

Mini-profile:

a day in the life of a health sciences library director



JEAN P SHIPMAN

Director, Spencer S Eccles Health Sciences Library and NN/LM MidContinental Region, University of Utah, USA, pictured outside the Library

My day begins with a beautiful commute along the foothills, as I live about ten minutes' drive from the entrance of two canyons and four ski resorts. The University of Utah is on the east side of Salt Lake City and backs right onto the foothills of the Wasatch Mountains. During my drive, I think about one or two things that I really want to accomplish, besides the many meetings that typically comprise my day.

I park in the base of the Health Sciences Education Building (HSEB), a facility housing most of the health sciences programs' classrooms, computer laboratories and a clinical skills teaching suite. The Library supports this building's technological needs as well as event scheduling. It also contracts with a bookstore, café and parking garage to offer conveniences to the campus as well as revenue for building maintenance. Taking an elevator to the 2nd floor of the HSEB, I cross an enclosed bridge to enter the Library and observe if anything seems amiss while listening to the chatter of the buildings' occupants. I pass the interdisciplinary

student lounge where I see an active game of ping-pong taking place. The building's philosophy is to create a shared space for students to learn about other health professions as they interact. It is unusual for a library to be so involved in the daily operations of such an interdisciplinary building, but it is not atypical for this Library – we are really so involved with many of the center's initiatives and missions.

The Spencer S Eccles Health Sciences Library faculty and staff have always set a national standard as regards technology and entrepreneurial organizational culture. We are the home of the MidContinental Region (MCR) of the National Network of Libraries of Medicine; one of eight national contracts with the National Library of Medicine, serving not only Utah, but also Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Wyoming, with staff distributed throughout these states. I was privileged to join the Library staff over a year ago as their director and have been having the time of my life since! So what makes me so happy? Let me

highlight just a few of the ways the Library and I help to support the key missions of the University and share a glimpse into the daily life of a health sciences library director.

Besides the typical services a library offers to support learning such as teaching classes, being members of curricular committees, helping with small group assignments and providing one-on-one consultations, the Eccles Library is responsible for the technology within the HSEB classrooms as well as for distance education. Being located within a mainly rural state, the University offers a lot of distance learning programs. We train faculty how to use software such as Wimba and Adobe Connect to provide such education. I personally chair three campus-wide committees that relate to education, including Interdisciplinary Education, Education Technology (subcommittee of the campus' Information Technology Committee) and a university-wide Health Literacy interest group. My responsibilities include planning these committees' meetings, connecting various personnel with each other, and setting direction for actions. Health literacy is my research passion and this past year, I traveled extensively including to Italy to present about how librarians can be effective educators of this topic within their health care institutions. This is what really makes me tick!

As with other libraries, the Eccles Library licenses electronic journals and databases and provides desktop delivery of needed information on demand. We provide the evidence and help others to discover supporting literature for their research endeavors. Where we stand apart is that we no longer just organize books and journals, we organize people!

Jean greets a member of the NNILM MCR Advisory Board



I've been working with our CTSA (Clinical and Translations Science Award) to create collaborative spaces for researchers from the University, the Utah Department of Health, the Veterans Administration and Intermountain Health Care. We are converting some library space into a 'research support center' or 'research incubator' where faculty can come for one-stop help with developing their research ideas into practice. I also chair a team that is creating a virtual collaborative space called MyRA, My Research Assistant, where again, researchers can electronically access information related to their research needs and work together.

The Eccles Library serves as the hospital library and operates a small clinical library within the Hospital. We are in the process of relocating this space to the front lobby to open a consumer health information center for patients and their families. The clinical library will remain, but will be totally virtual. I am very excited about this new consumer resource as we can support the patient education mission of the Hospital as well as reach out into the local community to help citizens learn more about their health.

As a member of the Knowledge Management and Mobility Team, I am enhancing our electronic medical record systems to provide knowledge when and where it is needed, in an applicable format. We want to establish an electronic information prescription that can be ordered by health care providers, and then transferred to the library for fulfillment and documentation.

Library faculty are partnering with community clinics to connect them to public librarians so that clinic patients can be referred using prescriptions to learn more about their health. We offer training on consumer health information resources and assist with promoting and managing this referral concept.

What else might I do on a typical day? Well, I travel a lot – for professional meetings, MCR-related events, promoting a national health literacy curriculum, and for my other national association responsibilities. I manage a forever changing budget, monitor our MCR contract, and offer staff guidance. Due to a ceiling remodel, the physical library is closed for about five months. Nothing forces one to think differently than such an event – we are rethinking a lot about what we offer and how we do so. There is never a dull moment and maybe, if I am lucky, I accomplish at least one of my commuting goals for the day! But I'm having fun and am enjoying the scenery along the way!