Capturing Students’ International Experiences:
 eScholarship@UMMS and International Medical Education

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Introduction
eScholarship@UMMS, a service of the Lamar Soutter Library, is a digital repository offering worldwide access to the scholarly output of the University of Massachusetts Medical School. The collaboration between eScholarship and the International Medical Education Program was initiated by medical students interested in creating a database of international clinical and language/cultural experiences. Past trip reports were available in one office and in paper format, making it difficult for students to review clinical experiences matching their interests and education.

By archiving these trip reports in electronic form, eScholarship offers an efficient means of preserving student experiences, promoting international medical education and enabling the UMMS students to better serve a rapidly expanding immigrant and refugee population in Massachusetts and the United States.

Transformation & Value Added
Based on the current paper forms, the Library created an electronic record for each report and converted the paper-based supplemental materials into an electronic equivalent. The final database structure allows for searching full-text or browsing by country and year. This online “display case” is accessible to the UMMS campus community. Interested students can use the database to find available international sites and read about the experience of students who have visited a site previously.

Next Step: The next phase of the process is to have students enter their reports directly into the system. The Library will review the record and materials and add subject headings.

Before

| Library Staff | Inventoried Files | Organized Files | Consistent Naming Conversion Subject Headings |

After

| Rate the placement’s educational value: | Excellent | Comments: I had a chance to see a great deal, from rural to urban, hospital to small clinic and both branches of Panama’s socialized medical system (both Ministry of Health and Social Security), including a health center in the Ngobe Bugle indigenous territory. |

Necessary health measures prior to, during and after experience: | Typhoid and Hep A vaccinations. Malana medication 2 days prior, daily while away, 4 weeks upon return (as advised by Student Health Service). Panama has (in almost all locations) potable water. I took water purification tablets just in case and never had to use them. |

Packing and preparation tips: | A white coat, stethoscope and name tag (like the UMMS ID), especially important in David. Need to take good insect repellent for rural areas plus sunscreen. In the rural clinics I wore scuffs or other light cotton clothes – it is very hot and humid. A small notebook and pen to write things down! Also, I took a small bottle of alcohol based gel/soap (like Purell) which is very handy, not only for clinics which may not have great handwashing facilities but also for long bus trips etc. |

Reflections
The hospital where I was working also unlike anything I had ever seen. All is large, public hospital and the most prestigious medical school in India. Since the institution is a public hospital, it provides practically free care to all of its patients, although I was surprised to find an additional “private ward” where the patients pay out of pocket where the conditions are quite a bit nicer than the general wards.

Visits by Continent

UMMS students have done clinical rotations or cultural immersion in 5 continents (23 countries) during 2003-2007. A total of 53 students have participated in the program.

Results
eScholarship@UMMS offers an efficient and convenient means of promoting student interest in international medical education. More than 50 student trip reports from over 20 countries have been entered into the database. In just four months the site has already had an impact and generated increased student interest.

“An fantastic resource for our medical students, who have been clamoring for something like this for years”

Dr. Vicki Godkin, Ph.D., Director of International Medical Education

http://escholarship.umassmed.edu
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