# Medium-Sized Hospital, Small Library, Tiny Budget, Innovative Solutions

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In these hard financial times in hospitals, the health library can be the last place administration may wish to place funds. Many hospitals are being forced to close their libraries, either for lack of space, lack of funds, or some combination thereof. Some go to all online access. This is, needless to say, very, very sad indeed.

Everyone in the Health Education Library at the New York Hospital Queens is working together in the most spectacular and cooperative way, with the patients and library patrons foremost on their minds. One of the library employees actually walked for four hours to get to the library in a very horrid snowstorm during a bus strike because his loyalty to the care of the patients was that high. This library is not unique in that way; librarians seem to be givers and caretakers at all costs.

To this end, the library has developed several initiatives to help patrons and patients alike. In one initiative, media were made available for sale for patrons to use in the hospital, starting with floppy disks; then zip disks, CDs, and DVDs; and now flash drives (thumb drives). Library hours are 8:00 a.m. until 11:00 p.m., most days during the week. These media are available to everyone working in the hospital at reasonable prices so they do not have to go someplace outside and interrupt their work to purchase these items.

The residents and fellows were asked via in-library rounding and an external survey what they really needed from the library, besides books, journals, mediated searches, and databases. A notary service was mentioned, as this service was frequently needed for licensing, employment, and personal reasons. One librarian studied for and passed the notary requirements solely for this purpose.

Small fees are attached to late returns on books and videos to ensure timely return. The profits from the late fees, media sales, and notary service have been used by the library to purchase Halloween candy for the residents and other small goodies. These funds also support a once-yearly holiday party for the staff and volunteers.

To improve the ease of learning for the hospital staff, vendors of the library's databases are brought in approximately four times a year to make sure all staff are using and getting the most out of the databases. These vendor classes are held often enough to update the staff and not too often to invade what little time they have for other endeavors. The most difficult part of this project is finding a common time that doctors, nurses, and other staff can attend these presentations. The library staff knows the databases very well and is available on a one-to-one basis when patrons cannot attend a formal class.

For the patrons' use, the library has also maintained several laptops that have wireless access in the library. When all of the library's desktop computers are occupied, laptops that have the same hospital materials are available for checkout. They will also print to the library printers.

The most current project the library is involved in is applying for a technology grant to purchase iPads, both regular and mini, for the residents' use in the hospital. The hypotheses are that the doctors should be able to retrieve important information while on the floors, share patient information with patients, and enter or view information in the electronic medical record (EMR). The library is working with both the information technology (IT) department and the head of the graduate medical education department to ensure the best trial possible. The most significant segments of this experiment will be to see whether the iPad mini will be too small for EMR entries and whether regular iPads will be lost. IT will configure these items, which will be loaned from the library, to use the library intranet. After the experimental use is complete (about six months), the iPads will be used in the library as small computers. Signed replacement accountability forms are required to use the iPads

It is hoped that the iPads will save money for both the library and the hospital by reducing paper and toner costs. Articles and other files can be emailed from the iPads to be printed outside of the hospital.

Surveys are conducted annually of department chairs and other patrons to determine what databases, books, journals, and so on are truly needed. This year, the library dropped two databases and replaced them with one other that all agreed would be used more often than the dropped materials. Because the patrons prefer the new database over the previous ones and use it more often, its cost per use makes it more cost effective.

The ultimate library goals are to supply all the needed resources to properly train and update the entire hospital staff within the budget supplied to the library. As everyone is aware, this is a difficult task requiring a great deal of imagination and negotiation.

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