff and students) to make a presentation about her LRC organization and services.
• The information coordinator from Astana Family Center "Demeu" (Kazakhstan) made a presentation for the faculty of the Astana Medical College – where she described LRC

functions and goals, resources and services.

All of the above examples show possible ways to expand LRC outreach activities that will help to fulfill your main goals, find new partners (in medical and educational institutions), and support the long-term sustainability of your LRC. Through the LRC mailing lists and discussion forums you can share your own experience with other information coordinators, and ask for their advice. These forums are intended to encourage information exchange and collaboration.

The following mailing lists and forums are functional for now:

LRCnetwork mailing list
http://groups.google.com/group/lrcnetwork?hl=en
The main topics of the list are - medical information resources and services,evidence-based practice, clinical guidelines, information and computer technologies in medicine, information on medical education, healthy lifestyles and health promotion. The list has now more than 350 subscribers from 25 countries. It is the place to post your information requests, and share experiences about LRC activities.
Discussion forums on LRC network:
- Distant learning
  http://lrcnetwork.org/en/forum/11
- Electronic medical records
  http://lrcnetwork.org/en/forum/8
- Evidence-based practice
  http://lrcnetwork.org/en/forum/7
- Information access
  http://lrcnetwork.org/en/forum/6
- Sustainability and grants
  http://lrcnetwork.org/en/forum/10
- Telemedicine
  http://lrcnetwork.org/en/forum/9

If you have any questions about joining LRCnetwork mailing list and registering at LRCnetwork Web site - please contact webmaster and list manager Grigory Naumovets at gri@aiha.kiev.ua

LRC-Ethiopia mailing list
http://groups.google.com/group/lrc-Ethiopia?hl=en
The main topics of the list are - LRC project activities in Ethiopia, medical information resources and services, information on medical education and health care in the region, medical conferences, grants and funding opportunities. If you have any questions about using the list, please contact list owner Mark Storey mstorey@igc.org

LRC-Zambia mailing list
http://groups.google.com/group/lrc-Zambia?hl=en
The main topics of the list are - LRC project activities in Zambia, medical information resources and services, information on medical education and health care in the region, medical conferences, grants and funding opportunities. If you have any questions about using the list, please contact list owner Mark Storey mstorey@igc.org

On the AIHA and LRC web sites you can find ideas and materials for you LRC brochures, newsletters, patient education leaflets.

American International Health Alliance
http: //www.aiha.com

Twinning Against HIV/AIDS
http://www.twinningagainstaids.org/

LRC Network
http://lrcnetwork.org

Since October 2001 till January 2009 LRC project staff produced a monthly «Health Resources Digest» to inform LRCs about useful Internet resources (each monthly issue was devoted to a specific topic) . All issues of the Health Resources Digest are archived at http://www.eurasiahealth.org/eng/misc/publications/publication3?PAGE=0& in pdf format. Here are some examples of topics covered in these publications:

- December 2008 - Evidence-Based Social Work
- May 2008 - Information and Communication Technologies for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Treatment
- April 2008 - Internet Resources on Primary Immunodeficiency Diseases
- December 2007 - Internet Resources on Grants and Funding
- November 2007 - HIV/AIDS and Youth
- October 2007 - Monitoring Adverse Drug Reactions
- May 2007 - Web-based Training
- October 2006 - Multimedia Medical Internet Resources
- August 2006 - Drug information on the Internet
- February 2005 - Evidence Based Nursing Resources
- January 2005 - Health Statistics Resources on the Internet
- December 2004 - Rational Antibiotic Use in Hospitals
- August 2004 - Internet Resources on ARV Drugs
- June 2004 - Internet Resources on Malaria Prevention and Control

More advice on outreach activities you can also find in LRC Toolkit at http://toolkit.lrcnetwork.org/

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