

## THE VALUE OF NON-MEDICAL ACADEMIC LIBRARIES TO MEDICAL LIBRARIES: A CASE STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

While the U.S. National Library of Medicine (NLM) created the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM) as a network to provide medical and health information, historically few non-medical academic libraries have participated. University medical libraries and hospital libraries have been the major focus of the Network. Recently, the NN/LM has intensified outreach to public libraries and community health agencies across the country and is investigating international cooperation, but non-medical academic libraries in higher education institutions seem not to be mentioned.

This case study evaluates the contributions of a southwestern Louisiana university non-medical academic library after its first year of Network membership, especially of Docline, the medical interlibrary loan system and prime component of the Network. The lending activity of similar NN/LM non-medical academic library members was also surveyed to discern possible contribution patterns.

### 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

“Consortia arrangements – libraries have developed a variety of consortia arrangements, some have geographical aspect, some are subject based, but overall they aim to share resources between members.”[1]

ALIA Access 2010 Conference program

When creating consortial arrangements, it is obvious which institutions are peer institutions. The premise of this study is that there are near-peer institutions with a common purpose that could and should be part of the arrangement.

“Why would your library need to belong to the medical library network? You aren’t our peer”  
“What could your library contribute to Docline? – you don’t have a medical library.”

These two questions received during McNeese State University Frazar Memorial Library’s investigation the possibility to join the National Library of Medicine’s National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM) and participate in the Docline medical interlibrary loan system.

In 2000, Dudden et al debunked the perception that hospital libraries take from and do not contribute to the NN/LM interlibrary loan system through an analysis of interlibrary loan activity in Colorado and Wyoming [2], but there is no similar comparable study of non-medical academic libraries.

This paper evaluates the Frazar Library’s first year of participation in the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM) Docline system and other programs. The study also looks at the participation of similar non-medical academic libraries. For this study, these are defined as postsecondary institutions without separate medical libraries, offering baccalaureate and perhaps graduate degrees in a broad range of disciplines, but not doctor of medicine, veterinary science or dentistry degrees. Many, however, award degrees in nursing and allied health sciences, such as physical therapy, social work, and counseling.

### 1.1. NN/LM and Docline

“The National Network of Libraries of Medicine began in 1967 as the Regional Medical Library Network and is the first comprehensive national library network. Under the leadership of the National Library of Medicine and through the participation of medical libraries and *other information resource providers* (author emphasis) throughout the nation, it has developed into a well-organized and effective network for meeting the information needs of the nation's health professionals and of the general public.” [3]

The National Library of Medicine describes itself as “providing access to biomedical and health information across the country in partnership with the 5,600-member National Network of Libraries of Medicine.”[4] According to the description and eligibility requirements of the NN/LM and Docline, there is nothing that precludes full membership either by academic libraries that are not medical libraries or in institutions without a medical school or health research facilities. A review of the institution profiles of the almost 2700 U.S. full members determined that currently about 140 non-medical academic libraries as full members in NN/LM.

Responsibilities of full membership in NN/LM include contribution of serials holdings and participation in the interlibrary loan system (DOCLINE). Docline is NN/LM's automated interlibrary loan request, routing, and referral system. While monographs and audio-visual materials may be requested, the predominant use is journal article delivery. Docline implementation began in 1985 and was completed in 1986. As of May 2010 there were 3,018 participating libraries, filling 1.86 million requests in the past year. [5]

Docline participants are required to add relevant journal holdings into SERHOLD, the National Library of Medicine's serials holding database for biomedical serial titles held by Network libraries across the United States as well as some Canadian and Mexican institutions. The bibliographic records in SERHOLD are derived from NLM's LocatorPlus database. As of May 2010, SERHOLD contains over 1.6 million holdings statements for approximately 58,000 serial titles [6].

### 1.2. McNeese State University and Frazar Memorial Library

McNeese State University is located in Lake Charles, Louisiana USA, in the southwest corner of the state. It was founded in 1939 and is part of the University of Louisiana system. It has approximately 8100 students in undergraduate and master's level degree programs. Graduate degree programs are offered in medicine and allied health fields include MS Health & Human Performance, MSN Nursing, and MA Psychology. Undergraduate degree programs include Pre-Veterinary Medicine, Pre-medicine, and Pre-dentistry tracts as well as Forensic Chemistry, Dietetics, Exercise Science, Health Promotion, Nursing (BSN and Associate) and Radiologic Technology [7]

The Frazar Memorial Library is the main University library. Although there are separate departmental libraries in the College of Education and the Visual Arts Department, there is no separate health/medical library at the University. The Frazar Memorial Library has a collection of 400,000+ volumes of books and about 1200 current print serials, and is a United States Government Depository, selecting around 60% of the publications. It has no designated health/medical librarian. The Library has been a member of OCLC since the early 1980s and participates in WorldCat Resource Sharing, the interlibrary loan subsystem.

In May 2007, the Library's Interlibrary Loan Service implemented the Odyssey electronic delivery system for journal articles. Previously, patrons had to come to the Library and pick up the interlibrary loan copies at the Reference Desk. Odyssey provides electronic delivery by posting PDFs to the person's ILLiad user account. Providentially, one graduate nursing student had approached the Interlibrary Loan Librarian a few months before implementation, requesting electronic delivery service. She was assured that it was in the planning stage and was notified when the service was implemented. She quickly informed her classmates. In the next eight months ILL borrowing article requests nearly doubled and medical-related requests increased from 22% to 31% of total as this new service market was tapped – part-time graduate nursing students who were on campus sometimes as

little as one night per week.

With this dramatic increase, the Library had become a “net borrower” – borrowing more through interlibrary loan than it was lending. There was a demonstrated need for Interlibrary Loan Services to develop no cost or low cost access to medical collections. Moreover, the National Library of Medicine and some other specialized health sciences libraries do not receive interlibrary loan requests through OCLC, even though holdings are reported in WorldCat, so access to NN/LM's Docline system was deemed critical.

### **1.3. Investigation and membership**

In Fall 2007 through Winter 2008, the Frazar Library Interlibrary Loan Librarian investigated the benefits, costs, impact, and drawbacks of participation in NN/LM and Docline. If the Library joined the Network, it would be part of the NN/LM South Central Region (SCR), also referred to as Region 5. The staff of the SCR Regional Medical Library (RML) at the Houston Academy of Medicine - Texas Medical Center Library in Houston TX was most supportive. Emails were sent to various Docline libraries in Louisiana and the region, asking about Docline and service performance. Responses were possible but sometimes included the question of the appropriateness of McNeese State University joining the NN/LM from several full member libraries. Some were surprised to learn that the University offered any nursing and health related programs. There was the recurring comment that the Library would likely not contribute much to the Docline network.

The Frazar Library Director approved the proposal on March 28, 2008 and the one-page application was electronically submitted to the SCR on April 3. Official approval was received on April 24, 2008. The McNeese State University Frazar Memorial Library was given the Library Identifier (LIBID) of LAUMUL.

A three person task force consisting of the Serials, Catalog, and Interlibrary Loan librarians established parameters for subject areas to be entered into SERHOLD. Based on the Interlibrary Loan Librarian's previous Docline experience, it was decided to include allied health sciences and science subjects, specifically health and nursing journal holdings, titles in Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Studies, Family/Nutrition Studies, Radiologic Technology, Psychology, Social Work, and Veterinary Science. Library science was later added in this list, as it was felt that hospital libraries in particular would have limited access to journals in that field.

## **2. NETWORK PARTICIPATION**

On June 10, 2008, the first Docline lending request was received from a Louisiana hospital library, requesting a 1980 article from *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Sixteen lending (16) requests were received in the first month. The Library joined FreeShare, the reciprocal free group within Docline in late June, partnering with more than 1300 FreeShare participants in the United States and Canada. The effect of FreeShare membership was quickly apparent, as eighty-seven (87) lending requests were received during the month of July 2008, although SERHOLD entry was not yet completed.

Among those early requests were one for an article from *New Yorker* and another for *JMR: Journal of Marketing Research*. This is because the Catalog Librarian discovered early in the SERHOLD data entry work that it was easier just to enter all of the Library's serial holdings that had records in SERHOLD than to try to identify only those journals in the twelve subject areas that had been selected for entry. Consequently, when SERHOLD entry was completed in the beginning of September 2008, 1373 holdings had been entered for the McNeese State University Frazar Memorial Library (LAUMUL).

### **2.1. Analysis of first year membership (June 10, 2008 pm through June 10, 2009 am)**

In the first year, 1407 lending requests were received for three loans and 1404 photocopies.

Surprisingly, this was “only” a 30% increase in lending services, not the 50% that was predicted. The increase in lending service made the Library a “net-lender” again.

Requests were from libraries in 47 states, Puerto Rico, Washington DC, and Guam, as well as eight provinces in Canada. 177 (12.6%) were from Louisiana libraries, 187 from other Region 5 libraries (total of 25.9% for Region 5 libraries) and 186 (13.2%) for libraries in Canada.

For Docline’s Library Type designation, many of the Canadian members are listed as “Other” rather than hospital or academic, and aren’t included in these following statistics. Hospital libraries accounted for 778 (58.9%) requests, 251 (19%) were from academic libraries (including medical schools), and 121 (9.2%) from Other types, usually research centers (e.g. Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center) or government departments (e.g. Center for Disease Control) or government libraries (e.g. New York Dept of Health).

Number of requests	Journal title
33	International Journal of Nursing Studies
33	Journal of Agricultural & Food Technology
30	Journal of Cellular Physiology
28	International Journal of Sport Nutrition & Exercise Metabolism
22	Journal of Interpersonal Violence
20	Journal of Nutrition For the Elderly
20	Medical Physics
16	Family Journal
15	Journal of Experimental Zoology
14	American Journal of Sports & Medicine
14	Developmental Biology
14	Environmental Toxicology & Chemistry
14	Perceptual & Motor Skills

Table 1: Most requested journal titles

## 2.2. Subject analysis

LC classification	Subject	Number of requests	Percentage of total
Q	Science	314	22.33%
R	Medicine	263	18.71%
H	Social Sciences	205	14.59%
B	Philosophy, Psychology, Religion	107	7.61%
T	Technology	82	5.83%
S	Agriculture	77	5.49%
L	Education	57	4.05%
Z	Bibliography & Library Science	36	2.56%

Table 2: Top subjects requested

Science (Q) was the largest requested subject reflects the large holdings that an academic library has in the sciences. Medicine (R) was the second largest subject category with 103 requests from nursing journal and ninety-nine from sports medicine journals. More than eighty percent of the requests were for journals outside the typical medical (LC classification “R”) subject area.

While Docline participation is the principle benefit of McNeese State University Frazar Memorial Library’s participation in the National Network of Libraries of Medicine, the Library contributed in other ways during the first year of membership.

## 2.3. Additional contributions

The Library hosted two regional workshops and promoted them to libraries in southwest Louisiana. These were provided at no charge and taught by highly qualified and enthusiastic South Central Region staff. On January 7, 2009 the library hosted the SCR workshop “No Compende? Spanish

Health Information Resources for English Speaking Librarians.” There were seventeen attendees, with more than 2/3 from institutions other than the University: library staff from four parish library systems, two other academic libraries, one from the local public school system, and one Louisiana State University Master of Library and Information Service student. This workshop was selected, not because of a need at the Library, but to assist libraries in the area. On March 20, 2009 two sessions of “Can You Hear Me Now: How to Make a Podcast” were presented. Twenty-seven (27) attendees included a number of University faculty and thirteen staff from the public library system and another Louisiana State University Master of Library & Information Science student.

#### **2.4. Survey of comparable non-medical academic network libraries**

Is LAUMUL (McNeese State University Frazar Memorial Library) unique, or does it reflect the Docline contributions of other similar non-medical academic libraries? Through a review of the Docline Institutions Directory and library and university websites, about 140 libraries appear to be comparable libraries, i.e. in an institution of higher education that doesn't have a medical school or health research center and does not have a separate medical library. Another twenty (20) members were community college or two-year technical college libraries which were not part of the comparison group.

A short survey about Docline activities and SERHOLD subject inclusion was sent to those libraries that appeared to be active participants. Fourteen (14) with fewer than twenty-five (25) SERHOLD records were excluded. Six (6) libraries had a Docline Status of “Temporarily Not Receiving Requests” for the four (4) months it took to conduct the survey, and while survey requests were emailed to these libraries, none responded. One library reported that it no longer used Docline, even though its profile indicated YES for Docline Participant field. There were thirty-three (33) completed surveys.

Six (6) libraries did not contribute non-medical journal holdings into SERHOLD, while the rest (twenty-five) contributed at least one other subject. The survey requested information as to whether journal holdings were entered into SERHOLD for any of the following LC classifications: BF (Psychology); H (Social Sciences); HF (Commerce, Business); HV (Social Pathology, Welfare, Criminology); L (Education); Q (Science); QD (Chemistry); QH (Natural History); S (Agriculture); T (Technology); and Z (Bibliography and Library Science). Almost all these subject areas were entered into SERHOLD by at least half the survey libraries, in a variety of different combination, with seven (7) entering all those subject areas. Psychology was the most commonly entered (20). Only Agriculture (11) and Library Science (12) weren't provided by half the survey libraries. Overall, three libraries have more than 1,000 SERHOLD records, while another four have more than 750.

Based on the statistics in the Docline Yearly report “Ranked List of Serial Titles - Lender (July 2008 -- June 2009),” these libraries submitted 5,666 borrowing requests and received 15,928 lending requests, a 2.8 to 1 lending contribution. For four libraries, Docline represented more than 50% of its overall ILL lending activities. All but two of the survey responses indicated that the libraries also used OCLC WRS, and of those two non-OCLC users, only one indicated that Docline was its only interlibrary loan system.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

This case study demonstrates that a non-medical academic library such as McNeese State University Frazar Memorial Library does make a significant contribution to the National Network of Library of Medicine and Docline. It provides lending activities and hosted two SCR workshops, both attended by more non-University than University people. The 1407 lending requests are 22.6 times more than were borrowed. Journal holdings in a wide range of subject areas were contributed to SERHOLD, and more than eighty percent of the Library's lending requests were outside the traditional medical field.

In the review of survey results of similar libraries in Docline, these non-medical academic libraries on average provided more interlibrary loans that they received. These near-peer institutions demonstrated a willingness to share resources in a medical network through the range of subject areas entered into SERHOLD and the net lending volume.

Although there is no documentation as to why non-medical academic libraries choose to participate in NN/LM and Docline, the author's experiences and notes from survey responders indicate an interest in sharing their resources, especially to local and state medical libraries.

On September 19, 2006, the NLM Board of Regents approved *Charting the Course for the 21st Century: NLM's Long Range Plan 2006-2016*. In panel 2, "NLM Health Information for Underserved and Diverse Populations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," under Objective 3: Expand the Audience and Extend the Reach of NLM Domestically and Internationally" is the following recommendation:

"Findings

1. The NN/LM successfully expanded its membership beyond academic medical libraries and primary access libraries (i.e. hospitals) to include affiliate members, such as public libraries that provide health information services directly to consumers, during the last NN/LM contract period. The inclusion of other types of libraries into the NN/LM network was done in order to more effectively reach the health consumer population.
- 2.1.1. (MAJOR EXTENSION) Expand the audience and extend the reach of the NLM domestically by refocusing the scope and purpose of the existing National Network of Libraries of Medicine to include new members such as community based organizations, health centers, and other broadly defined groups whose purpose or interest include providing public access to health information.[8]

### **3.1. Summation**

As this study shows, non-medical academic libraries have much to contribute to the NN/LM. These libraries should also be officially recognized and systematically contacted for membership in the Network. The unique collections of non-medical academic libraries only further extend the reach and effectiveness of the Network. Moreover, these library and university facilities can be used to support Network continuing education and outreach missions.

Medical information is not restricted to medical journals. "Cochlear and Brainstem Auditory Prostheses 'Neural Interface for Hearing Restoration: Cochlear and Brain Stem Implants'" was published in an engineering journal *IEEE Proceedings*. Medical libraries need information resources in a wide range of subject fields, from directly related library science journals to business and human resource journals. A prime example is the four requests from hospital libraries for articles from *New Yorker*.

The National Network of Libraries of Medicine states that it is "a well-organized and effective network for meeting the information needs of the nation's health professionals and of the general public ... through the participation of medical libraries and other information resource providers." [9] This case study supports the proposition that non-medical academic libraries can be significant *other information resource providers* to medical libraries.

In a larger sense, just as it is time to rethink resource sharing, it is time to rethinking network and the view of near-peers.

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