Case Load:
Incorporating Librarian Support for Clinical and Biomedical Research

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2016, the University of Washington Health Sciences Library (HSL) launched the Translational Research & Information Lab (TRAIL) in collaboration with four partners from across the campus. Capitalizing on each partner's skills, TRAIL coordinates data and innovation services focused on the needs of medical researchers through clinical data management, research data collection, cohort discovery, and emerging technologies. It includes a renovated, technology-enhanced space that has supported creative projects using virtual reality. Cross-partner collaboration has provided HSL librarians with opportunities to spread their proverbial wings beyond the confines of the library, providing key professional development opportunities and benefiting UW's clinical research community. The chapter will discuss and detail how HSL and its TRAIL partners have developed support models harnessing the skills of librarians to provide core support for clinical and biomedical tools laid the foundation for creative and mutually beneficial projects using new and emerging technologies and learning practices.

INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries supporting hospitals and health sciences educational cores have both the challenge and opportunity to establish themselves as key campus collaborators in projects pushing forward innovative new practices and technologies with real-world applications. In providing support and services beyond teaching and resources, those libraries can meet modern research needs focusing on data-intensive areas that evolve and complement the traditional role of the library.

The University of Washington (UW) is one of the premier health sciences institutions in the U.S. Pacific Northwest, with six health sciences schools (Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Public Health, and Social Work) that perennially rank among the nation's leaders. The UW Medicine network

operates four large hospitals and a growing number of neighborhood clinics. The UW Medical Center, based on the south end of the main Seattle campus, placed in the top-100 ranking of the best hospitals worldwide (Newsweek, 2021). The UW School of Medicine operates the award-winning WWAMI (Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho) program, supporting more than 4,500 medical students, residents, and post-doctoral fellows across these states (UW School of Medicine, n.d.).

To support that massive clinical enterprise, the UW Health Sciences Library (HSL) launched the Translational Research and Information Lab (TRAIL) in late 2016 in collaboration with four partners from across the campus: the Institute of Translational Health Sciences, UW Medicine Research Information Technology, the UW School of Medicine's Department of Biomedical Informatics and Medical Education, and the regional medical library of the Network of the National Library of Medicine (previously Pacific Northwest Region, now Region 5).

Capitalizing on the skills of each partner, TRAIL aims to coordinate data and innovation services focused on the needs of medical researchers through clinical data management, research data collection, cohort discovery, and emerging technologies. Cross-partner collaboration has also provided HSL librarians with opportunities to spread their proverbial wings beyond the confines of the library, providing key professional development opportunities and benefiting UW's clinical research community and libraries.

This chapter will discuss and detail how HSL and its TRAIL partners have developed support models harnessing the skills of librarians to provide core support for two clinical and biomedical tools—REDCap and Leaf—and laying the foundation for creative and mutually beneficial projects using new and emerging technologies like virtual reality (VR).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Evolving librarian skillsets, maturing technology, and reduced barriers to access have had a profound impact on reshaping the role of the library in an academic environment ever seeking the cutting edge in research. Library-based research data services and technology-enhanced spaces are still in comparative infancy within the overarching librarianship scope. As such, existing literature predominantly highlights institutions' experiences launching services without clear overall and profession-wide takeaways or best practices. As that area of librarianship matures and develops, future literature may better illustrate those lessons learned.

The librarianship landscape before TRAIL's founding in 2016 was one with initial exploratory forays into research data services without many clearly defined and structured support projects. Tenopir et al.'s (2014) survey of American and Canadian academic research libraries indicated that while few research data services were actively employed in the libraries, many were in the development stage. They also found that most services focused on informational, consultant-style data services, such as helping to find a dataset or creating online finding aids, rather than technical, hands-on services like data curation or technical support for a tool or platform. Kennan et al. (2014) identified a lack of staff knowledge/skills and staff lack of confidence to be the top constraints against the development of research data management and bibliometric services among surveyed institutions.

Over time, however, libraries in general and librarians, have become increasingly skilled and confident in launching and maintaining research data services, both for general audiences and subject-specific requests (Yoon & Schultz, 2017). The surge of data-related support has involved both adding responsibilities to existing jobs and the rise of the dedicated "Data Librarian" job title to develop and lead

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