

WHEN YOU NEVER SEE YOUR CLIENTS!

-- HOW WE MARKET THE HEALTH SCIENCES INFORMATION SERVICE (HSIS)

WHO ARE WE?

HSIS is a special fee-based unit at the Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA). We serve as Alaska's medical library, providing information services to healthcare professionals and government personnel across the state as our primary mandate. We also support UAA's nursing and allied health science programs, and the public's consumer health needs. Our staff of seven includes two medical librarians, an office manager, a library assistant, a part-time ILL technician and two students.

THE CHALLENGE

Alaska is America's largest state. With an area of 656,400 square miles, it is 2.3 times the size of Texas. There are few roads, and over one third of the population lives off the highway system, traveling instead by aircraft, boat, snowmobile, or dog team. Because of the distances and high cost of travel, we never see most of our clients: we bridge the gap using modern communication technology including e-mail and fax. Constant marketing of our service is essential as a result of high staff turnover in our client organizations. It is also important to distinguish our operation from the rest of the Consortium Library, reflecting our broader mandate and personalized service.

THE MESSAGE

Our most important task is to make clients aware of the services we offer. These services include book or article delivery, custom literature searches, research and consultation, individual or group training and current awareness through table-of-contents service or autoalert searches on specified topics. Our resources include 1300 journal titles in print (600 currently received), a current medical reference collection, 16 health science related online databases as well as supporting print and electronic resources of the Consortium Library. Clients can place requests by phone, fax, e-mail or online forms on our website. Turnaround time is 24 hours during the week: rush service is available for clinical emergencies.

THE MEDIUM

We use a variety of media to get our message out – brochures and Rolodex cards, posters, newsletters, websites, presentations & training, and articles in Alaska healthcare publications.

Brochures:

1. The HSIS brochure is a tri-fold, 2-color publication outlining our services and giving contact information. We had several thousand printed at UAA in 2000 and distribute them on campus, by mail and at presentations and onsite visits. Unfortunately cost information was not available.
2. Our PubMed Basics brochure was adapted for our clients with permission from the NLM. We had 500 copies @ \$0.24 each printed on blueberry card stock at UAA, but also make it available in PDF on our website

Original brochure: <http://www.nlm.gov/ner/education/pmtri.pdf>

Our version: <http://www.lib.uaa.alaska.edu/hsis/PubMedBrochure.pdf>

Rolodex cards:

These are one-color, double-sided standard cards, bearing our logo, name, parent organization, address and contact information on the face, and a list of staff phone numbers, e-mail addresses and principal responsibilities on the reverse side. We had 3000 printed at UAA in 2001 @ \$0.10 each. Unfortunately, the specific information on the cards becomes outdated faster than the general information on the brochures. It is surprising how many offices here still use Rolodex cards, so we distribute these during training site visits and presentations.

Posters:

1. HSIS poster, multicolored 11.5 x 14.5 in. on card stock. Created with our input at UAA. We purchased 250 early last year @ \$1.11 and mailed them out to all our major clients.
2. Arctic Health website poster, multicolored on 11.5 x 14.5 in. gloss cover stock. This poster, designed and printed at UAA, promotes the Arctic Health website created by the National Library of Medicine. We helped develop and continue to maintain this website under direction of a Users Group. We purchased 1500 posters @ \$0.76 each. One hundred were sent to NLM and the rest are being mailed out to hospitals, clinics, native administrations, government offices, public and school libraries throughout Alaska. A mailing envelope and postage adds \$1.55 within the state.

Newsletters:

In December 2000, we started our HSIS newsletter. This is a free one-page document, initially bi-monthly, but now distributed monthly by e-mail, fax and U.S. mail to around 300 subscribers and two health-related Listservs. The HSISnews list is a mediated list, maintained on the library server. The newsletter is produced using Adobe Pagemaker 7.0 software, and saved as a PDF file with live hyperlinks (since April, 2003). Back issues are archived on the HSIS website at:

<http://www.lib.uaa.alaska.edu/hsis/pubs.htm>

The purpose of the newsletter is to update readers on changes to our staff, resources and services. It is also intended to inform them of new database developments, recommended websites, and important health alerts. Over the past few months, we have used different themes of widespread interest, including obesity, aging, the role of the medical library, and databases licensed for Alaska residents.

Each newsletter takes about 10 hours to create. We are constantly on the lookout for potential themes and content! Each newsletter generally consists of several parts: an introduction or overview, a brief news item, a short list of online resources related to the theme, and a promotional section on HSIS services, e.g. holiday closures, call for journal donations, or user survey. It is always a challenge to "shoe-horn" the content into a single page, especially as we try to include some graphics, photographs etc. to add interest.

Websites:

1. The HSIS homepage is found at <http://www.lib.uaa.alaska.edu/hsis/>. It is a valuable source of resources of all kinds. We are currently revising it to more clearly reflect the division between our two client groups: external clients, and university faculty and students. Kathy Murray, Manager HSIS, maintains this site.
2. The Arctic Health website is being developed as a joint project between NLM and HSIS to serve as a single portal for health information pertinent to people living in arctic regions. Although it is currently restricted to U.S. based organizations and information, the content may expand over time to cover all countries represented by the Arctic Council. The website is hosted and maintained at the Consortium Library. You can explore this brand new resource at <http://www.arctichealth.org/>

Presentations and Training:

HSIS provides short presentations on request, outlining our services and demonstrating key resources to hospitals and clinics. These are PowerPoint slide shows, using live Internet demonstrations whenever possible. We provide handouts, including a list of current titles for our STAT!Ref online medical reference library, guidelines for evaluating websites, a list of recommended healthcare resources on the Web, and our brochures.

We also offer group or individual training sessions as requested. Last summer, we provided training to public health nurses in 12 communities from Barrow to Wrangell, under a joint state and federal grant. Participants learned how to use cable or satellite TV and the Internet to access bioterrorism preparedness information, as well as how to find quality healthcare resources on the Web. Local clients can receive tutoring on searching PubMed or other databases available to Alaskans more effectively.

Articles in Alaska health publications:

Last May we contributed an article on information resources to the Alaska Pharmacists Association newsletter. This article served the dual purpose of informing pharmacists of free and useful databases and websites, while allowing us to promote our service at no cost.

We have also submitted an information circular to Alaska Rural Health Notes (online) and are preparing an article for Alaska Wellness. The idea is to reach our diverse client groups, alerting them to our fee-based services and resources, while also encouraging the use of free healthcare information resources available to them.

THE FUTURE

As the Rolodex is replaced by electronic directories, we are moving to link our website to healthcare organization intranets, and to insert our contact phone and fax numbers in their directories. We are also considering some promotional novelties such as calendars, pens, clips, or even an HSIS bear paw pot mitt. Items must be useful, or better still, essential, so they will continue to spread our message over time.