

PROMOTING THE MEDICAL LIBRARY ON THE UT SOUTHWESTERN MEDICAL CENTER CAMPUS THROUGH OUTREACH

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Overview of UT Southwestern -

The UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas Library serves a diverse campus population of over 10,400 employees who work in many different locations (see campus map). The institution includes two University Hospitals (Zale Lipshy and St. Paul) and three degree-granting components: UT Southwestern Medical School, UT Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, and UT Southwestern School of Health Professions. Over 4,400 students, residents and postdoctoral fellows are trained annually.¹

Because the campus is so large and spread out geographically, many people never go to the physical library and may not remember that our resources are available virtually through our website. Google is often their method of choice to access information. To address this issue, the LIMO (Liaison, Marketing and Outreach) unit established a regular schedule of outreach to promote the Library to a large and diverse audience at the two University Hospitals.

History of UT Southwestern Library Outreach -

Outreach as defined by the Library focuses on the “big picture” - making contacts institution-wide and “establishing the Library as the primary information resource for the campus community.” Outreach was initially started by the CORE (Campus Outreach, Reference, and Education) unit beginning in 2006. A promotion plan for the University Hospitals was developed by CORE in conjunction with the Marketing Team. The University Hospital nurses served as a target audience for this promotion plan. Emily Patridge began demonstrating resources such as PubMed to the University Hospital nurses on the floors where they worked. The on-floor demos required a hospital educator and could not be regularly scheduled, so Emily decided to utilize Table Top demonstrations elsewhere to reach a wider audience. Emily and MaryAnn Huslig, also of CORE, decided on the University Hospital Zale Lipshy cafeteria. They set up a promotional table each Wednesday at lunch time, bringing a sign, promotional items, and library flyers. After about four months of consistent Wednesday Table Top demos, results were achieved in the form of recognition, requests for literature searches and follow up questions on previous searches.

In 2008, internal Library changes resulted in the formation of the LIMO unit (Liaison, Marketing, and Outreach). At this point, Catherine Schack and Emily Patridge of LIMO began to coordinate Table Top demonstrations in the Zale Lipshy cafeteria to promote the Library.

¹ <http://www.utsouthwestern.edu/utsw/cda/dept353744/files/461081.html>

Purpose -

Our purpose was to remind the population at the University Hospitals that they have a campus library available to address their information needs. We wanted to put the Library “on their radar” to increase the likelihood that they would remember to use the library resources through the website if they could not go to the physical location.

Methodology -

Since this was a pilot program, we adapted our methods as we went along, based on our observations. We initially selected Thursday from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. as our regular day/time to promote the Library in the Zale Lipshy cafeteria. Hospital staff, clinicians and employees from all over the campus take a break from their busy schedules at lunch time. The two-hour time span covered both lunch shifts.

We chose a table that made us easily visible and secured permission from the cafeteria manager to set up our display. Initially we sat close to the cashier, hoping that people would see us as they exited the food line and looked for a place to sit.

An eye-catching sign was essential to attract the attention of potential clients. We utilized an 11 inch by 17 inch poster featuring our names, phone numbers and information about free database searches. We brought bookmark-sized Library brochures, promotional pens and computer screen sweeps, resource flyers for clinical staff, and some consumer health brochures from the NNLM (National Network of Libraries of Medicine).

We decided on a “passive” promotional approach, making ourselves available to answer questions and provide information, rather than trying to “sell” the Library. We relied on our posters and other promotional materials to draw in attention - hence the name “Table Top demo.”

Observations / Modifications -

At first, we attracted only a few people, as our sign did not clearly indicate that we represented the Library. We soon realized that people couldn’t tell who we were and may have mistaken us for drug company representatives, who often have give-away items. We asked our Design and Promotion Specialist Jane Scott to revamp our sign to make our library affiliation easy to recognize. Our redesigned sign said “Need information? Ask a Librarian!” in red letters. We also made other modifications based on our observations:

- After noticing that “Pasta Day” Fridays attracted lots of people to the cafeteria, we changed our regular outreach day from Thursday to Friday.
- We moved our Table Top display to the entrance/exit of the cafeteria, so that people saw us as they entered and exited the cafeteria.
- We noticed that more people approached us when we wore bright colors like red or coral, so we made a point of wearing these colors.

- We realized that nurses often approached us with questions, so brought flyers about resources and classes for this client group.
- We were asked certain questions over and over, eg. how to access the electronic journals from off-campus, so we brought handouts addressing these issues
- We discovered that many people did not know about the North Campus Branch Library, which is accessible 24/7 by scanning their UTSW identification card. Our Design and Promotion Specialist enhanced the official campus map to show both Library locations with hours, which were included as handouts at our Table Top
- Since we were getting a good response in the Zale Lipsky cafeteria, we added a second outreach day at the other University Hospital, St. Paul (Wednesdays in the cafeteria)

We counted the number of interactions with UTSW affiliates and non-affiliates (patients and families, who also use the cafeteria), the number of people who stopped and read our sign, and the type and number of promotional items taken (pens, screen sweeps, promotional flyers, maps, etc.). Statistics were recorded in the Library's client contact database for analysis.

Results -

- The number of interactions slowly and steadily increased week by week at both outreach locations
- People began to recognize us and identify us with the Library
- We were able to establish individual contacts for the Library by doing email follow up for questions we received that could not be readily answered
- We passed on individual contact information to the appropriate library staff member
- Two outreach interactions resulted in library orientations for campus departments

Conclusions -

The weekly increase in the number of people who interacted with us, stopped to read our sign, took our promotional items and/or asked us questions indicated that we had succeeded in putting the Library on the "radar" of staff who otherwise might not have thought to use either the virtual or physical Library. We were also able to establish new client relationships and increase the number of requests for Library orientations as a direct result of our outreach activities. Since the LIMO unit manages both liaison and outreach activities, we anticipate using Library liaisons to assist us with future outreach endeavors. We will continue using Table Top demonstrations as an effective way to promote the Library in other geographical areas of the campus.