
Consumer Health Information Services at Iowa City Public Library

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ABSTRACT

IOWA CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY RECENTLY COMPLETED an eighteen-month consumer health project entitled Expanding Access to Consumer Health Electronic Resources in Iowa City and Rural Johnson County, Iowa. This project included health-related computer classes, demonstrations, and programs and was funded by the National Library of Medicine through a subcontract with the National Network of Libraries of Medicine, Greater Midwest Region. The Iowa City Public Library project built on the work completed by the Iowa Consumer Health Information Project, an earlier subcontract also funded by the National Library of Medicine. The Expanding Access project was an overall success. Project goals were met while patrons and staff increased knowledge and skills using electronic consumer health resources.

PROJECT PLANNING

Library Strategic Plan, Mission and Vision

The Iowa City Public Library's (ICPL) Strategic Plan guided project planning. The library's strategic plans run for five-year periods, and project planning began shortly after adopting a strategic plan set to begin July 1, 2000. Many individuals, including community members, board members, and ICPL staff, created the library's strategic plan. The strategic planning process emphasized visioning for exemplary programs and services that

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respond to identified needs in the community. From this process, the mission and vision for the library was created.

Library Mission

The Iowa City Public Library is an innovative, dynamic resource central to sustaining and encouraging a literate and informed citizenry. The library reflects and responds to the community and is committed to

- Equal accessibility for a diverse population
- Intellectual Freedom
- Life-long learning beginning with the young child
- Enhancement of cultural and leisure activities

Library Vision

The Iowa City Public Library will be the best choice for information, quality collections, outstanding programs, and exceptional service. The library will be a trusted civic, cultural, social, and learning center and a welcoming place for relaxation, the exchange of ideas, and interaction among people.

Strategic Plan Goals Support a Consumer Health Project

The Strategic Plan provided a framework for project planning. Specific goals and objectives related to a consumer health project include

Collections and Programs: Offer collections and programs that reflect community interests and support the library's mission

- Provide excellent print and audiovisual collections
- Offer adult and young adult programs
- Increase programming on The Library Channel

Community Relations: Build community knowledge, pride, and support for the free public library

- Utilize media and strategic partnerships to maintain a highly visible and positive institutional profile
- Encourage regional and interjurisdictional collaboration

Accessibility: Improve access to the library, information, materials, services, and programs

- Be at the forefront in the use of technology related to information retrieval and delivery
- Make technology accessible through well-trained staff and regular user education
- Reach out to those who cannot or do not come to the library

A Tradition of Outreach Services

The Iowa City Public Library has a strong tradition of exemplary outreach services to organizations within our community that serve at-risk

populations. These include twenty-two outreach sites throughout the city and county, located in retirement residences, residential facilities for persons with mental or developmental disabilities, a senior center, neighborhood centers, a domestic violence shelter, and a chemical dependency residential treatment center. The library provides outreach collections at these locations because individuals who utilize the services often are unable to personally visit the library.

Identification and Description of Target Population

The target population included the Iowa City metropolitan area and rural Johnson County, Iowa. This geographic area was selected because the Iowa City Public Library serves Iowa City residents, area city residents through Iowa's Open Access program, and rural Johnson County residents by contract with the Johnson County Board of Supervisors. The target populations include

Patrons who seek consumer health information in person at the Iowa City Public Library

- Iowa City Public Library serves a population of 62,220 residents of Iowa City and 17,400 residents of rural Johnson County.
- Iowa City Public Library serves the nonacademic information and recreational needs of the 29,000 students at the University of Iowa.
- In fiscal year 1999 ICPL's Information Desk staff responded to 42,908 questions patrons asked in person, 19,723 telephone requests, 673 questions while representing the library in the community, and 128 fax requests. Although specific data is not collected, up to 10 percent of these questions are related to health information.
- Many residents of Johnson County towns including Coralville, North Liberty, Oxford, and Solon also utilize Iowa City Public Library's collections, services, and Web page.

Patrons who sign up for electronic consumer health information training classes

- In fiscal year 1999 Iowa City Public Library staff provided training or tours for 595 adults.

Persons who live at or visit targeted sites that receive outreach services from the Iowa City Public Library

- Iowa City Public Library provides outreach collections for twenty-two community organizations that serve residents of Iowa City and rural Johnson County.
- Iowa City has the fastest growing population aged seventy-five and over in the nation.

Table 1. Iowa City Demographic Information, 2000 Census

Race for All Ages	Total	Percent
One race	61,172	98.3
White	54,334	87.3
Black or African American	2,333	3.7
American Indian and Alaska Native	191	0.3
Asian	3,509	5.6
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	27	0
Some other race	778	1.3
Two or more races	1,048	1.7
Total population	62,220	100
Hispanic or Latino and Race		
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	1,833	2.9
Not Hispanic or Latino	60,387	97.1
One race	59,501	95.6
White	53,405	85.8
Black or African American	2,272	3.7
American Indian and Alaska Native	175	0.3
Asian	3,492	5.6
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	26	0
Some other race	131	0.2
Two or more races	886	1.4
Total population	62,220	100

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2. Johnson County, Iowa, Demographic Information, 2000 Census

Race for All Ages	Total	Percent
One race	109,329	98.5
White	100,051	90.1
Black or African American	3,223	2.9
American Indian and Alaska Native	313	0.3
Asian	4,578	4.1
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	48	0
Some other race	1,116	1
Two or more races	1,677	1.5
Total population	111,006	100
Hispanic or Latino and Race		
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	2,781	2.5
Not Hispanic or Latino	108,225	97.5
One race	106,818	96.2
White	98,619	88.8
Black or African American	3,148	2.8
American Indian and Alaska Native	282	0.3
Asian	4,557	4.1
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	46	0
Some other race	166	0.1
Two or more races	1,407	1.3
Total population	111,006	100

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Assessing Community Consumer Health Needs

In 2001 the State Library of Iowa completed the Iowa Consumer Health Information Project (I-CHIP), a project funded by the National Library of Medicine through a subcontract with the National Network of Libraries of Medicine, Greater Midwest Region. The I-CHIP project created the Health Info Iowa Web page (see Figure 1) (www.healthinfoiowa.org) and included a database of resources designed to meet the consumer health information needs of Iowans. Iowa City Public Library staff participated in the I-CHIP project and, based on knowledge of local needs, felt that a community-level consumer health information project would benefit local residents.

By combining strategic planning for library services at a local level and evaluation of needs on a statewide level, the framework for a project began to emerge. The I-CHIP project identified many consumer health needs in Iowa. In determining the focus of a local consumer health project, ICPL reviewed the I-CHIP needs and identified the following as most critical for Iowa City and rural Johnson County¹:

Figure 1. Health Info Iowa homepage.



- The public does not know what is available.
- There is an institutional gap between public libraries and health science libraries.
- There is a need for alternative and complementary medicine information.
- There is an explosion of information to choose from.
- There is a need for links to authoritative Web sites.
- There is a need for adequate training for librarians and the public in finding and evaluating health resources.
- There is a need for publicity and promotion regarding consumer health information resources.

Locally, we identified three critical gaps in consumer health information knowledge and skills. First, library staff needed training to provide effective consumer health reference services in the library, over the telephone, and via e-mail. Second, patrons seeking health information needed information and training to identify and use quality consumer health resources. And third, there was a need for information and training at established outreach sites that serve elderly, low-income, and minority groups in our community.

Establishing the Project Goal and Deliverables

After completing the needs assessment we established an overall goal, "To increase the health of residents of Iowa City and rural Johnson County, Iowa through improved access to high-quality consumer health resources." To meet the goal, the following project deliverables were established:

- Use Health Info Iowa project work as a foundation for consumer health information services and resources in Iowa City and rural Johnson County.
- Create special pages and links on ICPL's Web page that assist patrons to easily access peer-reviewed resources. An emphasis was placed on

MedlinePlus

clinicaltrials.gov

Health Info Iowa Web resources

Iowa City Public Library electronic resources

- Train Iowa City Public Library Information Services staff to provide effective consumer health reference services.
- Offer consumer health training for the patrons in ICPL's computer classroom.
- Offer Internet accessible computers and training for one retirement residence, one community residential facility, one senior center, and two community neighborhood centers that receive outreach services from ICPL.

- Create a consumer health information training television program to play on The Library Channel, the Iowa City Public Library's local access television channel.
- Sponsor two educational programs related to health promotion.
- Promote the project to the community.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Online Resources

Initially project staff designed Web pages that would direct patrons to recommended online consumer health resources. Links to these pages were placed in prominent locations within the library's Web pages (<http://www.icpl.org>). In addition, the Library's Science and Medicine Web page (see Figure 2) (<http://www.icpl.org/resources/web/science.php>) was updated to reflect recommended consumer health resources. In 2003 the library's overall Web site was redesigned. This coincided with staff planning for continuation of project initiatives after the end of the project. Staff determined that it was more effective in the long term to maintain links

Figure 2. Science and Medicine Resources web page of the Iowa City Public Library.

Iowa City Public Library
123 S Linn St, Iowa City, IA 52240 ~ (319) 356-5200

ICPL Home | Your Library | Catalog | Online Info | ICPL Kids | ICPL Teens | Community Info

Science and Medicine Resources

- **[Health Info Iowa](#)** - An Iowa-focused health information web site for consumers and providers. The web site combines national, state, regional, and local resources, to help Iowans improve their access not only to printed information but also to agencies, organizations, and services that can help consumers meet their health information needs.
- **[World Health Organization](#)** - Health reports worldwide, including disease outbreaks, statistics, and newsletters.
- **[MedlinePlus](#)** - Provides access to extensive information about specific diseases and conditions and also has links to consumer health information from the National Institutes of Health, dictionaries, lists of hospitals and physicians, health information in Spanish and other languages, and clinical trials.
- **[U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)** - Government resources on human health, and disease, both for consumers and researchers.
- **[Mayo Clinic Health Information](#)** - Health information from the Mayo Clinic.
- **[Hardin Library Meta Directory](#)** - Links to hundreds of sites, providing information on medical problems.
- **[National Center for Biotechnology Information](#)** - A national resource/research database for molecular biology information. The NCBI creates public databases, conducts research in computational biology, develops software tools for analyzing genome data, and disseminates biomedical information.
- **[Planets](#)** - Links to planetary sites.
- **[NASA](#)** - NASA's home page contains archives, links, and shuttle launch information.
- **[Natural History Web](#)** - From the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution. Provides a visual and text guide to the museum and its exhibitions, as well as information on research programs and links to other natural science resources.
- **[Agriculture Online](#)** - Includes timely information on weather, markets, farm life, machinery and more. Produced by Successful Farmer magazine.
- **[Geology and Earth Science](#)** - Provides links to user-friendly geological information, including fossils, earthquakes, mineralogy, radon and more.

on the library's Science and Medicine Web page rather than maintain two separate pages.

Classes

Classes for Library Staff At the beginning of the project, a librarian from the State Library traveled to Iowa City to provide training. All reference librarians assigned to the Information Desk were trained to use Health Info Iowa, MedlinePlus, and Clinical Trials. Staff also received consumer health reference services training. Staff reported that after the training they felt more comfortable providing consumer health reference services and were better able to judge the quality and authoritativeness of online resources.

Classes for Library Patrons The classes for library patrons were held in the library's computer classroom and offered on a monthly basis. Instructors included the library's reference librarians and project staff. The classroom had twelve laptop computers attached to the library's network as well as a presenter's station with an LCD projector. Classes were scheduled at varying times so they were available to the widest range of people who might be interested.

During the training session, the instructor outlined basic tips for finding and evaluating trustworthy health-related information on the Internet. Part of this discussion included the HonCode of Conduct (<http://www.hon.ch/HONcode/Conduct.html>) principles of Authority, Complementarity, Confidentiality, Attribution, Justifiability, Transparency of authorship, Transparency of sponsorship, and Honesty in advertising and editorial policy.

Instructors demonstrated use of three Web sites: Health Info Iowa (www.healthinfoiowa.org), MedlinePlus (www.medlineplus.gov), and ClinicalTrials.gov (www.clinicaltrials.gov). The instructing librarian outlined each Web site's content and gave a brief demonstration of the various ways to find information at each site. The formal portion of the class usually lasted one hour. Often an information question and answer session continued for another half hour or more while individual questions were answered. While there were multiple computers at each site, the best outcome came from the instructor working at one computer while the students sat nearby and observed. Occasionally someone would work on one of the other computers, going to the sites as they were discussed.

All attendees were given class outline handouts so they could follow along with what the librarian was demonstrating and discussing. The handout included a brief survey for the patrons to complete at the beginning of the program. Questions included current or former occupation, prior use of the Internet to find health information, specific health Web sites used, strategies to find online health information, and whether or not Internet access was available at home. The survey also requested permission to make a follow-up call to determine if the class changed their information-seeking behaviors.

Feedback from the class indicated that MedlinePlus provided the resources patrons were most interested in, and so the training tended to gravitate toward this resource. Health Info Iowa tended to have more interest from students; however, feedback indicated it was a Web page that was easily navigated by all and in-depth instruction was not needed. Clinical Trials seemed to have less general interest from participants, unless persons in the class had an immediate need for finding current clinical trials.

Classes at Outreach Sites A large part of the project focused on classes taught at outreach sites located throughout the community. Initially, five outreach sites signed on to participate in the project. Each site received a computer and printer with Internet access and agreed to assist with scheduling, publicizing, and hosting consumer health classes taught by an ICPL librarian. The outreach sites included one residential care facility, one retirement residence, one senior center, and two neighborhood centers.

We learned early in the project that we overestimated the basic search skills project participants at the outreach sites would have. Basic Internet instruction was needed as a foundation before we were able to teach the online consumer health classes. Once we realized this, we developed a basic Internet use curriculum and subsequent consumer health classes were more successful.

The residential care facility that participated in the project was Chatham Oaks, located just outside of the Iowa City limits. Chatham Oaks serves persons with mental illnesses of varying degrees and types. One of the main goals of Chatham Oaks, aside from helping those who struggle with mental illness in their daily lives, is to help residents gain some element of independence. Part of this is accomplished through education, and the project's classes fit nicely with this mission. Chatham Oaks' residents learned about using the Internet, as well as locating online health resources. Classes were taught in a computer room that had several computers and printers, as well as a Chatham Oaks staff person who observed the classes and provided assistance if needed. The residents and staff at Chatham Oaks were very welcoming and excited about the classes being taught there, and turnout was always good. As noted above, the residents expressed early on that they needed basic instruction with computers and the Internet, so the library's regular Internet class was modified for them. We taught both classes regularly, on an alternating schedule.

The retirement residence was Oaknoll Retirement Residence. Oaknoll has a very active, engaged community of retirees aged sixty-two and older. Oaknoll provides its residents with the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of educational and cultural activities, and its location near campus and within walking/driving distance of the downtown area means that the city's and the university's many offerings also are available to its residents. Many Oaknoll residents choose to live there specifically because of these attractions. Residents have a vested interest in life-long learning; consequently, project classes were always well attended there. Oaknoll has a

small but adequate computer lab with three computers, all of which offer Internet access, and this is where the classes were conducted.

It was a similar situation at the Johnson County Senior Center ("The Center"), which is located in downtown Iowa City one block from the library. The Center serves adults aged fifty years and older who live in Johnson County and offers a variety of classes and activities that support life-long learning and community involvement. The Center has a large base of volunteers who teach classes and assist with daily Center activities. The Center is a very popular and well-utilized facility. It offers a computer lab that has several computers, a printer, and a scanner. The library held both basic Internet and consumer health classes there, which always had attendees. Several people who use The Center also came to classes offered at the library.

The final two sites were neighborhood centers. Both are located in low-income areas of Iowa City, and both serve minority populations. The Broadway Neighborhood Center has a large African American and Hispanic population, while the other, Pheasant Ridge Neighborhood Center, primarily serves immigrants from the Sudan and Jordan. Both centers focus on strengthening neighborhood and community bonds, providing various services to families that could not otherwise afford them, and bringing different types of programming into the communities so residents could participate more easily. Each location had a designated computer area with at least two computers.

The directors of both of these sites were very optimistic about the health classes being taught at the centers, and they felt that they would provide a service that was important and useful to the centers' populations. It is odd, then, that these were the two places where we had no success.

Several classes were offered at the Pheasant Ridge center, but attendance was always zero. No classes were ever scheduled at the Broadway center, despite several phone calls and visits in which possible class times and topics were discussed. The directors of each center were called and/or emailed at least once a month throughout the duration of the project, but they only responded a few times, usually to say that schedules were too busy at the moment.

In discussions with neighborhood center staff after the conclusion of the project, staff identified many reasons for not fully participating in the project. Obstacles included staff turnover, work overload, lack of space, and conflicts with other programs.

Educational Program for The Library Channel

The Library Channel, a local access television channel in Iowa City, originates at the Iowa City Public Library. The purpose of programming on The Library Channel is to extend library programs to a wider audience, to inform the community about library services, to promote reading and library use, to record community events of enduring interest, and to make

meetings and events at the library more accessible to the community via personal televisions. Community-use surveys show that Iowa City residents watch programs on The Library Channel and get information about library programs and services from messages that play when other programs are not running. The Library Channel is channel 10 on the city's cable tier and is strategically located between the local ABC and PBS stations.

Because The Library Channel is used to share information with the community and extend library programs into homes, project planners decided to produce a television program that focused on finding and evaluating online consumer health information. Staff based the television program on the outline created for library classes. This program continues to play on The Library Channel, and anecdotal information indicates that patrons watch this program.

Programs

A large part of the library's project was health-related programming created or sponsored by the library and presented in the library's large meeting room. Because of community interest in the programs, seven programs were offered during the project, five more than originally planned.

The first two programs, entitled "Kids and Drugs: A Parent and Youth Discussion of Substance Abuse," were presented in April 2002. These programs were created and co-sponsored with the Iowa City Community School District staff. Students *and* parents were encouraged to attend; in fact, teachers offered students extra credit for coming to one of the sessions with a parent. Parts of the programs were videotaped and continue to replay on The Library Channel.

We found this to be a highly successful way of organizing a program, and both sessions were very well attended. Different parts of each program were presented or moderated by a specific individual, teacher, group leader, or library staff member. In addition, library staff created a PowerPoint presentation to give information about online substance abuse education and information. Both programs were highly successful in that they resulted in interaction among students, parents, and educators, as well as ideas and actions being formulated for improvement of drug-free alternatives for students, both in school and in the community.

The third program presented was entitled "Planning for a Healthy Retirement" and was sponsored by the library. The main speaker was Geri Hall, an associate professor and director of the master's program, University of Iowa College of Nursing and Advanced Practice Nurse, Behavioral Neurology, University of Iowa College of Medicine. She discussed important topics such as maintaining good nutrition, preventing age-related illnesses, and considerations involved in selecting retirement facilities. Senior citizens and middle-aged persons who were interested in learning about retirement options for their parents attended the program. This program was videotaped and continues to replay on The Library Channel.

During National Mental Health Month, the library sponsored three programs that were presented by the local Community Mental Health Center (CMHC). These programs were all videotaped and replay periodically on The Library Channel. The first of these was "Becoming a Parent—Maintaining a Mentally Healthy Pregnancy & Recognizing Signs of Postpartum Depression." The speakers were Richard Michaelson, M.D., CMHC Psychiatrist; Charles F. Hesse, M.D., CMHC Board Member, the Nest Board President, and retired OB/GYN physician; and Mary Hanna, Ph.D., CMHC staff. They discussed topics such as physical changes during pregnancy, the use of medications while pregnant, diagnosing different levels of depression in pregnant women, health-related resources, and options for pregnant women.

The second program was entitled "Parenting a Teen—Helping Kids Cope & Realizing When Outside Help Is Needed." A three-member panel led the discussion and was made up of representatives from the Community Mental Health Center, the counseling department of a local high school, and a local youth group. The final program was "Adult Children & Aging Parents—What to Do and Where to Go." There were four speakers who presented: Kit Dinneen Crane and Ginny Hamilton-Lawler, both of the Community Mental Health Center; Steve Siglin of Elder Services; and Jeff Kellbach from Pathways Adult Day Health Care. The presentation focused on topics related to the care of aging parents, including their physical, mental, and emotional needs, and options and resources for them and their caregivers.

The library also hosted the program "Advertising & Girls: From Awareness to Action Workshop." The goal of the program was to educate parents and students about the effects of advertisements on consumerism and body image. The speaker was Mare Sullivan, actress and activist from Los Angeles, and talks centered on the effects of different forms of advertising on young women. The event was co-sponsored by the Iowa Women's Foundation, the Women's Resource and Action Center, the Emma Goldman Clinic, the Domestic Violence Intervention Program, WISE, the Rape Victim Advocacy Program, and United Action for Youth. This program was very well attended, both by young women between the ages of eleven and fourteen and their parents.

Overall we were very pleased with the programs presented. The project served as a catalyst to bring community groups together to focus on health issues faced by persons of all ages. An added bonus is the periodic replay of the programs on The Library Channel. Most of the information shared in the programs is not time sensitive, so we continue to rotate the programs into The Library Channel's play schedule.

Promoting the Project to the Community

Giveaways were created as a way to share project information with the community. The primary giveaway was a bandage holder. The bandage

holders were neon colors and had messages printed on both sides. The front side said "Good Health Information is just a click away!," and the back side had the Iowa City Public Library logo along with URLs for the library, Health Info Iowa, and MedlinePlus. Because our primary promotion activities were in the summer, we also ordered cardboard fans with the message, "I'm a FAN of good health information!" along with the library's logo and three URLs.

Promotion activities focused on three separate areas. The primary project promotion was at a booth rented at the annual Johnson County Fair. The project was also promoted at other community events, a radio talk show, and through requests for programs from community organizations.

Johnson County Fair We participated in both the 2002 and 2003 Johnson County 4-H and FFA fairs. The fair is held for four days in mid-July, and always draws large crowds. Annually the Public Libraries of Johnson County purchases exhibition space at the fair. The Expanding Access project joined with the public libraries to create a larger booth in both 2002 and 2003. One-third of the booth was dedicated to consumer health resources. A laptop computer and large screen showed online health sites, and a PowerPoint presentation was set to automatically run when the laptop was not being used for one-on-one demonstrations. Also, a local company provided a water cooler to dispense free water for anyone who stopped in the booth. The library booth was very popular, and the bandage holders, fans, and water were in high demand.

In addition to the exhibition booth, fair staff also made demonstration space available for organizations to share information about their programs or services. In 2002 the demonstration area was quite simple, consisting of a couple of long tables to set equipment upon and a group of about fifteen chairs located on a corner of the walking path through a main demonstration building. In 2002 we gave four demonstrations and had people stop by for each session. In 2003 the demo area was in the same spot, but this time it was cordoned off and better arranged. We presented three sessions and had people at each one. The demonstrations were based on the class curriculum converted into a PowerPoint presentation.

Other Demonstrations Three demonstrations were given to focus groups, conducted by the NLM, that centered on the MedlinePlus Web site and how to increase awareness and use of it. Attendees of the focus groups were medical office personnel and patients. The librarian's part in the focus groups was to go in at an appointed time and give a ten-minute demonstration of the Web site. The demo was, in essence, a slightly shorter version of that part of the library's regular health class. Not only was this a great opportunity to give back to those who provided the library with the grant money, it also gave librarians feedback on the Web site—what works and what is confusing.

In addition, Kara Logsdon presented two computer sessions at the We-

ber Elementary School Health Fair in Iowa City. The topic for the sessions was "Finding Good Health Information on the Web," and it was geared toward students in the third and fourth grades. Kara was invited back to Weber School's annual Career Day to talk about careers in libraries and different types of subspecialties.

Exhibits and Other Promotions Other promotional activities included library displays throughout the duration of the project, messages played on the Library Channel, and paid advertising on cable television stations that promoted the projects and the availability of consumer health resources at the library. Staff was invited to share information about the project on "The Dottie Ray Show," a local community events program. Information and fans were also distributed at a community-wide ice cream social as a part of Iowa City's Irving B. Weber Days, an annual celebration of Iowa City's local history.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

Part of our evaluation of the project came from the questionnaire given to class attendees. While this survey and its results are not controlled or scientific, they did give important feedback from patrons that we interacted with directly. At the end of the project, we had a total of sixty-four questionnaires providing feedback. This number does not match the total number of attendees because those from the county fair were not given the handouts, and some attendees at the sites did not fill them out. There were five questions that we measured outcomes for; two came from the handout given at the time of the class and three questions were asked after the class. Question one looked at the various ways attendees sought health information before taking the class. We received 165 tallies from all respondents, with medical professionals and the Internet being the sources identified the most (see Figure 3). The second and third questions asked attendees to rate how much they used the Internet to look for health information, both before taking the class and after (see Figures 4 and 5).

A large number of respondents, 45 percent, indicated that they used the Internet as a resource for health information before taking the class, and we saw that number jump to 75 percent after the class. The fourth question asked which Web sites attendees had used after taking the class; the largest number of tallies indicated that both MedlinePlus and Health Info Iowa were being used (see Figure 6). The final question asked the attendees whether or not the class had been helpful to them; 54 percent said the class was very helpful, 38 percent said the class was helpful, and 8 percent said the class was not helpful.

The numbers show us several things that are relevant to the project. First, residents of our community were already using the Internet to find health information. This comes as no surprise, as it mirrors a widespread and growing trend. The data also indicates that medical professionals con-

Figure 3. How attendees find health information (before class)—165 responses from 64 attendees.

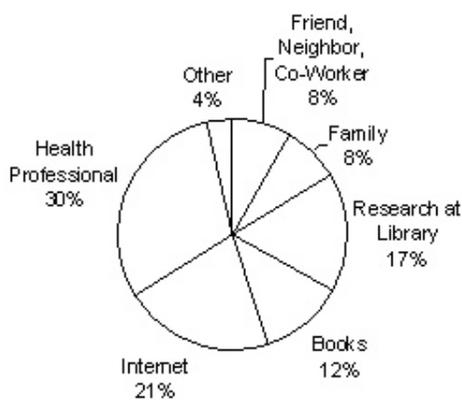


Figure 4. Attendees' use of the Internet to search for health information (before class)—64 attendees.

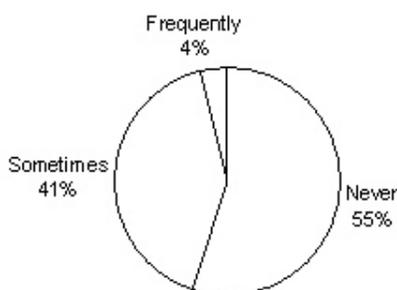


Figure 5. Attendees' use of the Internet to search for health information (after class)—64 attendees.

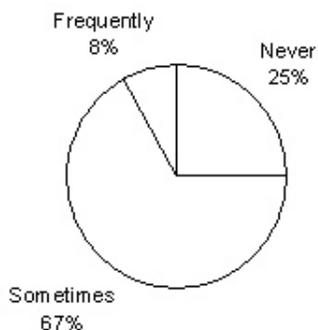
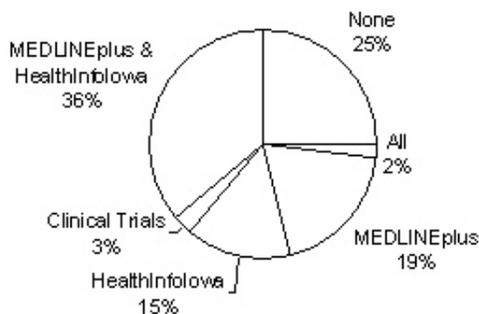


Figure 6. Web sites used by attendees (after class)—64 attendees.



tinue to be a primary, trusted source of medical information for many; it follows that, if we want to educate people about other types of information resources, those should also be reliable and backed by sound research and trusted entities. The three Web sites we used in the classes were chosen, in large part, because of their trustworthiness and authority, and it seems to have made a difference as a large percentage of attendees used MedlinePlus and Health Info Iowa after taking the class. At the same time, Clinical Trials was not used very much, but this is probably due to its very specific type of content. Finally, a large number of attendees said that the class was helpful to them in some way. While the responses were not specific in terms of how the class helped, they certainly indicate that those who took the class benefited from it.

In summary, the project was a success. It achieved the established goal—to educate Iowa City and rural Johnson County residents about finding and using good consumer health information resources on the Internet. We were able to reach portions of our community that could benefit most from the project, and participants responded in a very positive way to what we had to offer. We established useful and mutually beneficial connections with different organizations and institutions in our community. A large number of the library's staff—not just those who worked on the project—were introduced to useful Internet health resources and learned to use them effectively. Reference staff reported more confidence in providing consumer health information, and we incorporated the selection and provision of consumer health information services into our ongoing, routine work assignments and outreach services provided to our community.

NOTE

1. Health Info Iowa, a consumer health information resource from the State Library of Iowa, is funded by the National Library of Medicine under contract NO1-LM-6-3523 with the University of Illinois at Chicago.