Joint Meeting with the Massachusetts Library System

Tuesday, December 4, 2012
MetroWest Hospital, Natick

Thanks to Jeanie Vander Pyl for arranging the first meeting between the Massachusetts Library System (MLS) and a group of health sciences librarians. Greg Pronevitz, Executive Director and Anna Popp, advisor represented MLS and began by describing the “snapshot” version of the MLS Strategic Plan 2013-2015. Resource sharing, econtent, advocacy and member library connections play a key role in their future plans. MLS is taking steps to enhance access to resource sharing and recently announced a reduced price to join MassCat. MLS is studying mediated ILL services which are currently provided by the Crane Library in Quincy and the Wellesley Public Library. After the brief overview, the MLS representatives asked the group what health sciences librarians would like to see from this state group. The answers included:

1. Resource sharing/collaborative purchasing
2. Webinars/continuing education (please email Greg, greg@masslibsystem.org, if you have topic ideas OR if you have taken webinars and found them particularly helpful). Also, if you have an area of expertise and would like to offer to teach a webinar, contact Greg.)
3. Stronger/more formal collaboration with public libraries. The possibility of either NNLM or NIH funding was mentioned.

The next big state-wide purchase (hope you all are taking advantage of the many databases including Health Reference Center Academic and General BusinessFile ASAP, just to name a few, already available to your library patrons and which can be integrated into your electronic journal lists) is an e-book package which includes over 10,000 titles to be trialed by 50 libraries, not all of them public libraries. The state is providing initial funding, but Greg pointed out that libraries need to plan for budgeting for e-book content in the future. While many of our libraries already have transitioned much of our purchasing to electronic content, currently, public libraries have a collection development budget of $33 million of which only $1 million is dedicated for e-content. This package will include health sciences books geared to the consumer/patient and less to the health care professional. The hope is that every library will contribute to these statewide purchases. Guided by the Statewide Resource Sharing Committee, there are a number of criteria for purchase of e-books:

- Prefer a purchase rather than a lease model
- Multiple platforms - prefer downloadable model although will consider computer-based model
- Easy to use!!!

While some other states are considering similar large e-book packages, Mass. is in the forefront in this area in terms of state-wide access. The key is long-term funding as it is a significant investment and libraries need to start planning for this budget line item in the future. Currency and mobile access were mentioned by the group as important features for our patrons. Greg pointed out that the Gale databases have a mobile app and hitting Access My Library will search for a local public library and any can be clicked to gain access.
In addition to e-books, we discussed the statewide databases, and our group identified CINAHL as being a top priority. One issue is that there are many “versions” of CINAHL depending on how much full-text is available. Other databases mentioned were PsychInfo and Health Business Elite. The state puts out a bid every five years, and Gale offered the best proposal for this funding period. It was noted that it not all databases need to be purchased from a single vendor. Right now the funding comes from both MLS and the Mass. Board of Library Commissioners, and this arrangement allows for more negotiating power as well as some budget protection should one agency experience a budget cut. Jeanie spoke about MAHSLIN’s statewide purchase of the StatRef book package and other joint purchases. Because the market is pretty well saturated for statewide purchases to have negotiating strength, it is necessary to find new content or other services to convince the vendors that these large contracts are in their best interest. Delaware was mentioned as a state which provided statewide purchase of core medical resources available to anyone living in the state. There was discussion of reinvigorating the MedlinePlus Go Local, perhaps in collaboration with the public libraries.

Health sciences librarians in the western part of the state will have the opportunity for a similar discussion. Contact Margot Malachowski if you are interested in participating. It is a great opportunity to connect with the state-group and advocate for the needs of health sciences libraries.

Submitted by

Alison Clapp
Manager, Library Services
Boston Children’s Hospital