Closing the Gap: Public Health and Public Libraries

Noah Lenstra  lenstra@uncg.edu
@NoahLenstra / @LetsMoveLibrary
Assistant Professor of Library and Information Science at University of North Carolina Greensboro
1. What are public libraries?
2. What is public health?
3. How do they come together?
4. Next steps in closing the gap
WHAT IS A LIBRARY?

- buildings with books: 1%
- the social and cultural infrastructure of a community: 99%

Albany Public Library
www.albanypubliclibrary.org

Let's Move In Libraries.org
Americans love (and fund) libraries for three reasons:
1. Transformative potential of reading
2. Useful nature of information
3. Community building capacity of public space
More voters today say it’s important for the library to be a community hub.

- Activities, entertainment not found elsewhere: 48% (2018) vs. 38% (2008)
- Be a place for people to gather and socialize: 45% (2018) vs. 36% (2008)
- Support civic discourse and community building: 47% (2018)

Comprehensive public health protection—from primary prevention through treatment—becomes possible for the first time in history.

Development of an astonishing array of health-protecting tools and capacity with increasingly sophisticated techniques for ensuring sanitation and food safety.

(late 19th/most of 20th Century)
By late in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, there was \textit{tremendously uneven} public health capacity at the local levels.

Health Departments strained to address new infectious disease challenges as well as the growing challenge of chronic disease prevention and preparedness.

\textit{Governmental} public health ‘came of age’ – culminating in today’s Health Department accreditation movement.
What is PUBLIC HEALTH 3.0?

A significant upgrade in public health practice to a modern version that emphasizes cross-sectorial environmental, policy- and systems-level actions that directly affect the social determinants of health.

Local Public Health Leaders as the Chief Health Strategist

www.healthypeople.gov/ph3 | #PH3
Historically, we in LIS have been here.


Consumer health reference
Increasingly, we are here
Health means physical and mental health status and well-being, distinguished from health care.

Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This requires removing obstacles to health.

Fourth most read story in APHA newsletter in 2018

https://www.thenationshealth.org/content/most-read-public-health-news-stories-year-2018
- Percent of LHDs working with organization in any way
- Percent of LHDs regularly scheduling meetings, have written agreements, or share personnel/resources with organization

Community-based partners (e.g., education, non-government)

- K-12 schools: 71% (98%)
- Media: 21% (96%)
- Community-based non-profits: 72% (92%)
- Colleges or universities: 62% (88%)
- Faith communities: 44% (87%)
- Businesses: 48% (87%)
- Cooperative extensions: 45% (82%)
- Libraries: 25% (74%)

National Profile of Local Health Departments

UNC Greensboro | Department of Library and Information Science | LetsMoveInLibraries.org
Community Health and Wellness: Small and Rural Library Practices, Perspectives, and Programs

Research Questions

- What programs and services do small and rural public libraries provide that they see as related to health and wellness?
- How are these programs and services developed and implemented?
- What factors contribute to or deter libraries from offering these programs?
- How do public library patrons engage with and benefit from these programs?
- How do small and rural public libraries measure outcomes that result from these programs?

Methods

- 16 case studies of library systems and individual public libraries in small and/or rural areas in four states: Michigan, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Vermont
- Interviews, observations, analysis of public documents
- Collaborative work with distributed network of faculty & graduate assistants

Goals

Provide small and rural public libraries with evidence-based model for successful strategies and common challenges associated with developing and delivering health and wellness programs that develop health literacy.
HEAL (Healthy Eating and Active Living) at the Library via Co-Developed Programming

• The research will answer: "How, why, and with what impacts do public libraries collaborate with others to co-develop programming around healthy eating and active living?"

• This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, RE-246336-OLS-20
Where do we fit in? We can:

1. **Change the culture** of health in America
2. **Prioritize** ACCESS for all
3. **Work creatively** with partners around CI

“Collective Impact (CI) is the commitment of a group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem.”
Partner evolution in thinking about public libraries

- Stage 1: Library => Book Repository
- Stage 2: Library => Resource
  (Always there, people turn to it, stable, trusted)
- Stage 3: Library => Space to use
  (for food distribution, programs, coalitions meetings, etc.)
- Stage 4: Library => Partner
  (We work together to figure out what to do)
“Valentine Cards made by Library patrons were delivered today to Meals on Wheels participants in Farmville by David Miller, Library Director and Tammy Matis, Meals on Wheels volunteer. The Library also delivers magazines and reading materials to Meals on Wheels participants. Thank you to everyone who made a card! Cards will also be delivered to residents at Pruitt Health.”

Partners include:
Public Library, Meals on Wheels, Pruitt Health, Farmville Senior Council, Pitt County Council on Aging, Library patrons organized by children’s librarian (drop off cards)
Embrace the SHARED USE of the library

Shared use

Onslow County Public Library

The Main/Jacksonville Library is excited to introduce our Community Wellness Garden! Join us as we learn more about wellness, nutrition, and growing your own food.

Interested in volunteering? Sign up here: onslowcountync.gov/FormCenter/Lib...

What a great day for gardening! Jessica and her son Patrick came to the Walkertown Branch library today to harvest sweet potatoes from their plot and to plant collards for the Fall. They enjoy being part of the Library Community Garden. Library is for growing!
Curb Hunger

Free weekly food bags for individuals and families

Library Pick Up

A partnership between:

Feed My People

L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library

Contact Library Pick Up services at 715-839-5066 or Community Resource Services at 715-839-5061 or libbyr@eau Claire.lib.wi.us to schedule a food pick up

Ready to eat meals for those without kitchen access will be available to pick up without an appointment on Tuesdays and Fridays from 9am-10am or by special request at the Lower Level Library Pick Up Location.
How and why were the relationships started?

- Geographical proximity
- Library known as central hub
- Community coalitions
- Intermediaries connect library and health department
How were relationships used?

• Library support for Farmers’ Market => Brainstorm on volunteer management for food pantry
• Library nurse => CSA and cooking demos => Bike Share
• Summer meals at the library => Market Bucks for Farmers Market
• Connect library to partners and funding for Yoga classes and more
What is needed to close the gap?
1. A space for health departments like those I interviewed to share their stories and practices
2. More research on how and why these partnerships emerge and are sustained over time
3. More opportunities for librarians and LHD’s to network
STORYWALK(R) AND SCAVENGER HUNT

RINGTOWN AREA LIBRARY, PENNSYLVANIA

How has this library supported healthy living?

During the COVID-19 stay-at-home order in Pennsylvania, the Ringtown Area Library started monthly scavenger hunts around the community, relating to a children’s story when possible (green sheep for Mem Fox’s Where is the Green Sheep? and strawberries for Don Wood’s The Little Mouse, The Red Ripe Strawberry and the Big Hungry Bear.) The library began offering StoryWalk(R) programming during summer 2020, and in September 2020 unveiled the 4th StoryWalk(R) of the year at a local farm’s pumpkin patch, choosing Pumpkin Trouble by Jan Thomas.

What impacts have you seen this work have?

The scavenger hunts and StoryWalk(R) both provided no-contact, fun activities that got families moving and kept them engaged with the library while it was temporarily closed and/or after reopening but with limited services and capacity. In addition to encouraging families to get out for a walk, these outreach efforts brought awareness of our library to many people who rarely or never utilize traditional library services. The library also believes that these activities led to an increase in monetary donations to the library this year.

Lessons learned: Don’t be afraid to think outside of the library! Lots can be done using outdoor spaces to engage communities in healthy living programming.

Combine stories and literacy with outdoor programming. Weave stories into public space and you promote the library, promote reading, and also promote fun, active engagement in the outdoors!
Thank you!

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