Invisible and Inaccessible
Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin, Inc.
A Mixed Methods Inquiry

by Laura Patino & Joyce M. Latham

Planned Parenthood is a not-for-profit organization that provides sexual and reproductive health care, education, and advocacy. Margaret Sanger, a nurse and birth control activist, opened the first Planned Parenthood clinic in Brooklyn, New York in 1916. In 1935 a group of volunteers opened the first Wisconsin clinic, though at the time the distribution of contraception and family planning information was still illegal in the United States (Gordon 2002, 226). In the 78 years since its first clinic opened, Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin (PPWI) has grown into Wisconsin's largest reproductive health care provider (Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin 2013) and currently operates 23 health centers across the state of Wisconsin[1] and employs approximately 220 staff.

The Maurice Ritz Resource Center, founded in 1972, is located at the agency's administrative headquarters in Milwaukee. The library provides information and research support to all 27 health centers and is also open to the public by appointment. Due the recent state of the economy, PPWI experienced reductions in funding. These budget cuts left the Resource Center functioning at minimum capacity for the two years prior to this study. As a result, resource and technology developments in the library have been negligible, and outdated materials and technology have proven to be one of the barriers to use by PPWI staff.

PPWI administration recognized there were challenges in connecting their medical staff to current health resources. In partnership with the School of Information Studies (SOIS) at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM), PPWI supported that a needs assessment be performed to

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advance the process of resituating the library as a true resource center for the state. SOIS provided funding to support an MLIS student intern in a pilot engagement project to advance "academic objectives … through the implementation of projects which serve the community" (Yontz and McCook, 2003, 62) and to heighten the visibility of the school within the community. PPWI assigned staff to manage the needs assessment to ensure an accurate and evidence-based response to staff's information needs as well as ensure the most efficient use of funds. Evidence-based decision making involves using reliable research data to shape institutional decisions, in preference to anecdote, personal experience, or tradition. While professional opinion can be useful, evidenced-based initiatives are grounded in research (McKnight 2010, 154). The partnership between SOIS and PPWI modeled partnerships between researchers and practitioners wherein each contributed to "the development of research questions, methodological design, data collection and analysis, as well as dissemination of findings" (Dulmus and Cristalli, 2012, 199). This research contributes to the discussion of research-in-practice within the fields of library and information science. It demonstrates the "intersection between research and practice in libraries" as well as illuminating how "the practice of librarianship can identify and influence areas in which there is a need for scholarly research," particularly the information needs of non-profit organizations (Bertot and Wiegand, 2006, p.1).

Implications of Study

PPWI fills a unique need within the local community and state. The agency provides free and scalable reproductive health care for men and women including annual wellness exams, contraception, sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing and care, breast, cervical and testicular cancer screenings, colposcopy services and midlife services for menopausal women. Three of the 27 health centers provide abortion services. Without PPWI, reproductive health care would be inaccessible to many patients as more than 50% of PPWI patients live below the Federal poverty level (Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin 2009, 4) and, particularly during the time of this research, have limited resources and access to health insurance. PPWI also provides educational programming throughout the state on such topics as human growth and development, contraception, sexuality and relationships, sexually transmitted disease (STD) prevention, breast and cervical cancer prevention, and adult-child communication. In addition, the community education department provides training and technical support to other professionals working with youth, such as educators and social workers. Because of their reach of service population, it is essential that PPWI staff have ready access to current information on best practices to provide equitable, high-quality care and education.

Aims

The goal of this needs assessment was to obtain data about current information seeking behaviors and practices, knowledge and attitudes, and

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information needs of PPWI staff. Prior research has shown that when seeking information, individuals will seek a family member, peer or colleague as their first information source (Lester 2007, 46). In addition, research demonstrates that health professionals will only seek out information for non-routine decisions, that is, situations that arise that cannot be solved by the individual's own knowledge and experiences (O'leary 2012, 388). Research has also determined that health professionals, both nurses and doctors, are not aware of the library as a source for information (Younger 2010, 2). However, earlier research has demonstrated the libraries can provide contribute positively to patient treatment (Marshall, 1992). There is a serious lack of research related to the information needs of non-profit organization staff. This needs assessment explored current awareness and use of the library, as well as the current level of technology use among staff of an community based service organization.

Methodology

Mixed methods, a combination of data collection strategies, (Interview, Observation, and Survey) was used to achieve triangulation to strengthen the validity of the data. Anonymity was maintained throughout the interview and survey portions of the needs assessment. During the interviews and survey, no identifying information was recorded. Only department information and health center was requested, as well as position title, so long as that title was not an identifying characteristic. In cases of unique position titles, this information was omitted from the final report.

Interview method was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of problems and provide an opportunity to examine meaning. Seventeen PPWI participants from seven different health centers were asked a standard set of 11 questions. Interviewees (see figure 1) and health centers (1 rural, 3 suburban, and 3 urban) were purposively selected by PPWI staff member Anne Brosowsky-Roth to ensure data was gathered from centers of diverse size that service a variety of patient populations. Interview questions were crafted in order to elicit data regarding current information seeking behaviors and practices, knowledge and attitudes, and information needs of PPWI staff. The Research Team did not limit the length of each interview. Interview lengths ranged from six minutes to 41 minutes, based on the subjects' inclination to provide more or less detailed responses. Interview data was collected using Audacity Sound-recording software. Transcription of interviews was performed by a certified transcriber. Codes were inductively generated after data collection was complete. Open coding of transcribed interviews was performed in Microsoft Word. Category and thematic coding, as well as theoretical concepts were developed using Microsoft Excel.

Observation was selected to gain an understanding of the physical environment in which participants work and the types of resources they have on hand in the center. At each interview site, the Research Team toured each center with a staff person and took field notes regarding

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onsite resources, location of resources, and organization of resources. The Research Team recorded observations using hand written notes that were later typed and coded in Microsoft Word and Excel.

Survey method was utilized to maximize data collection for a broad, generalizable understanding of the current behaviors and practices, knowledge and attitudes, and information needs of PPWI staff. After the majority of the interviews and observations were conducted, the Research Team modified several questions in the online survey. Then, the Research Team pilot-tested the survey with three staff members to obtain their feedback regarding survey questions, and questions were modified where indicated. Pilot-test results were not included in the final survey results. Survey data was collected using the *Qualtrics Survey Instrument*. Print surveys were made available at all sites to ensure no one was excluded due to Internet access issues.[2] Participants had two weeks to complete the survey containing 32 questions. Given the relatively small staff population, the survey sample was non-exclusive. Of the 220 staff members, 125 completed the online survey resulting in a response rate of 57%. The University of Texas at Austin (2013) states that, for email surveys, a response rate of 40% is average, 50% is good and 60% is very good. Survey results were tabulated automatically within the *Qualtrics Survey Instrument*. For open-ended survey questions, codes were inductively generated after the survey closed. Open coding of open-ended responses was performed in Microsoft Word. Category and thematic coding, as well as theoretical concepts were developed using Microsoft Excel.
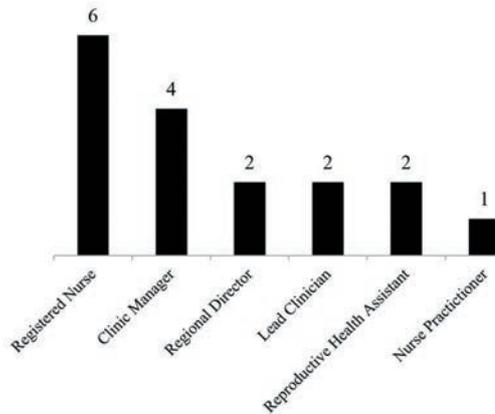

Figure 1

Project Design

The purpose and scope of the project was initially reviewed and approved by Senior Management Team of PPWI to ensure buy-in from senior level staff, who then helped communicate the importance of participation to the staff they supervised. The Research Team promoted the needs assessment to PPWI staff to inform them of the purpose of the research and increase awareness of the project.

Qualitative interviews and observations were conducted first in order to help inform the quantitative survey structure. Beverages and snacks were provided for participants during interviews. Emails and strategically placed flyers (i.e. break-areas, announcement boards, and staff restrooms) went out 2 weeks before the online survey was released. Survey respondents were entered into a drawing to win 1 of 10 Target Gift Cards each worth $15, which was designed to enhance the response rate. At the end of the survey period, participants were prompted to forward an email to the Research Team to verify participation and be included in the drawing. During an annual staff day, 10 names were drawn and prizes distributed in-person.

The Research Team conducted on-going data analysis during all previous phases, but it was completed at the end of the survey process. The Research Team then coded interviews and observations for analysis, analyzed the results from all data collection methods, and forwarded the final report to the Senior Management Team.

Results: Observations

At each interview site, the Research Team toured the facility with a staff person in order to view onsite resources for staff. These observations revealed that, aside from the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) Medical and Operational Protocol Manuals, the only other standard resource was *Contraceptive Technology*.[3] The aforementioned resources comprised the standard print collection available in the visited centers. The location of the resources and organization system used for the resources varied in each center, due to building layout and available shelving. Staff comments during the tours revealed that four of the seven locations desire a more comprehensive standard print collection, which would additionally include: Nurse Practitioners' Prescribing Reference, Managing Contraceptive Pill Patients, a medical dictionary, and a dermatology book.

Interviews

Seventeen PPWI staff members were asked a standard set of eleven questions.

Interview participants were asked about their roles and responsibilities and asked them to describe a "typical" day. Because participants holding a variety of positions were interviewed (see figure 1), varied responses were given, though nearly all participants (88%) had some level of daily patient contact. Many (47%) also had administrative duties in addition to patient responsibilities.

All interview participants stated that the resources provided by PPWI are necessary to perform their duties. Nearly all participants (94%) reported each other as an information source, which supports previous research (Lester 2007, 46). Of the resources provided by PPWI, the *Protocol*

Manuals, both medical and operational, were mentioned most often (88%). These manuals are compiled by PPFA, and use of these *Protocol Manuals* is required to maintain accreditation by the Federation, so availability and accessibility of these manuals is required. Other resources were cited as well (see figure 2). Participants indicated a preference (47%) for online/ digital resources although some (24%) favored print. Others could not choose, stating they preferred either online or print depending on the situation (24%).

Many interview participants (64%) described certain PPWI provided resources as easily accessible. However, many more described other resources not easily accessible (82%), and described both print (65%) and online (35%) resources as difficult to access, and once accessed, poorly organized (65%). Additionally, these participants described the limited availability of resources (53%) that address unique conditions, situations, medications, and patient questions.
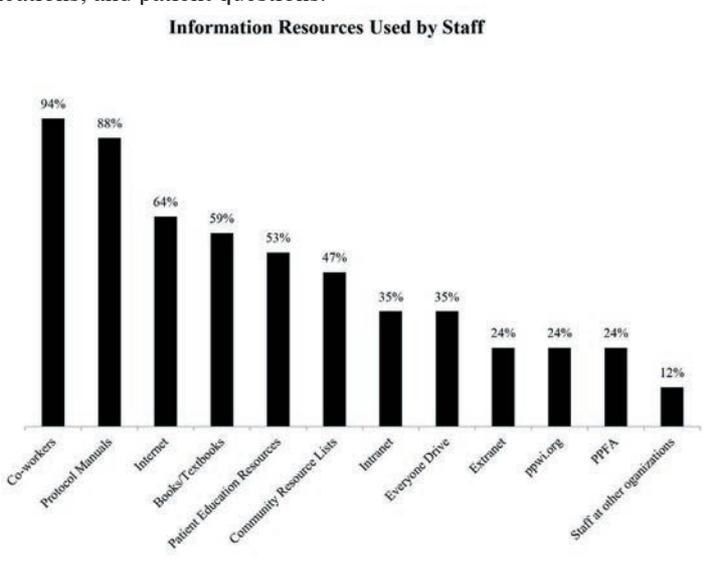

Information Resources Used by Staff

Figure 2

The most frequently encountered problem during the information search occurs with the *Protocol Manuals* (65%), both in print and online formats. The print manuals were described as poorly organized and difficult to keep current, with multiple versions in circulation. Additionally, four participants reported contraindications in the print versions of the medical protocol manuals.

The online version of the *Protocol Manual* then available on the Intranet[4] was described as not searchable, poorly organized, and infrequently

updated. In addition, participants sometimes experienced connectivity issues making it impossible to access online resources. Participants encountered other problems as well during the information search (see figure 3).

Problems Encountered in Information Search

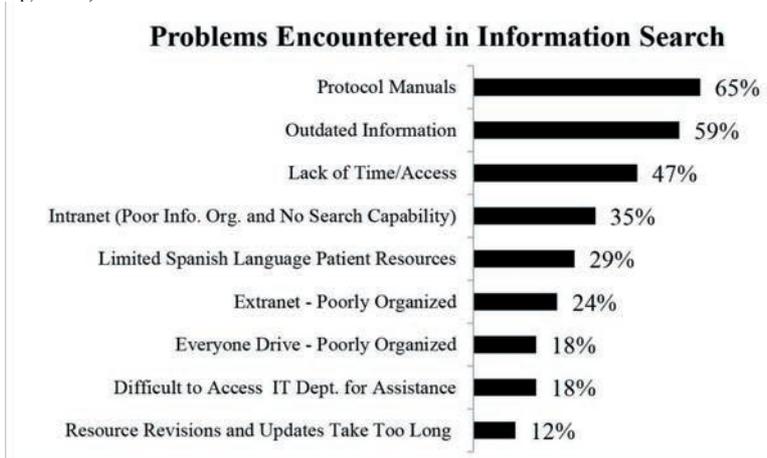| Category	Percent
Protocol Manuals	65%
Outdated Information	59%
Lack of Time/Access	47%
Intranet (Poor Info. Org. and No Search Capability)	35%
Limited Spanish Language Patient Resources	29%
Extranet - Poorly Organized	24%
Everyone Drive - Poorly Organized	18%
Difficult to Access IT Dept. for Assistance	18%
Resource Revisions and Updates Take Too Long	12%

Figure 3

Participant responses also revealed that information to address unique conditions, situations, medications and questions about anything outside of women's health was the most difficult information to find (59%). Spanish education materials were also cited as difficult to locate (29%). Participants also had problems locating information about community resources outside of Milwaukee (24%) as there are no comprehensive lists of ready resources for this type of information. When staff are unable find the information that they need to serve a patient nearly all participants stated that they would ask a co-worker (88%).

Those participants (76%) who indicated satisfaction with resources available to them found them very good in the realm of reproductive health and the patient resources user-friendly. Participants who were unsatisfied (65%)[5] stated that patient resources are not user-friendly, locating material took too long due to navigation issues, and resources available to them too limited. They specifically lacked resources on unique conditions, situations, medication and questions, Spanish-language resources, and resources for or about males. These respondents wanted more depth and coverage in the resources available to them, as staff believes it is important that patients do not leave the service facility without the information they require.

The Research Team also explored resource awareness among staff. Thirty-five percent (35%) stated they were aware of library resources and that they had referred patients, students, parents and external organizations to the library. However, most stated they were not aware (65%) of the library

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resources as the facility is not staffed and not marketed. They also indicated a lack of time to look into the resources that are provided.

Still, many stated they had used the library (65%) for work-related, personal, or educational purposes. Some who had visited the library did so to attend a meeting or interview that was being conducted there, but were still unaware of the resources available there. Others had never used it (35%) in any capacity. Almost all interview participants indicated that they did use public and/or academic libraries (88%) such as Shawano City-County Library, UW-Green Bay, UW-Milwaukee, Sheboygan Public Library, Lakeshore Technical College, and Waukesha Public Library, among others. Public library visits were for personal use or to attend a meeting. Academic library visits were made to conduct research for school or work, or to access e-journals.

Participants reporting positive impressions of the library (35%) stated the collection has useful and unique resources, were impressed with the size and accessibility of the collection, found staff helpful and welcoming, and the space comfortable. They also believed the library is an important part of PPWI. Participants who had negative impressions (24%) described the library as outdated, small, and inaccessible (i.e. print only). They also indicated that they are not sure how to access materials. Forty-one percent of participants stated they were not able to speak to this as they had either not used or not visited the library.

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Participants did have recommendations for improvements. Overwhelmingly, 82% of staff felt that the library should improve its accessibility and visibility. Staff that did not work at the main Jackson St. Center, and even those at other Milwaukee-area health centers, had a difficult time connecting with the library.

Survey

Staff from the Jackson Street (Milwaukee) health center represented the largest respondent group at 25%. The Jackson Street location has the highest number of staff as it houses not only a clinic, but all other departments like Administration, Community Education and Public Affairs, Marketing, Information Technology, and Medical Billing Services. The majority of survey respondents, however, were from Patient Services (65%).

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The survey results showed that 100% of respondents use a computer daily as part of their work and 96% reported convenient access to the Internet at work. Furthermore, 79% of respondents use a computer several times a day outside of work and 95% of respondents report they possess an average to high ability to learn new computers systems and procedures.

Most respondents (57%) reported that they experienced an information need in the past year that required resources outside their health center. To obtain answers, respondents were most likely to use an Internet search engine or co-worker. Less than half of respondents (43%) preferred to access resources only online or digitally; most preferred a combination of both print and digital resources.

Based on the qualitative portion of the study, several staff indicated that they used the PPWI Intranet to satisfy many of their information needs. With that in mind, a series of questions related to the Intranet were included. Sixty-two percent of staff reported that they use the PPWI Intranet several times a week, primarily for Human Resources materials (66%) and Patient Services materials (57%). Sixty-six participants responded to an open-ended question to ascertain what they believed should be on the PPWI Intranet that is not; 24% indicated that the information on the Intranet is not current, particularly staff manuals, forms, health center information and directories. Again, staff indicated that the information contained on the Intranet is not well organized (14%) and specifically noted that information is kept in more than one place (both the Intranet and Everyone Drive[6]), the organization system is complicated, and they would like better search tools.

Despite 93% of staff indicating awareness of the library, proximity is a major cause of lack of use. Of the 40% that do visit, the most common reason was to attend a meeting or event. Respondents were usually initially introduced to the library through New Employee Orientation (NEO). Push and pull – searching and dissemination – issues are well balanced, as 52% percent of respondents prefer to find library information on the Intranet, and 58% indicated that they would like to receive information from the library on a monthly basis.

Respondents were most interested in professional development resources, information *about* available resources, and patient/community resources. Other resources were suggested as well and staff also indicated which subjects they would like developed in the collection (see figures 4 and 5).

Asked how the library could better support the institutional mission, respondents suggested increasing access through virtual components and increasing visibility through marketing and communication. PPWI staffs' final thoughts were positive, noting they were glad to have the library available to them and that the study was conducted to improve the Center (54%).

Findings revealed that there are two major barriers to use. The library is both *inaccessible* and *invisible* to most staff. To correct inaccessibility, the library must have an online component. Both the interview and survey portions of the study support this conclusion. Given that staff indicated a high degree of comfort with computer-based access, providing online access to the library collection would be highly valued. However, many participants reiterated that "online" does not necessarily mean "more accessible." Both the interviews and survey showed that good information organization is key to accessibility.
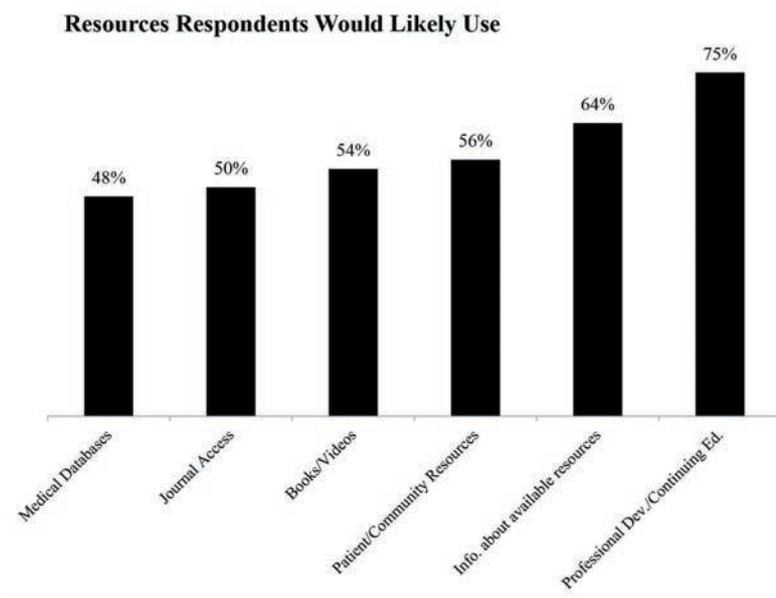
Resources Respondents Would Likely Use

Figure 4

The survey also revealed that 7% of PPWI staff is not aware the library exists, and a majority have never used it. Of the staff that responded to our survey, only 50% learned about the library through New Employee Orientation (NEO). A representative of the library attends every NEO; however, results indicated that something must be done to ensure greater retention of information presented at NEO. Apart from NEO, staff indicated a preference for finding information about the library's materials, services and how to access and use those materials and services through the Intranet (52%), as this is the most visible and most accessed forum for staff.

Results further exposed that staff wants and needs access to current medical resources, in the reproductive health area as well as resources to address

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unique conditions, situations, medications, and questions. They also want access to professional development resources. Staff would like to be able to search for materials remotely (OPAC), as well as access databases and journal articles.

Collection Development - Top Subjects

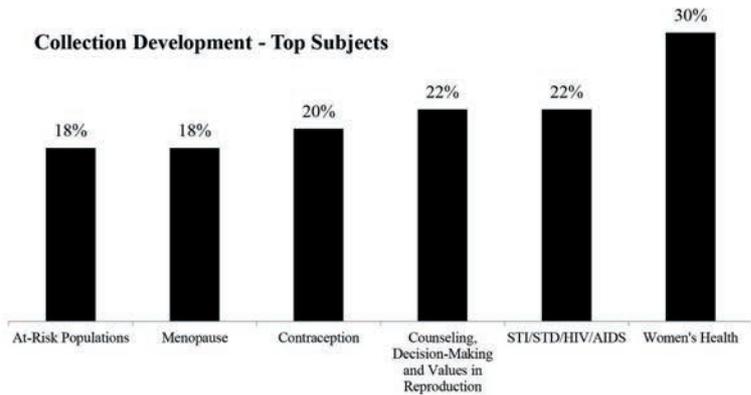| Subject	Percent
At-Risk Populations	18%
Menopause	18%
Contraception	20%
Counseling, Decision-Making and Values in Reproduction	22%
STI/STD/HIV/AIDS	22%
Women's Health	30%

Figure 5

Despite a desire to have access to more information, another common theme was lack of time to search for information. The sustained presence of a Librarian is important as staff frequently does not have time to conduct their own research.

Some results were not anticipated. The findings of this study revealed startling dissatisfaction with the Intranet, Everyone Drive, and *Protocol Manuals*. Respondents in both the interview and survey portions of this needs assessment reiterated that the Intranet is not searchable. The Everyone Drive also poses problems. Unlike the Intranet, which can only be modified through an IT administrator, the Everyone Drive is accessible to all PPWI staff. No policies address the management of this tool. This sometimes means that files are moved and/or deleted without notice, making it very difficult to find things. Staff also reported dissatisfaction with the *Protocol Manuals* as they found them poorly organized, not current, with multiple versions in circulation simultaneously. Although these resources are outside the jurisdiction of the library, *per se*, they are significant information resources requiring information strategies for optimal management.

Limitations

The interpretations that can be drawn from this study have limitations. First, the interview participants and survey respondents for this needs assessment volunteered to participate and did not constitute a representative or random sample. However, it should be noted that 57% of the targeted

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population participated in the survey portion of the study and that interview participants were chosen from small and large health centers in the hopes of obtaining a wide range of perspectives.

Second, the act of publicizing and implementing the needs assessment affected participants' knowledge about the library and the services offered. That is, interviewing and surveying staff about library services and materials heightened the profile of the library. As no control group was created, it was not possible to measure the extent of the shift in knowledge.

Finally, due to limitations on time and resources, the Research Team was only able to interview 17 staff members. Thus, data collected from the interviews cannot be considered to represent more than their individual responses. This limitation was mitigated in part by a 57% response rate to the survey, and the survey findings supported many of the interview participants' responses.

Conclusions

This study revealed that staff very much supports the library, which is the first step in building a successful resource center. One survey respondent put this feeling of support in words when s/he stated, "[I] am excited to see the changes being made to the library and the resurgence of excitement for this valuable resource." The study also revealed several key areas that should be addressed. Some can be addressed with little to no expense to PPWI, (e.g. pathfinders, resource lists, newsletter, etc.) but others would require some allotment of funds and the consistent presence of a librarian (e.g. database/journal subscriptions, ongoing marketing campaign, reference, etc.). Many of the recommendations could be accomplished by library and information studies interns, which would reduce the cost for PPWI and also provide valuable learning experiences for students. However, some commitment of resources must be made by PPWI if the library is to continue the rebuilding initiative.

This project highlights the importance of a robust information center for staff and client support in a health information field. Further, non-profit organizations need to address information needs of their service providers.

While the impact of the study has been delayed due to further budget cuts to Planned Parenthood in the state of Wisconsin, it still demonstrates how "the practice of librarianship can identify and influence areas in which there is need for research" as well as "[illustrate] how researchers and practitioners can collaborate"(Bertot, Wiegand, 2006). The project enabled one MLIS student to engage in community service learning, and identified expanded areas for service learning for subsequent students. It also engaged a public institution of higher learning in community outreach to enhance the public good. It demonstrates the value of partnerships between scholars and practitioners in framing information service delivery.

Endnotes

1. At the time of this study, PPWI operated 27 health centers. Four centers closed in 2013 due to cuts in state funding. The number of health centers will be referred to as "27" for the remainder of the article.
2. Print surveys collected and entered into online survey instrument by the Research Team.
3. *Contraceptive Technology, Bridging the Gap Communications*, 2011, is a family planning reference book currently in its 20th edition.
4. Includes departmental resources for PPWI staff.
5. Some participants reported satisfaction with some resources but dissatisfaction with others.
6. A Network directory that can be accessed directly by all PPWI staff.

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