Regional Medical Library-Sponsored e-Science Activities: A Qualitative Survey and Lessons Learned

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Regional Medical Library-sponsored e-Science activities: A qualitative survey and lessons learned

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Objectives

To determine, by National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM) region:

- the extent of participation in Regional Medical Library (RML)-sponsored e-Science activities addressing e-science;
- the structure of those activities, and;
- the extent, if any, they have had within their region.

The project was limited to activities occurring during the current 2011-2016 NN/LM contract period.

Background

What was my interest?

- I have been the Project Coordinator for the University of Massachusetts and New England Area Librarian E-Science planning group that involved the Southeastern/Atlantic Region in April 2011.

Methods

The same introductory letter and qualitative survey was emailed to each RML Associate Director.


Results

The survey was designed to a) elicit the types of e-science activities the RMLs had sponsored, b) gain information about the e-science activities scheduled for the current contract period, and c) determine if the RMLs had any ongoing needs for e-science planning.

1. Regional e-science sponsored activities included: e-Science forums, 2-3 day science management courses, webinars, annual e-Science symposia, annual science bootcamps, annual professional development days, publishing the Journal of E-Science Librarianship, and continuing the e-Science Portal.

Lessons Learned

Very valuable lessons were learned during the course of this project, which ultimately broke down into two categories: understanding what e-science is and how it can be defined, and how the RMLs plan to sponsor activities in the future.


Conclusions

As this project has illustrated, e-science, while a nebulous concept and rather difficult to identify with a definite definition, is being discussed and supported for medical libraries due to the rapid growth of the field. In retrospect, the author has come to understand that the most interesting question is not, "What is each RML doing about e-science?" but rather, "What form is the RML science outreach activity taking?" Every RML is participating in e-science activities; the most important take-away for this author is that the form and structure of these activities may vary greatly from one RML to the next. Ultimately, the bottom line is, what level of activity best serves the region and the network members? As the author has learned, the RMLs are not strictly top-down organizations, and as such, their activities will strongly reflect the interests of their regional membership.

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References