Consumer Health Information (CHI) need within the Spanish-speaking population

By Kristen Meyer

Today half (50%) of Hispanics, in the US, use the Internet. Recent growth estimates indicate that 2 million new users per year are Hispanic. Community-based access through community centers and libraries is an important part of this growth. One of the most popular categories searches, accounting for 51% of Hispanic internet users, involves health and medical information. Additionally, older Hispanic Internet users (55%) are more likely to have turned to the Internet for health information over younger Hispanics (46%). Also, a majority (61%) of Hispanic Internet users are concerned about having unqualified people giving medical information online (Pew). Courtright defines health-related information as including “both information about health issues and health care resources (7)”.

Immigrants often obtain lower quality and infrequent health care than those who are native-born (Guendelman et al.).

The availability of CHI for the Spanish-speaking is significantly lower than those written in English. Bertrand found that only 20% of those using English search engines and only 12% using Spanish search engines located CHI on a particular health topic. Half of the English-language materials and 40% of the Spanish-language materials are written at the college level. Studies have shown that online health information is often inaccessible to members of these communities due to low health information literacy. As Bertrand concluded, “the best English-language websites are far better than the best Spanish-language sites. Major gains in quality of Spanish language information can be achieved by translating and culturally adapting what is now available in English.”

Suggested websites include:

From ELM
Gale’s ¡Informe!: www.elm4you.org
This database includes the periodical Médico De Familia and other general interest magazines that cover health-related topics.

Proquest Newsstand Complete: www.elm4you.org
Full-text articles found on health-related issues can be translated into Spanish under the document view and then selecting translate. Also, various languages may be selected to display the interface.

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FREE on the web
NOAH:  www.noah-health.org
New York Online Access to Health began in 1994 with the mission to provide “quality health information that is accurate, timely, relevant and unbiased” in a language easily accessible to the layperson in English and Spanish. The “no frills” interface is divided into three sections with a bilingual search bar on top where you can toggle back and forth between English and Spanish. The page consists of health topics, an A to Z index and a features page of the month.

Healthfinder: http://www.healthfinder.gov/espanol/
This website consists of over 300 topics available in Spanish. The layout is simple with a search bar and main categories that are common medical needs within the Spanish speaking population.

Suggested Readings


Minnesota ESL, Bilingual, and Migrant Education Conference
May 4-5, 2006, at the RiverCentre in St. Paul, MN

All those who work with English language learners in K-12, ESL, bilingual, migrant education, mainstream, special education, and adult basic education programs are invited to attend this annual conference. MINITEX Reference Services will present a session on Friday, May 5th, at 1:00 p.m. on ¡Informe!, the Spanish-language database available in ELM. Sessions offered at this conference include Evaluating Programs for ELL, Using Learning Styles to Teach Language, Introducing Public Libraries to Newly Arrived Latinos, and Reading for Today’s Adults.

Continuing education credits will be available for both teachers and administrators at the conference. You can register online at http://www.education.state.mn.us > Learning Support > English Language Learners > ELL Workshops and Conferences.
La Prensa De Minnesota

_La Prensa_ is a free bilingual weekly newspaper published in St. Paul serving the Latino community in Minnesota. It includes local and international news, sports information and classifieds. MINITEX Delivery Service ships out 1,000 papers weekly to school and public libraries in Minnesota at their request. According to Bruce Pomerantz of the State Library Services and School Technology, “The idea for distributing the newspaper developed at a Latino Library Outreach workshop in Mankato, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. During a discussion at the November 2004 workshop, several librarians mentioned that paid subscriptions to the weekly paper were unsuccessful. The newspaper is distributed freely; consequently the publisher did not have a subscription service.” If you are not currently receiving _La Prensa_ and would like to, contact Fred Finch at finch006@umn.edu or 1-800-462-5348.

¡Informe! ELM’s Spanish-language resource

If you have Spanish-speaking library patrons or students, don’t forget to direct them to ¡Informe! at [http://www.elm4you.org](http://www.elm4you.org). The first electronic database in Spanish, ¡Informe! contains over 350,000 Spanish-language documents including reference material. It’s 100+ Spanish and bilingual resource are updated on a daily basis. ¡Informe! includes articles and information on news, politics, current events, cultural and lifestyle issues, entertainment, health and parenting, literature, history, science and more. ¡Informe!’s content is not translated from English language materials, and its indexing terms and thesaurus are based on the expressions commonly used by Spanish speakers.


Interesting survey results on background information on who uses the Spanish interface of MedlinePlus and how they use the site are now available.

“During 2005 MedlinePlus served an average of 65 million page views a month. Patients, their families, and their health care providers come to MedlinePlus to find information on diseases, prescriptions, and treatments. They use this information for research, to help themselves, and to help others.”

5th Annual Reference Symposium

Library as Place: Physical Realms, Virtual Possibilities
University of Minnesota Libraries/MINITEX Library Information Network
5th Reference Symposium

Monday, May 15, 2006
8:45am - 4:00pm
Continuing Education and Conference Center
(formerly the Earle Brown Conference Center)

St. Paul Campus
University of Minnesota
Registration info at [http://sdt.lib.umn.edu/reference](http://sdt.lib.umn.edu/reference)
Cost is $65

Highlights of the day include:

- Keynote by Stephen Abram, Vice President for Innovation for SirsiDynix
- Panel on local libraries using IM, blogs and wikis for reference
- Panel on the growing role of libraries in the learning process
- Posters on local reference-related projects

Join your colleagues and come away with new ideas for your reference services!

Everyday Life with End Users: A Cool Tool for Health Consumers

The information provided is according to Outsell, a nationwide firm who is on the cutting-edge of researching markets and analyzing their use in the information industry.
MedlinePlus has released a 16-minute online tutorial at http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/webeval/webeval.html that very simply and effectively helps users to be better consumers of health information. The tutorial shows how to look for and find clues about the quality of a Web site’s information, including its providers, purpose, and content sources. It even covers issues of privacy and advertising. Using two mock Web sites, the tutorial illustrates key points about credibility and trustworthiness of online information and ways to discern information quality. Users can print a handy checklist of attributes to look for when evaluating health-oriented Web sites. Outsell’s research shows that 68 percent of knowledge workers believe the Internet has high-quality content, and 64 percent say that the Internet has information from known and trusted sources. Nearly one-third use and trust Internet information without verification. Using unvetted Internet information to make serious decisions - whether as consumers or knowledge workers - can result in misjudgment or error, with potentially serious consequences. Tutorials like the one offered by MedlinePlus can be a boon to unwary consumers, and also provide a good model for information managers looking for ways to boost information literacy in their organizations. Publishers and information providers in other fields can serve their own customers by providing similar targeted guides to information in their own subject areas.

Provided by Outsell:

For more information about Outsell visit http://www.outsellinc.com/

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The Institute of Museum and Library Services, a Federal agency that fosters innovation, leadership, and a lifetime of learning, and State Library Services & School Technology, the Minnesota state library agency, supports MINITEX Reference Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA).