

The implementation of a Nursing and Allied Health Library Forum at The Friends of the Children of Great Ormond Street Library

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Background

The Friends of the Children of Great Ormond Street Library has provided information services for all nursing staff since 1996 after the Charles West School of Nursing Library closed and the collection moved to South Bank University. Funding was made available to provide services for nurses and allied health professionals (AHPs) and as a result we employed a new member of staff to develop the book and journal collections, expand the provision of electronic resources and develop contacts with the clinical departments.

Although this service was very popular with some of the users and very well used, we still had a number of challenges that needed addressing. Despite all the publicity, there were still people who thought of the library as the "Institute" library, or even worse, the "Doctors" library and were unaware that the service was available to all NHS staff from Great Ormond Street, regardless of profession and status. Staff from some departments and wards were keen library users, whereas others hardly used us at all. Some departments had developed their own library collections while others didn't see the relevance of the library to their work. In addition, the collections for some disciplines (for example dietetics, physiotherapy) were strong, whereas for others (e.g. play, occupational therapy) were not, as this reflected our current rather than our potential users and the larger groups of staff. Setting up and advertising new services for nurses and

allied health professionals was often difficult, as our liaison methods varied between departments some of whom we had strong links with, and others not so strong.

The convening of a Forum

To address these issues we decided to convene a Nursing and Allied Health Library Forum. The aim of the Forum is to represent and promote the information needs of all nurses and allied health professionals at Great Ormond Street Hospital for clinical work, research and professional development. The initial meeting was chaired by the Director of Nursing (who was also responsible for most of the AHPs) and attended by heads of allied health departments and representatives from the senior nurses. At this meeting, the Librarian outlined the services we offered at that time, and the potential for future development. The staff at the meeting agreed that the Forum was a good idea, and went away to designate a representative from their departments to attend the meetings.

Outcomes

The Forum has now been meeting quarterly for two years and has implemented a number of projects and new services. We have:

- ***developed a strong core book collection:*** by reviewing the existing book collection, assigning a designated fund to each department to augment the collection starting with the weakest departments, and implementing an annual book suggestion round. Using the forum representatives has made this process much easier as they have liaised effectively with their colleagues, coordinated suggestions and provided a guide for the relative importance of the suggested items. This was also a popular project to get the Forum off to a good start, demonstrate that it would be useful and helped form a working relationship between the representatives and the Nursing and Allied Health Liaison Librarian.

- ***implemented a journal review:*** to identify new titles required, and suggested titles for cancellation. With very little extra funding we managed to improve the journal collection by exchanging low-use journals for more popular ones, and we were able to subscribe to new titles by cancelling some existing ones, which could be donated from individuals in the departments. It is unlikely that this would have happened without the Forum representatives liaising with their colleagues.
- ***expanded database provision:*** as initially there was little access to nursing and allied health databases such as Cinahl, BNI and Amed, we used the influence of the Forum members to successfully bid for funding to subscribe to these databases and used the specialist subject knowledge of the representatives to help set up relevant training in the departments.
- ***developed outreach library services:*** to ensure the information needs of the nurses and allied health professionals were met, by taking library services out of the library and providing training and information support in the clinical setting. The forum representatives have been invaluable in helping to ensure that services are relevant to the needs of their colleagues and publicising the services.

Conclusion

The Forum has been very useful for the development of library services for nurses and allied health professionals. It is much easier to implement and promote new services through departmental representatives, as the nursing and allied health staff are much more willing to listen to one of their senior colleagues than a member of library staff. In addition, as nursing and allied health staff are involved with the development of services, it is much easier to ensure the services offered are the right ones and the needs of all users are met. Finally, many of the ideas for the development and implementation of library services have come from the users through their representatives which has enabled us to

develop in ways we may never have thought of. There is a lot of discussion about interprofessional working in NHS, and this is one example where it has been very successful.

For more information about the Great Ormond Street Nursing and Allied Health Forum, go to <http://www.ich.ucl.ac.uk/library/forum.htm> or email s.holloway@ich.ucl.ac.uk

