Creating Connections in the Research Enterprise: The Library’s Role in Research Development

Merle Rosenzweig*, MALS
Informationist
Taubman Health Sciences Library, University of Michigan

Judith E. Smith, MSLIS
Informationist
Taubman Health Sciences Library, University of Michigan

Ann Curtis, BGS
Associate Director of Marketing
Office of Research, University of Michigan Medical School

Amy Puffenberger, MAM
Marketing Communications Specialist
Office of Research, University of Michigan Medical School

* Corresponding author
Abstract

To provide the needed support to researchers at the University of Michigan in finding funding for their research, the librarians and informationists at the Taubman Health Sciences Library have collaborated with the University of Michigan Medical School’s Office of Research in developing an online funding guide. This paper describes the collaboration and the tool that was developed.

Introduction

Librarians and informationists at the University of Michigan have traditionally facilitated research development by providing such services as literature searches, support with copyright issues, research data management, and more. In recent years, there have been new and varied needs on the part of researchers. Consequently, researchers have turned to their medical libraries to assist them in meeting these new demands and requirements of their clinical practice and research, and, importantly, to obtain needed funding. Because information experts are well versed in locating various information resources for research funding as well as efficient search techniques, they can tailor information retrieval of funding resources to a researcher's needs. The University of Michigan’s Taubman Health Sciences Library (THSL) has built a strong collaboration with the University of Michigan Medical School’s Office of Research (OoR). Both units have taken an active role in assisting researchers in locating funding to support their work. In this paper, the authors describe the development of a guide to assist in finding funding.
Mission Statements

Both THSL and OoR strive to facilitate faculty efforts in developing original scientific research. The first step in the process is finding the necessary funding to initiate the research project. The mission statement of each unit makes their collaboration a natural fit to accomplish this.

The University of Michigan Medical School Office of Research

“The Office of Research at the University of Michigan Medical School is constantly striving to enhance the research enterprise, including maintaining an investigator-focused infrastructure, facilitating and diversifying investigators' avenues for funding, and streamlining research processes.” (University of Michigan Medical School Office of Research 2016)

The University of Michigan Taubman Health Sciences Library

“The mission of the health sciences library is to be a valued partner, fully integrated into the work of the university and providing leadership in knowledge management for education, research, patient care, and community outreach”. (University of Michigan Taubman Health Sciences Library 2015)

The Taubman Health Sciences Library (THSL) at the University of Michigan has worked closely with departments and units in supporting the research enterprise. THSL has been the “go to” resource for assisting NIH Grantees in complying with the NIH Public Access Policy by developing an online guide and a personal consultation service, developing an online resource “Guide to Scientific Writing and Publishing for the Health
Faculty Funding Needs

To assess the funding needs of the researchers, OoR conducted a survey. In feedback, the faculty and staff expressed frustration with the time it takes to search for new funding opportunities as well as the lack of one, central campus guide for funding resources. The respondents expressed the concern that between juggling administrative and teaching responsibilities, attending meetings, and working in the lab and the clinic, they could not find the time to seek research funding. Also, they felt overwhelmed with e-mails and information about funding which, in many instances, did not meet their specific research needs. The survey results revealed that over half of those who took the survey were unaware of the internal funding available to them and therefore did not reach out to internal services to assist them.

Developing a Funding Guide

The results of the OoR survey revealed that there was an obvious need for a guide to streamline the task of finding funding resources. Therefore, the OoR approached the informationists at THSL with the idea of developing such a guide. The two units met regularly to discuss the design and content of the guide. The members of OoR provided
their expertise in design and communication, while THSL informationists contributed their in-depth knowledge about the numerous information resources available for identifying research funding and provided expertise in search techniques.

**Designing the Guide**

The software used for the development of the guide was Springshare LibGuides, an easy to use content management system employed by many libraries. In the design of the guide the units agreed on some key elements: it should serve all disciplines, it should include funding opportunities available internally from the University of Michigan, and it should also include external funding from such resources as government agencies and foundations. Also, the guide should be visually inviting and easy to navigate, thus encouraging and facilitating its use. Also, since it was important for researchers to be able to request tailored assistance as needed, an information consultation service was instituted and incorporated into the plans.

**Guide Layout**

Limiting the number of tabs—four in total-- on the landing page of the guide and labeling them so that users understand the content of each area saves researchers time in finding resources. The tabs, going from left to right, are Home, Finding Funding, Grant Writing Preparation & Training, and Research Collaboration. In addition, there is a left navigation panel that is incorporated into each page of the guide, providing access to a form that can be used for requesting a consultation, and “quick links” listing high-use resources.
The consultation form allows users to request a personalized meeting with an informationist. It utilizes BMC Numara FootPrints software that allows tracking in a system that handles requests submitted to an e-mail address. Eight informationists and librarians rotate in responding to the requests. [Figure 1: Research Guide]

The quick links enable users to quickly locate resources when moving through the guide. These resources include core funding databases such as COS Pivot, Foundation Directory Online, Foundation Funding for Faculty, Grants.gov, SPIN, and Sponsored Awards on the Web (SAW) They also include a number of U-M internal resources, such as:

- U-M the Medical School Office of Research’s Route Map, which directs researchers to resources on campus throughout the entire grant life cycle;
- Michigan Experts, the U-M’s version of SciVal Experts, a faculty expertise tool for finding collaborators and highlighting individuals’ research expertise;
- U-M Office of Research, which provides a gateway to research across all three University campuses.

As the user points to each of the tabs on the home page, a drop-down menu reveals its contents.

The Find Funding tab points to:

- **Internal Funding** listing sources of funding offered to U-M affiliates; these include Limited Submissions, Faculty & Staff Funding Awards, and Pilot & Feasibility Funding.
• **External Funding** points to opportunities from Foundations, Public Charities, & Non-Profit Organizations; Commercial, Business, & Industry Sponsors; State & Federal Government Agencies.

• **Search Funding Databases** provides a list of “third-party funding databases” that U-M subscribes to—COS Pivot, Spin, Foundation Directory Online; ; included is a link to Grants.gov.

• **Stay Informed** points to both U-M Internal Email Lists & Groups and External Email Lists & Groups that can be subscribed to.

• **Funding Search Consultation** pulls up a form for requesting a consultation with a librarian.

• **Student Resources** links to a guide designed to help students find funding.

The *Grant Writing Preparation & Training* tab lists

• **U-M Resources & Trainings** includes a list of resources and tools to assist in preparing funding applications.

• **External Workshops & Seminars** provides options outside of U-M to help in grant writing preparation.

• **Database Tutorials** points to tutorials provided by the databases that U-M subscribes to.

• **Books of Interest** points to both eBooks and Print Books.

The *Research Collaboration* tab can help in finding collaborators and can assist in networking.
Conclusion

By developing the guide and establishing the consultation service, the library has increased its role in the research enterprise across the entire campus. Those seeking information about research funding at the U-M and beyond now have a one-stop resource to help them. If someone is in need of help, or needs information tailored to their specific research interests, a campus-wide system has been established to handle and address these requests.

Since the rollout of the guide and accompanying consultation service in July 2015, statistics reveal that both have been a resounding success. As of April 2016, there have been 11,504 views of the guide and approximately 139 interactions with researchers through the consultation service. [Figure 2: Guide use statistics]

The collaborative effort to design and produce the guide and consultation service can serve as a model for others seeking to partner with stakeholders at research institutions. Establishing and proactively maintaining a collaborative relationship with units across the research enterprise can build a sustainable system to help researchers navigate the complex funding process.
References

Bass, M. B. 2015. *NIH Template Creation for PC*


Figures

Figure 1: Research Guide
Figure 2: Guide Statistics