

Medical Information – When Limited Access Can Have Life Changing Consequences



by **Sally Patrick** (Outreach Librarian, Utahealthnet Project Director, Spencer S. Eccles Health Sciences Library; Phone: 801-581-6979) <spatrick@lib.med.utah.edu>

There is no subject where information being current, accurate and thoroughly validated is as critical as it is with medical information.

Health professionals including Physicians Assistants, social workers, nurses, dieticians, psychologists and others often work independently, without access to a hospital or academic library. Nowhere is there a group of users who, as librarians, should concern us more. For many, their only access to the journal literature may be through their public libraries.

Consumers of health information — which is all of us — want the best and most complete information when dealing with health and medical issues. They may or may not want to look at scholarly research materials — but, if they do, they should be able to.

Eccles Library is working very hard to “reach out” to everyone and bridge that gap because we believe access to health information is critical for all and there is a great deal out there that is evidence-based that most people can get to. There is a toll-free phone line (866-581-5534) for state residents that rings on the **Eccles** reference desk. **Eccles** has started **UHID**, a document delivery direct-to-the-consumer service which is available to all citizens of the state for materials in **Eccles**’ collection. This service, unlike traditional ILL services from many health sciences libraries, is free to the end user.

The “**Eccles Outreach**” **Web page** lists services which are available for each clientele. We encourage libraries and library users throughout the state to use them:

“The primary route to reaching consumers all over the state is a partnership with public libraries.”

The “O” (Outreach) Team

In the delivery of health related information to consumers and independent professionals, a partnership between academic health sciences libraries and public libraries is mission-critical for both.

To work with public libraries and other groups, **Eccles Library** formed the **Outreach Services** team to offer “information access, service and innovation by working with Utah communities not located on **University of Utah** campuses.”

Utahealthnet — <http://utahealthnet.org>

Utahealthnet was begun in 2005 as part of a **National Library of Medicine** grant to form a **Utah Consumer Health Information Infrastructure**. This project has two major goals:

1) To create a consumer health collaboration statewide around **Eccles Library**, public libraries, health departments and community-based health information providers. Currently **Utahealthnet** is comprised of over 30 such partnerships. The core partners who joined **Utahealthnet** at its start are: the **Utah Department of Health**, the **Utah Telehealth Network** and the **Utah State Library Division**. Most notably, the **Eccles Library** extends its outreach through a strong partnership with the **University**

of **Utah’s Health Sciences Center of Excellence in Women’s Health, Community Health Centers** statewide and **Utah Navajo Health System, Inc.**

continued on page 26

Eccles Library Outreach Services:..

The links below are intended to help off-campus communities find library resources and services. If you are...

University of Utah Students and Faculty (top)

<http://library.med.utah.edu>

- Remote Access to Library Resources — <http://library.med.utah.edu/ed/remotearchive.php>
- Access to Reference Services — <http://library.med.utah.edu/or/asklibrarian.php>
- Renew Library Materials Checked-Out to You — <http://library.med.utah.edu/or/services/renew.php>
- Request an Article or Book
- Request Library Services — <http://library.med.utah.edu/or/requests.php>
- Library Classes — <http://registration.med.utah.edu/classes.cfm?textonly=false>
- University of Utah Continuing Education: Distance Education Services — <http://continue.utah.edu/distance/index.php/>

Utah Health Care Professionals (top)

<http://library.med.utah.edu/or/#top>

- Access to Reference Services — <http://library.med.utah.edu/or/asklibrarian.php>
- Request an Article or Book
- Request Library Services — <http://library.med.utah.edu/or/requests.php>
- Library Classes — <http://registration.med.utah.edu/classes.cfm?textonly=false>

Utah Library Professionals (top)

<http://library.med.utah.edu/or/#top>

- Access to Reference Services — <http://library.med.utah.edu/or/asklibrarian.php>
- Request an Article or Book
- Request Library Services — <http://library.med.utah.edu/or/requests.php>
- Library Classes — <http://registration.med.utah.edu/classes.cfm?textonly=false>

Utah Health Information Consumers (top)

<http://library.med.utah.edu/or/#top>

- Consumer Health Links: Spencer S. Eccles Health Sciences Library — <http://library.med.utah.edu/km/chealth.php>
- Access to Reference Services — <http://library.med.utah.edu/or/asklibrarian.php>
- Request an Article or Book
- Request Library Services — <http://library.med.utah.edu/or/requests.php>
- Library Classes for Communities — <http://library.med.utah.edu/or/oteam/classes.php> (Off-campus classes Guidelines) — <http://library.med.utah.edu/or/oteam/offcampusclasses.php>
- Utah Public Pioneer — <http://pioneer.utah.gov/> (Check out the Health section!)

Medical Information ...
from page 24

- 2) To create an up-to-date consumer health information portal for Utah.

The primary route to reaching consumers all over the state is a partnership with public libraries. One of the ways this is done, primarily for rural public libraries is through the “Quick Links” off the **Utah State Library Division’s Homepage**. Citizens seeking health information are directed to **Utahhealthnet** as their default search. Since Utah is a rural state, the T-1 high speed Internet access provided in public libraries is often a rural citizen’s lifeline to accurate, up to date health information.

In addition, the **Eccles Health Sciences Library** is also a **Regional Medical Library for the MidContinental Region** in the **National Network of Libraries of Medicine MidContinental Region** that also has a commitment to provide outreach services to Utah communities.

Conclusions

Putting all these resources together doesn’t solve the problem unless someone solves the “last mile” issue — getting the information into the hands of those who need it

This will be accomplished through public libraries — in a partnership between academic/public libraries to best serve all of the users of all our library systems. 🌱