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

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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 UMMS Humanities Lab at UMass Medical School is to integrate the arts and humanities into medical education and healthcare through students, faculty, and staff to foster humanism in medicine.

Leaders: David Hatem, MD; Hugh S/s, MD; Regina Raboin, MSLS

January 16, 2019
First meeting

July 2019
Website launched

February - May 2020
Meetings suspended

January 28, 2020
Humanities Lab logo finalized

June 17, 2020
First Zoom meeting

“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

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)

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
• Accessing 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

A call for increased librarian support for the medical humanities.

Cultivate professional conduct in physicians, reinforce knowledge and skills in clinical ethics, and develop tangible skills in writing, presenting, publishing, research, project management.

We would love to hear from you!
https://umassmed.libwizard.com/f/acrl2021-humanities-lab

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Lamar Soutter Library
Education • Research • Health Care
Empowering the future. Preserving the past.

“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 (3-4)
• Develop awareness of different perspectives, bring unconscious bias and assumptions into focus (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 (1,8)
• Develop tangible skills in writing, presenting, publishing, research, project management (7)

“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

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

“The libraries 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 Captions 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 affected by the efforts of the Library and the Humanities Lab.”
~ Hugh S/s, MD
UMass Medical School

January 16 - February 20, 2019
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Library Support for the Lab
• Leadership and administrative support
• Technology expertise
• Space for in-person meetings
• Hosted virtual meetings
• Promotional assistance

Clinical Anthology

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 ShareThis site and transferred the works from the physical anthology to the digital medium. Also consulted on copyright considerations.

Murmurs: Stories From Our Journey in Medicine

Description: Murmurs: Stories From Our Journey in Medicine is a narrative medicine podcast that explores how health providers and students 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 discuss their experiences in the writing process with the author. Through these podcasts, the creators hope to build community, promote reflection, and increase awareness of issues in medical education and health care.

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.

“While we lead, we can be idea people, the library staff has been invaluable in their support, their low work and their investment in these projects—promoting them, providing technical skills for establishing ShareThis point sites, helping to track our tasks, and helping to organize our work.”
~ David Hatem, MD
UMass Medical School

March 17, 2021 Meeting

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

References
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Figure 1. Screenshot of Clinical Anthology

Figure 2. Murmurs logo

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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