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ResearchRaven: Its Value to Librarians

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This article has two aims. The first is simply to alert you to the launch of ResearchRaven http://www.researchraven.com/, a free online service of the Samaritan Health Services Center for Health Research and Quality. The purpose of ResearchRaven is to enable users to efficiently find current information about professional conferences, calls for papers for publications and for papers for presentations at professional meetings, and other research-related materials in the health sciences.

The second aim of this article is to suggest ways that librarians can utilize ResearchRaven to assist patrons and to leverage the listings on it to provide newsmastering services to your patrons and thereby increase the visibility of your library on their radar screens.

Here is a bit of background on the origins of ResearchRaven. At the Center for Health Research and Quality, one of our tasks is to help researchers find the information they need in order to find the necessary funding to support their research. We wanted to assist them with the often burdensome and time-consuming task of locating grants and fellowships to fund their research projects. We also wanted to assist those at Samaritan Health Services who wanted to further their educations in the health sciences but who needed to track down scholarship funding. To assist these various groups, we created ScanGrants http://www.scangrants.com/, which lists funding opportunities in the health sciences as well as scholarships for patients to attend gatherings of disease advocacy organizations, scholarships for those with certain disabilities or conditions, prizes for achievement in science and medicine and so on. Basically, we want to help those who want to learn about a disease or contribute to its study.

Once we created and launched ScanGrants we decided to release it for free use by anyone in the world and have been gratified to see it adopted by various libraries and offices of research administration as one of their standard electronic resources.

As we worked on ScanGrants, we came to note that many of the calls for abstracts that carried with them the monetary amounts we listed on

ScanGrants were associated with meetings and that many of the abstracts would eventually be published in books of conference proceedings. We also noted that those researchers who used ScanGrants to learn about essay awards or abstract awards were almost certainly engaged in research projects that they would want to give presentations about at conferences or publish papers about in scholarly journals. While there are blog and wiki postings here and there about calls for papers and though professional societies and commercial sponsors of meetings would feature notices on their own Web there didn't seem to be an overall aggregator of such calls for papers for meetings and publications and notices of meetings in the health sciences that would attempt to be as comprehensive as possible, encompassing not only the medical sciences and hard sciences but also fields such as Health IT and health-related social science. ResearchRaven is our attempt to fill that gap.

It is early days yet, so we are still creating categories. But we are confident we can create a robust (and free!) tool that everyone from novice student nurse researchers to established investigators in pharmaceutical science will find helpful.

As with ScanGrants, users of ResearchRaven can subscribe for free via RSS or email to either all the listings entered that day in whatever category was updated that day (find conferences, call for papers/conferences, calls for papers/ publications) or they can choose to subscribe to only those categories that most interest them (public health, nursing research, psychiatry, drug development, etc.). The ability to subscribe by area of interest is one of the most powerful features of both ScanGrants and ResearchRaven and will make it quite easy for librarians, for instance, to alert researchers interested in certain fields about publishing opportunities. And each listing on ResearchRaven can be downloaded as a PDF for easy transmission to your patrons. And, again, this is all free--no Docline or other interlibrary loan fees.

Now, what does all this mean for you as a medical or science librarian? Well, as already noted, by subscribing to some of the feeds/ email alerts offered free in ResearchRaven

you can enable researchers to keep abreast of publishing opportunities and of meetings they would not otherwise have heard of and might wish to simply attend or to present papers at. It never hurts to help researchers save time and to alert them to ways to get ahead and learn of potential audiences for their work. And as you alert patrons to publishing opportunities feel free to add, "And if you need help with a literature search or any other assistance with your paper, the library offers…" ResearchRaven is a library marketing tool and a research resource all in one!

And if you work with undergraduates, graduate students, nursing students or novice researchers (say a diabetes educator or public health nurse who believes strongly in a method she has developed), ResearchRaven can serve as a teaching tool to illustrate to new investigators the ins and outs of how to get published or present at professional gatherings. And again, a librarian can be a huge help to those putting together powerpoints and scholarly papers and who can help newbies (and busy researchers) with the intricacies of citation styles and copyright matters better than a librarian? ResearchRaven can help even the smallest hospitals ramp up research programs.

Another way that librarians can benefit from ResearchRaven is by using it to keep on trends in library and information science. As the worlds of Open Science and Science 2.0, E-science and E-Health impact more the world of medical librarianship it behooves us to follow developments in those realms. Therefore, on ResearchRaven we list items of interest to those in the information sciences and librarianship about calls for papers and notices of meetings about data sharing and collaboration, scientific communication, E-Learning, big data, biomedical informatics and so on.

And not only do we offer serious listings of such matters, ResearchRaven also includes Leman's Lexicon, a tongue-in-cheek guide to the latest buzzwords in science and medicine.

Please give ResearchRaven a try and if you are editing special issues of library journals on health or science-related topics or organizing a conference on them, please feel free to submit the announcement to ResearchRaven for possible listing on it. I am always looking for material to tell everybody about. ResearchRaven is here to advance science and medical research and who does that better than librarians? Thanks, group! ❖