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The Librarian Comes to You: Being Resilient in Times of Change

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**THE LIBRARIAN COMES TO YOU—BEING RESILIENT IN TIMES OF CHANGE: PAPER
PRESENTATION**

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ABSTRACT

Background: Due to library space downsizing and a virtual library collection, the librarian sought ways to meet staff and promote library resources. This was complicated due to the large area of the main campus and several satellite clinic locations. Objectives: The librarian developed a marketing approach that included working with a small library space and being outside of the library. The objectives were to increase staff's awareness of library resources and services the librarian provides. Description: Online events included information sessions on library resources and training on Microsoft Excel and PowerPoint. Online scavenger hunts were held during National Medical Librarians Month and National Library Week to promote library resources and services. The librarian turned a closet into a small reading room and created a mobile patient resource cart. The librarian took part in hospital committees demonstrating skills that could assist each committee with their information needs and outreach work. The librarian also attended 10 outreach events on campus and in the greater community to promote the hospital's work. Results: Increased visibility helped increase usage of library resources and services. Specific numbers will be available at the end of FY17/18 in September. The librarian was invited to join another committee on campus due to the design abilities demonstrated in other committees. Conclusion: These outreach efforts have helped increase library usage and helped the librarian meet staff from many departments. Staff now request library services beyond literature searches.

BACKGROUND

The librarian at the Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA) Central Western Massachusetts Healthcare System (CWM) is based in Northampton, MA and serves outpatient clinics in Pittsfield, Springfield, Greenfield, Worcester and Fitchburg. The librarian is part of the VA New England Healthcare Systems' department of Knowledge Information Services (KIS). The librarians in the KIS department collaborate on staffing the librarians on call online reference system, purchasing and interlibrary loan. Since 2016 all the purchases made by the KIS department have been for online resources. No print resources have been purchased. The lack of new print resources made it difficult to justify keeping a large area for the library. Despite advocacy efforts of staff and patients, the CWM administration closed the library space in 2017 so that it could be used for patient care while renovations in other departments were occurring. The librarian was moved into an office. Staff and patients expressed confusion about whether there was still a librarian available and what library services were available.

OBJECTIVES

The librarian developed a marketing plan to increase the visibility of library services, increase use of the online library, and become more active in the campus. These included programs in which the librarian met with staff virtually and brought library resources directly to staff and patients.

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

To increase the visibility of library services and increase use of the online library, the librarian developed information sessions based on education needs assessment surveys. The sessions were held online through Lync and Skype. Staff from the main Northampton could attend as well as those in outpatient clinics. Information sessions included: how to find full-text in the library, Lyme resources in the library, and a statistics refresher. Non-clinical staff expressed interest, through the education needs assessment survey and in person to the librarian and education department staff that they needed training in Excel and PowerPoint. The librarian was asked to help meet this information need and developed sessions on Excel basics, Excel formulas, PowerPoint introduction, and PowerPoint infographics.

The librarian developed programs for National Medical Librarians Month in October and National Library Week in April to promote the visibility of library services and increase usage of the online library. These events have included resource fairs featuring library resources and online scavenger hunts (Appendix 1).

To become more visible and promote library resources to the outpatient clinics, the librarian holds office hours at each clinic at least once a year and more if requested. The librarian will set up in a conference room or break room with a laptop, snacks, and materials about the online library resources.

To become more active on campus, the librarian sought to join committees, which proved challenging. Two committees that accepted new members were the Diversity Committee and the Outreach Team. In each of these committees that librarian utilized skills in public health information and Microsoft skills to assist with their information needs.

To be more active on campus and to increase the visibility of library services, the librarian participated in several campus wide events, such as the diversity fair white cane information fair, and the VA 5k event. The librarian promoted exhibited library resources specific to each of these topics at the events.

To meet the information needs of patients and increase the visibility of the library on campus, the librarian developed a mobile patient resource cart (Appendix 2). All the resources on the cart are free for anyone to take. Resources include books, booklets and information sheets from a variety of government agencies on topics such as health eating, exercise, mental health, quitting smoking, hepatitis C, talking with medical providers, and emergency preparedness. The cart can be requested by departments on campus and the librarian will bring the cart to that area and pick it up at a designated time.

The librarian is also in the process of developing a reading room in the closet next to the librarian's office. Many staff and patients had commented they missed having a quiet space to sit and read on breaks and while waiting for appointments. The reading room will help increase the visibility of library services and resources.

RESULTS

Overall the results have been positive. Staff appreciate the online information sessions and the mobile patient cart is being used regularly.

In the fiscal year (FY) 16/17 there were a total of 525 reference questions in FY 17/18 there were 210 reference questions. This was a 250% decrease. However, in the reference questions being asked in FY17/18 were more complex. Rather than asking for a copy or to have something printed out, patrons were asking for assistance with accessing library resources, getting CEs, and how to use databases. In FY16/17 the reference questions for resources and services was 194. IN FY 17/18 it was 292, a 66% increase. The librarian has also seen an increase in the number of individual consultation projects. Consultations are often requested for Excel assistance as well as literature searching.

The librarian was asked to serve on three more committees due to her work on projects on campus. The chair of the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (HPDP) Committee was the lead contact of the VA 5k event and also part of the Outreach Team. She invited the librarian to join HPDP because she was aware of the librarian's knowledge of public health information and outreach efforts. The chair of the Employee Recognition Committee requested the librarian to join because she served with the librarian on the Diversity Committee and knew the librarian had extensive training on PowerPoint and that was a skill the group needed. The chair of the Historical Committee was part of the Logistics staff who had helped the librarian move to a new office and was aware of the historical items the librarian had already helped preserve and catalog.

CONCLUSIONS

The marketing approach to increase the visibility of library services, increase library usage and become actively involved on campus has had positive results. Since the librarian no longer must staff a library space, she is able to visit departments and clinics and be more actively involved with committees and campus groups.

Stretching beyond traditional literature searches to deliver instruction on Excel and PowerPoint and visiting other departments and clinics has helped break down the stereotype of a librarian sitting in a library with old books.

By meeting the information needs of staff, both clinical and non-clinical, the librarian has provided services staff consider important and relevant to their work.

While the transition from a library space to an office has been challenging, the process has helped increase the visibility of the librarian and allowed staff to see the relevancy library services and resources play in their work.

APPENDIX 1

National Library Week

April 9 – 15, 2017

Get to Know Your Knowledge Library!

Business, informatics, health topics and more!

Online Scavenger Hunt

Complete the three questions below and be entered into a raffle to win prizes:

Maple syrup, local honey, Lake Champlain Chocolates, and a copy of *When Breath Becomes Air*.

The Knowledge Library can be accessed from the intranet homepage. In the right hand column, in the “I’m Looking for” section, choose the last link: VISN1 Knowledge Library.

Once in the Knowledge Library, complete these three questions and submit them to Jessie Casella at Jessie.Casella@va.gov.

- ❖ In the Knowledge Library, click on the “eBooks & eJournals” tab. Look for an eBook by selecting the eBook radial button. Type in a keyword or two of a topic of interest and search.
 - Which book title seems most helpful to you?

- ❖ In the Knowledge Library, click on the “Subject Portal” tab. Click on a subject portal of interest.
 - What eResource or Database is most helpful OR which resource would you like to see included?

- ❖ In the Knowledge Library, click on the “Databases” tab. Look for the databases that have mobile access.
 - What apps have you used OR what apps would you like to see included?

APPENDIX 2

