Digital Libraries and Health Information Access in Lusaka, Zambia

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Abstract and Objective

The goal of the Zambian Health Information Project is to enhance access to health information through customized health information portals on the eGranary Digital Library. Over the past year, a partnership between the University of Alabama at Birmingham's Sparkman Center for Global Health, the University of Iowa's WiderNet Project, and Zambian health institutions has been working to create portals of Medical, Nursing, and Public Health specific information for health faculty and students in Lusaka, Zambia. The eGranary offers an offline mechanism to access digital information, over an institution's local area network (LAN). This approach is especially appropriate to areas of the world where access to the Internet is limited. This poster will discuss the experience of portal creation and implementation of the digital library at health institutions in Lusaka, Zambia.

Keywords:

Digital libraries, International cooperation, Medical education, Computers, Internet

Introduction

This poster will discuss the process of the partnership between the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the University of Iowa's WiderNet Project, and health institutions in Zambia to create health information portals on an offline digital library called the eGranary.

Methods

The eGranary digital library provides offline access to information by storing information on the server of an institution's local area network (LAN). The eGranary server contains around 2 TB of searchable, indexed information, ranging from websites to audio/video, and CD-ROMs. This information is donated through the goodwill of authors and publishers worldwide, to benefit those in developing countries who have limited access to information resources and the Internet.

Results

One year was spent in communication and planning of the health information portals. Three portals with over 500 resources each were developed for Nursing, Public Health, and Medicine. The eGranary with these new portals was installed and training and orientations were provided during a visit to health training institutions in Lusaka. A key challenge is providing training to faculty and students in the use of this system so that the resources will be optimized. The contents of the eGranary portals will continue to be updated and the health institutions will be revisited throughout the duration of the project.

Conclusion

The ZHIP offers an opportunity for partnership and collaboration between US and Zambian institutions. This project produced a tool for accessing health information for Zambian health sciences faculty and students through health information portals on the eGranary digital library.