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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OBJECTIVE

To determine, by National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM) needed.

BACKGROUND

I am the Managing Editor for the Journal of Health Libraries and one RML included CTA activities, while another did not.

METHODS

The same introductory letter and qualitative survey was emailed to each Regional Medical Library (RML) as the form that this took, however, varied greatly.

RESULTS

Table 1: e-Science related activity, broken down by form of activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Activity</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Day Workshop/Symposium</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Day Workshop/Symposium</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webinar/Webcast</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Continuing education opportunities include: an e-Science forum, a 2-day data management course, online, annual e-Science symposia, annual science bootcamps, annual professional development days, publishing the Journal of Online Libraries, 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:

ABOUT THE RMLs

- The RMLs are not necessarily “top-down” organizations, the direction of such is led strongly by the interests and needs of the network members;
- Each RML has its own culture and because of this, it is difficult to fairly compare them;
- Some RMLs have been in place for multiple contract periods, others are either new or relatively new and are still working out their regional plans;
- The regions do not “exist in a vacuum,” i.e. they do not necessarily operate independently of one another.

ABOUT DOING RESEARCH

- Defining “e-science” is difficult. Although I provided a frequently cited definition, there does not seem to be a standard definition of e-science, so the survey questions may be interpreted differently among Associate Directors;
- E.g., one RML included CTA activities, while another did not.

CONCLUSIONS

As this project has illustrated, e-science, while a nebulous concept and rather difficult to identify with one definition, is being discussed and supported for medical libraries and their clientele. In part due to the national reach of the RMLs, in retrospect, the author has come to understand that the most interesting question is not, “what is each RML doing to address e-science?”, but rather, “what form are the RML e-science outreach activities taking?” Every RML is participating in e-science related activities; the most important takeaway for this author is that the form and structure of these activities may vary greatly from one RML to the next.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES