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Using REDCap to Collect Library Service Statistics in a Large Health System

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Background

Context
In January 2018, library services at Providence Health/Swedish and St. Joseph Health merged to form a single, unified system, incorporating nine libraries and sixteen full-time staff. We recognized a need to document the activities of our merged team in a consistent and meaningful way.

Challenges
- Disparate methods of statistics collection at legacy organizations
- Variation in services offered at legacy organizations
  - Some sites serve patients, families, and the public
  - Some sites serve cancer centers and research institutes
- Large geographic spread
  - Patrons served across seven states
  - Library staff located in five states

Literature Search

Limited literature exists on statistics collection and reporting in health science libraries. In their comprehensive article on identifying and communicating the contributions of health science libraries, Abels and colleagues emphasize the importance of selecting measures that align to organizational goals (1). We selected measures that are simple for non-library professionals to understand and that document contributions to goals such as building research capacity throughout PSJH and achieving Magnet designation at more hospitals.

We also use our REDCap form to document our contributions to particular strategic initiatives. For example, the organization has a current goal of improving patient experience, and we now flag all requests that relate to this.

Building the Form

January 2018
Choose a tool: REDCap
Web form accessible on site and off
Quick and easy reporting (2)

February 2018
Convene small task force with representatives from each legacy organization
Document current statistics collection processes
Brainstorm information we wanted to collect

March 2018
Build draft form
Invite entire team to test

Results

Our REDCap form for statistics collection went live on April 1, 2018. The form is simple to use, and REDCap’s branching logic functions allow us to collect detailed information without making the form unwieldy. Occasional communication and retraining for our team has been necessary, to ensure that fields in the form are understood and used consistently. Finally, we are using our reports to assess and further refine the form for 2019. Some fields, such as the purpose of a request, are rarely used and may be eliminated, while new fields may be added in consultation with the team.

A sample form is available at https://tinyurl.com/y6e9ct2x, or through the QR code:

This is an exact copy of our stats form but uses REDCap’s “draft mode” and does not collect real statistics.

Applications & Future Directions

We used our form to generate or contribute to a number of reports, including:
- Monthly System-wide activity summaries
- 2018 Annual Report
- 2018 summaries, broken down by service area

We are investigating ways to further demonstrate our value using service statistics, and will likely begin to document hours spent on services, as recommended by the NNLM (3).

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