

## **Global health: Some first steps to serving this interdisciplinary field**

- Jeffery Loo, Doctoral student, School of Information and Library Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- Anne Langley, Chemistry Librarian and Coordinator of Public Services Assessment, Duke University Libraries
- Beverly Murphy, AHIP, Assistant Director, Marketing and Publications, Duke University Medical Center Library & Archives
- Patricia L. Thibodeau, AHIP, FMLA, Associate Dean, Duke University Medical Center Library & Archives

Global health is an important agenda at Duke University. To understand this field and to help plan for library services, we took the following actions.

### **Understanding global health**

#### DEFINITION

Global health at Duke University is working to end health disparities

#### THEMES

- Change
  - Globalization
  - Development
  - Not the status quo
  - Emerging diseases
- Collaboration
  - Global outreach
  - Service
  - Public and health policy
- Conceptual extension
  - Understanding health beyond the clinical and biological perspectives
  - Health knowledge ownership and control
- Extension beyond traditional boundaries
  - Looking to local, national and global environments
  - Sharing medical technology, equipment and infrastructure

This definition was developed from a qualitative review of the home pages and strategic plans of academic departments across the Duke University campus (both medical and non-medical divisions).

Global health reflects our globalizing world. By aligning with this field, libraries may leverage the opportunities for outreach and distinction.

## Exploring from diverse perspectives

Collaboration with non-medical librarians is strategic.

Many fields converge in global health: business, economics, education, engineering, informatics, international development, law, medicine, policy, psychology, and much more – therefore, many librarians can contribute in the global health arena.

In a campus-wide survey, many librarians reported global health as a prominent service priority.

To illustrate the potential for collaboration, here are potential global health reference scenarios with the contributions from different libraries highlighted.

### POTENTIAL REFERENCE SCENARIO 1

A Divinity School student wishes to create artwork addressing the issues of death and dying. The goal for the art pieces is to support pastoral care for terminal AIDS patients in the developing world. What resources may be helpful?

	Global health contributions of different libraries			
Topic	Divinity library	Social sciences library	Fine arts library	Biomedical library
Care	Pastoral care	Art therapy Psychology	Art therapy	Hospice care AIDS care
Art and imagery	Religious art	Cultural trends	Art history	Medical photos
Academic grounding and perspectives	Philosophy of death and dying	Memoirs	Art interpretation and criticism	Health sciences

## POTENTIAL REFERENCE SCENARIO 2

Engineering students are interested in developing a volunteer program that acquires medical equipment donations and then distributes them to underserved areas in North Carolina. What resources and contacts may be helpful for the students?

Topic	Different libraries and their global health contributions			
	Business library	Social sciences and law library	Engineering library	Biomedical library
Sharing and developing medical infrastructure	Health administration  Philanthropy	Community organization and development  Non-governmental organizations and social welfare programs	Biomedical engineering  Medical equipment installation and maintenance  Systems engineering and needs assessment	Health services  Public health  Health facilities and networks
Medical equipment	Business directories	Public policy	Medical equipment  Design and usability	Medical equipment  Diagnostic testing  Therapeutic techniques

### Looking for a service model

Informatics may facilitate global health collaboration and knowledge sharing.

The PubChem database is a tool that fosters interdisciplinary collaboration (<http://pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>). Developed by the National Library of Medicine / NCBI, this resource fosters data and knowledge exchange across the varied disciplines of health, biology and chemistry.

Associated with PubChem is the Molecular Libraries Probe Production Centers Network (MLPCN). This collaborative research network is promoting robotic laboratory testing and experimental data sharing. It is supported by the NIH.

To promote campus-wide library partnership and discussion of global health, we organized a current awareness presentation on global health and interdisciplinary research.

## **Planning for action**

Four possible areas to address

### **PLACE**

- Foster spaces for diverse stakeholders to learn, share and collaborate for global health:
  - Virtual spaces: wikis, federated search tools, online communities, blogs
  - Community spaces: the library as a venue for global health exhibits, events and resources

### **CONTENT**

- Focus on user-oriented, seamless content drawn together from diverse information sources
- Showcase library expertise and knowledge that support global health activities

### **THE ESSENTIAL MOMENT**

- Focus on the moments of global health learning, research and service, and establish a library presence at these instances
- Identify the information needs for global health activities
- Facilitate knowledge discovery among diverse disciplines
- Promote mobile information services for patrons who are geographically dispersed in their global health activities

### **SUCCESSFUL STAFF**

- Identify librarian skill sets that are suitable for global health activities
- Foster collaborative teams by identifying complementary skill sets among subject specialized librarians

We developed this framework by reviewing the strategic plans of the university and its libraries.