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Opening Medical Humanities to the World: Reflecting on Library Support for the Medical Humanities Lab

Lisa A. Palmer

University of Massachusetts Medical School

Et al.

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"The UMMS Humanities Lab is intertwined with the efforts of the Lamar Soutter Library - in other words - our Humanities efforts would not exist without the Library."

~ Hugh Silk, MD
UMass Medical School

Librarians can lead and support medical humanities initiatives on their campuses.

"The library is the backbone and the real glue to this project. [...] Without the Library staff and services, we would simply not exist."

~ David Hatem, MD
UMass Medical School

#ACRL21MedHumLab

Opening Medical Humanities to the World: Reflecting on Library Support for the Medical Humanities Lab

Lisa A. Palmer, Tess Grynoch, Regina Raboin

Lamar Soutter Library, University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS)

The First Two Years of the UMMS Humanities Lab

The mission of the Medical Humanities Lab at UMass Medical School is to integrate the arts and humanities into medical education and healthcare through student, faculty, and staff collaborations fostering humanism in medicine.

Leaders: David Hatem, MD; Hugh Silk, MD; Regina Raboin, MSLIS

"Medical humanities" is an interdisciplinary field of medicine that uses methods, concepts, and content from the humanities (literature, philosophy, ethics, history and religion), social sciences (anthropology, cultural studies, psychology, sociology), and the arts (literature, theater, film, multimedia and visual arts) to investigate illness, pain, disability, suffering, healing, therapeutic relationships, and other aspects of healthcare education and practice. (1,2)

Benefits of Medical Humanities

- Foster empathy, compassionate behavior, humanism, capacity to be patient-centered (3-6)
- Develop awareness of different perspectives, bring unconscious bias and assumptions into focus (3,5)
- Reduce burnout, increase well-being, solidify self-care (6,7)
- Improve teamwork and communication (5)
- Cultivate professional conduct in physicians, reinforce knowledge and skills in clinical ethics, promote reflection (7,8)
- Develop tangible skills in writing, presenting, publishing, research, project management (7)



March 17, 2021 Meeting

January 16, 2019
First meeting

July 2019
[Website launched](#)

February - May 2020
Meetings suspended

January 16 - February 20, 2019
Compiled initial inventory of medical humanities activities and interests within UMMS community



January 28, 2020
Humanities Lab logo finalized



June 17, 2020
First Zoom meeting

Library Support for the Lab

- Leadership and administrative support
- Technology expertise
- Space for in-person meetings
- Hosted virtual meetings
- Promotional assistance

"While as leaders, we can be idea people, the library staff has been invaluable in their support, their leg work and their investment in these projects--promoting them, providing technical skills for establishing Share point sites, helping to track our tasks, and helping to organize our work."

~ David Hatem, MD
UMass Medical School

Clinical Anthology
Creators: Dr. David Hatem, Dr. Hugh Silk, Dr. Lauren Colwell ('20), Dr. Jason Yang ('20), Tess Grynoch

Description: The physical Clinical Anthology of student writings was typically handed out to rising 3rd-year medical students during their transition ceremony to act as a reflection tool during their clinical rotations. Students are more likely to carry their phone than a book in their pocket, so an effort was spearheaded to digitize the Anthology. With the added motivation of a virtual transition ceremony this year due to the pandemic, the digitization of the anthology was fast-tracked.

Library Support: Built the SharePoint site and transferred the works from the physical anthology to the digital medium. Also consulted on copyright considerations.

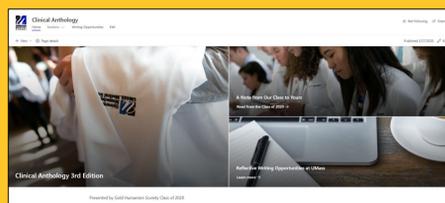


Figure 1. Screenshot of Clinical Anthology

"The librarians have been very dedicated to our efforts adding a level of organization, promotion, and support that makes the work possible. Students are the ultimate beneficiaries - they have created Capstone projects that are meaningful to them and their colleagues including a student blog, a podcast, A Caring Committee, an annual Anthology of writing - all of which are directly affect by the efforts of the library and the Humanities Lab."

~ Hugh Silk, MD
UMass Medical School

Murmurs: Stories from Our Journey in Medicine
Creators: Divya Bhatia ('21), Qiuwei Yang ('22), Dr. Hugh Silk (advisor)

Description: *Murmurs: Stories from Our Journey in Medicine* is a narrative medicine podcast that explores how health providers and trainees think about their experiences in medicine. Each episode features a member of the UMass Medical School community to discuss a poem or essay they have written about an impactful moment in their medical education or career and takes the listener through the inspiration, writing process and interview with the author. Through these podcasts, the creators hope to build community, promote reflection and increase awareness of issues of medical education and health inequality.

Library Support: All episodes are archived in the school's open access institutional repository and can be downloaded or streamed from the repository. Transcriptions of audio files are created using Otter.ai for accessibility. Narrative pieces discussed in the episodes are available.

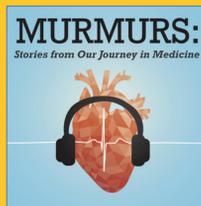


Figure 2. Murmurs logo

[Listen now to Episode 4: Dear Anonymous Donor](#)

Additional Projects

- **2020 Hindsight** – Collection of poetry, written reflections, images, and music from the UMMS community reflecting on the year 2020.
- **Art Walks at UMass Memorial Hospital** – Pamphlets designed to accompany timed walks around the hospital describing the artwork.
- **Gerald F. Berlin Prize** – Annual prize for writing at UMMS.
- **Human Side (of Medicine)** – Website/ podcast profiling the diverse range of people in the medical community.
- **The Interstium** – Multimedia blog for the UMMS community to share reflections on daily life, medical training, and medical practice.
- **MedMoth** – Live storytelling event for UMMS community.
- **Streams of Consciousness** – An online literary and visual art publication of UMass Medical School.
- **Thursday Morning Memo** – Communicating clinical success stories within the Family Medicine & Community Health Department.
- **Promoting humanities events on campus such as:**
 - Screening of *Black Men in White Coats*
 - *Private Guns* Public Health Talk

Facilitators

- Library is well respected on campus and connected to medical humanities and diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts on campus
- Range of expertise available across campus
- Existing medical humanities efforts at UMMS to build on
- Interdisciplinary nature of librarianship (9)
- Deep interest on campus

Challenges

- Developing clarity of purpose
- Collaborating and supporting very busy faculty-clinicians and students
- Student and staff turnover
- Keeping momentum going for all-volunteer effort
- Limited funding and resources
- Appealing to all three schools on campus (School of Medicine, Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, and the Graduate School of Nursing)
- Limited integration in curriculum
- Raising awareness about the lab

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the members of the Humanities Lab and the support of our library colleagues, especially Kristine Sjøstedt, without whose participation the Humanities Lab and various projects would not have been possible.

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Have suggestions for the UMMS Humanities Lab or have a medical humanities initiative at your institution? We would love to hear from you!
<https://umassmed.libwizard.com/f/acrl2021-humanities-lab>



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