Director’s Message
The Arc of Change

By Kathryn Carpenter

The Library of the Health Sciences is in ferment this spring and the excitement is not about to end anytime soon. There is no question that “perpetual white water” continues to be an apt metaphor for the times in which we live. Having experienced white water in an actual raft, the metaphor is remarkably descriptive: respond NOW or risk going under and losing EVERYTHING. Our team is working furiously, moving quickly through sudden rapid change and circumventing unexpected obstacles (A major retirement! Severe budget reduction scenarios! Un-repairable elevators! Higher expectations for cleanliness!)...and we are staying afloat. As colleagues, we take great satisfaction in working together to meet the demands that face us.

More exhilarating, though, are the opportunities for innovation that we grasp before they slip through our sphere of influence. The difference between a demand and an innovation can be minor, such as “students need 24-hour access during exams” to “the library will fund the cost of an extra overnight intra-campus van so students can stay safe in transit to use 24-hour services.” Or the difference can be significant, such as strategically envisioning information practice in the Library of the Health Sciences, launching clinical support services, embedding librarians in academic units, proposing a complete renovation of user-centered space, and serving as a sponsor of a new university-wide academic program. We are actively engaged in as well as thoroughly enthusiastic about these ways to increase our impact, our leadership, and our service to the university community.
Beyond the boundaries of the campus are even more opportunities to have an impact and many times, to create something new to fill a need that hasn’t been addressed or may not even have been articulated as a need. As the Regional Medical Library for the Greater Midwest Region, we work directly to improve access to biomedical and consumer health information by underserved health professionals and consumers, respectively, in our 10-state region. Further, through our subcontracts and awards program, we support innovation by other libraries in the areas of public health, consumer health, community preparedness, exhibits, assessment, technology improvements, and professional development (for a list of projects, see Funding Recipients).

The Library of the Health Sciences is also a recipient of funds to support innovation and meet needs in providing access to health information. In partnership with the American Academy of Pediatrics, we are developing strategies for collaboration between pediatricians and librarians to improve awareness of and access to information to address children’s unique needs in disaster preparedness and response initiatives. The “Disaster Outreach and Collaboration for Kids” project is funded by the National Library of Medicine as one of its Disaster Health Information Outreach and Collaboration Projects 2011 (NLM-11-130-KDB). Working together, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Library of the Health Sciences will be able to create new partnerships, develop skills, and offer targeted services to a significant group of a community – its children.

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