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Today's Librarian and Building an Evaluation Team

Judith A. Savageau

University of Massachusetts Medical School

Et al.

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Judy Savageau and Len Levin on Today's Librarian and Building an Evaluation Team

We are Judy Savageau and Len Levin from the University of Massachusetts Medical School's [Center for Health Policy and Research](#) (CHPR) and [Lamar Soutter Library](#), respectively. Back in November, we introduced you to a week's worth of lessons learned, hot tips and rad resources for how the literature (written and electronic) and various databases provide key information and tools that we need to conduct all types of evaluation projects. Partnering with our medical school's library and its resources has been key to CHPR's many successes. We wanted to continue these discussions with this blog on "What Does Today's Librarian Look Like?"

Not too long ago, accessing public libraries and all of their resources was done almost exclusively via paper-based systems where you needed to be present 'in' the library to access all of its resources. Connection to a reference librarian was 'physical' – mostly in-person and sometimes via a land-line telephone. Library patrons accessed print resources through large tomes of written words. So what's changed to help improve information needs for our evaluation work? Today's library is more active than passive. Information is available in real-time and most of it electronically accessible. Today's librarian is often working 'outside' of the library's physical space partnering on-site with key stakeholder groups and/or evaluation teams. And, when necessary, the librarian and his/her resources can easily have a virtual presence in the work we do.

Lessons Learned:

- **New partnerships**: Today's librarian doesn't necessarily need a "building" to be effective. They don't always sit at a Reference Desk waiting for a question to come to them (but if you call your local library, you WILL find someone to help you). Instead, they work where the information is needed whether with an individual or a team.
- **Active approach**: Before, if you were researching dragons in medieval castles, you would have to come by the library every now and then to see if there was any new information. Now, if you work closely with a librarian and they know that your interest is dragons and medieval castles, they will push information to you as it comes across their radar. And since librarians are usually working on many different projects with many different people or teams simultaneously, it is likely that they will come across new things often. There are a lot of efficiencies in library resources when librarians are supporting multiple teams/projects.

Hot Tip:

Instead of just consulting with a librarian on your next project, consider adding one to your project team. Having a librarian as part of your team will help to more efficiently identify needed resources and access them.