Using the Internet to Disseminate Information

The Internet has become an indispensable tool. . ..

The ability to disseminate and promote one's work and research is an important component of managing and communicating health information. By disseminating information, an organization can reach members of its target audience and have a greater impact on policy and programming. The Internet can serve as an invaluable tool in this effort to communicate health information across a wide audience.

Information can be disseminated through listservs or through the use of websites designed to promote information for outside and member sources. This module will describe the various methods one can use to provide information and educate others via the Internet.

Ways to Disseminate Information Via the Internet

Listservs

Listservs are a very effective and cost-efficient way to communicate information to target audiences.

COMMUNITY-HEALTH-L (Management Sciences for Health)
http://erc.msh.org/forums/chealth.htm
With over 650 subscribers from more than 50 countries, COMMUNITY-HEALTH-L provides a forum for exchanging information and experiences in managing community health services. Members can post and receive messages. The messages are archived on the website for general viewing. To subscribe, send an e-mail to LISTSERV@MAIL.MSH.ORG, leave the subject line blank, and type SUBSCRIBE COMMUNITY-HEALTH-L in the body of the message.

DemoNetAsia
http://membres.lycos.fr/demonetasia
DemoNetAsia has an e-mail discussion group, with 100 members, that focuses on population research in Asia. Its purpose is to promote effective use of new technologies of information in the context of demographic research and training in developing countries. The group has open membership and all members may post messages including attachments. However, all messages require approval by the listserv moderator. Messages are archived for public viewing. Subscription information is available on the website.

Development Forum (World Bank)

www.worldbank.org/devforum

The Development Forum is an electronic venue for dialogue and knowledge-sharing among members of the development community. Particular emphasis is placed on learning from clients and other stakeholders in developing countries who can and should be active contributors to information on development issues. The Forum consists of an ongoing series of development dialogues that vary in their content, format, and duration. They are usually focused on a particular subject and limited in their duration. Most discussions are moderated. They are all accessible both through the World Wide Web (where they are archived for future reference) and by e-mail (through a "listserv" e-mail distribution list), so that colleagues with limited Internet access can participate. The discussions are open to the public and anyone interested in the subject is welcome to join. Instructions to join a particular discussion group can be found on the website.

H-DEMOG

www.h-net.org/~demog

H-Demog is sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and Michigan State University. H-Demog is an international scholarly online discussion list on demographic history. Subscription information and archived messages are available on the website.

Interagency Gender Working Group (IGWG) (Population Reference Bureau)

www.prb.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Measure_Communication/Gender3/IGWG_Listserv.htm

The IGWG is a network of nongovernmental agencies. It promotes gender equity within

Population, Health and Nutrition (PHN) programs in order to improve reproductive health and HIV/AIDS outcomes and foster sustainable development. The IGWG listserv informs members about the group's progress and provides gender related news items including upcoming conferences, workshops, and presentations. Membership is open to anyone who is interested in the topic. Members are encouraged to submit e-mails (such as gender articles in the population, health, and nutrition sector or conference announcements) in order to expand the network of information.
If you are interested in joining the listserv, or have any questions or concerns relating to the listserv, please contact the listserv moderator: hkashiwase@prb.org.

Population (Audubon Population and Habitat Program)

www.audubonpopulation.org/sections/joinus/listserv.cfm

Audubon's Population and Habitat Program offers a listserv for individuals interested in population. *Population* is a participatory listserv that also includes news updates, legislative alerts and news from the program as well as discussions by list members. Subscription information is available on the website.

PROCAARE: Program for the Collaboration Against AIDS and Related Epidemics

www.procaare.org/subscribe.php

This discussion group provides a forum for dialogue among clinical and public health physicians, nurses, researchers, policymakers, program managers, and other interested health practitioners in the developing and industrialized world who are engaged in the fight against AIDS. Discussion centers on biomedical and care issues covering such topics as prevention, access to drugs, home and institutional care, education, and

epidemiology. To maintain a high-quality interaction, moderators monitor the discussion. A Steering Committee comprising representatives from internationally recognized institutions in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and North America guides the overall direction of the discussion group. Previous messages are archived for general viewing. Subscription information is available on the website. After subscribing, members receive an e-mail message confirming membership in the conference along with more detailed instructions on how to participate, unsubscribe, and retrieve archive files.

Repronet-L (JHPIEGO Corporation)
www.reproline.jhu.edu
REPRONET-L is an e-mail discussion group focused on reproductive health and training. Subscribers can post messages to the group which are then archived for public viewing. Subscription information is available on the website.

Dissemination Tools

Electronic news services and dissemination websites are additional methods of communicating information.

Electronic news services are similar to listservs in that they are e-mail based, however electronic news services also serve as a more formal method for disseminating information. Electronic news services accept press releases, fact sheets, etc. Submission information is listed below.

Electronic News Services

The Drum Beat
Send submissions to the editor, Deborah Heimann, at dheimann@comminit.com.

Gender-AIDS
Send submissions to gender-aids@healthdev.net.

Great Network
Send submissions to development-gender@yahoo.com.

Kaiser Daily Health Reports
Send submissions to dailyreports@kaisernetwork.org.

SEA-AIDS
Send submissions to sea-aids@healthdev.net.

UN Wire
Send press releases, advisories, and other news tips to unwire-submit@unfoundation.org.

In addition to listservs and news services, which distribute information to a limited group on a one-time basis and are then archived, dissemination websites allow organizations to contribute their research and publications through a more permanent method for a wider audience.

Dissemination Websites

id21
www.id21.org/id21-info/index.html

id21 is a research reporting service funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). It aims to bring UK-based or UK-funded (e.g. DFID-funded) development research findings and policy recommendations to policymakers and development practitioners worldwide. id21 aims to be part of the process of putting policy into practice. Online, in print, and through the southern media, id21 presents recent research findings and policy lessons on major development issues.

UK-based or UK-funded researchers can submit their work to id21 to be presented on the id21 website. Through this well-established and well-publicized venue, researchers can share their expertise and research, and gain a high level of visibility and accessibility. id21 summarizes the research with an emphasis on policy relevance. id21 is an efficient and cost-effective dissemination channel allowing researchers to reach a wide audience. Instructions on submitting research highlights are available on the website www.id21.org/id21-info/stylesheet.html. Please note that submission is limited to UK-based or UK-funded researchers.

Population and Health InfoShare
www.phishare.org

Population and Health InfoShare is an electronic library of material submitted by partner organizations working in less developed countries. It provides organizations with a platform for sharing information on reproductive and child health, HIV/AIDS, and population with audiences worldwide. Partner organizations can take advantage of the latest Web and e-mail technologies to transmit their study results, reports, presentations, and other materials to a wide range of readers, including those with limited Web access.

Features

Web pages about the organization. Partner profile pages on the InfoShare website display information submitted about the organization and its documents. Users may access documents by topic, region, country, date, and language.

E-mail document distribution. Documents and links in the Infoshare library are available to users as e-mail attachments, expanding the reach of publications to those with limited Web access.

Data on use of the material. Partners have easy access to Web and e-mail usage statistics for all their documents and links.

Material listed in InfoShare E-mail Updates. Documents from partners are highlighted in monthly e-mail updates sent to InfoShare subscribers, who specify the material they want to receive by topic, region, language, and partner.

Registering

Membership is free and open to organizations with science-based research, policy, or program findings relevant to less developed countries. Information of a promotional, commercial, or fundraising nature is not permitted. To request membership, complete a registration form at www.phishare.org/register. Details on the rules of use are available at www.phishare.org/about/terms.php.

On the registration form you may submit a description of your organization for the InfoShare website, and an organizational logo if you want. Logos must be JPG or GIF format and 120x140 pixels or smaller in size.

During registration, you will also submit the contact e-mail and password that you will use to log in to your account. If you wish to keep your colleagues informed about the material uploaded into InfoShare, you may include additional administrative e-mail addresses. They will receive notices when you edit or add new documents. Finally, you will choose a URL short name for your profile page. This will create a Website address or homepage for your organization on InfoShare. After submitting the registration form, you will be notified by e-mail when your account has been activated.

Contributing Material

By contributing to InfoShare, your documents will be displayed on the InfoShare website, in the e-mail updates, and in the InfoShare catalog.

You may log in by going to the InfoShare website. After logging in, you will have the following options: adding and managing your organization's documents, viewing statistics on how many users have downloaded your documents, and editing your account information.

Add New Documents

You may contribute a variety of document types to Population and Health InfoShare. You may choose to include a new publication, data set, training manual, report on lessons learned, or a presentation. It is suggested that these files be prepared in a widely accessible format such as Microsoft Word, Excel, a simple text file, HTML Internet file, or a Portable Document File (PDF). Try to limit the file size to less than 1MB. These files can be uploaded directly from your computer to InfoShare. Alternatively, you may include just a website URL (hyperlink) for documents you want to share.

Add new documents by clicking on the link from the main administrative page when you log in. Complete the form on the page, making sure you provide all information for required fields, designated by an asterisk (*).

Provide a brief but thorough description of your document for audiences to read. Put the most important information in the first few lines. To facilitate topical searches by users, select the relevant topics and regions for your document. If you choose a specific country your document covers, also choose the appropriate region. Keep in mind that if you check "global," your document will be displayed under the global category and not under all regions. In the additional information field, you may opt to include information about ordering print copies, availability in other languages, further results, or a specific contact person.

Manage Documents

The "manage documents" page allows you to edit information about your documents, upload a new file or URL, or delete an out-of-date document. This screen also displays the e-mail retrieval keywords assigned to each of your documents.

Users can obtain any of your documents as an e-mail attachment by putting the document keyword in the body of an e-mail message to phidocs@phishare.org. They should not include any other text in the subject or body of the e-mail. Please note that some users will have trouble receiving large documents more than 1MB in size through their e-mail systems.

Viewing Usage Statistics

You can view statistics that show how many times users of Population and Health InfoShare have viewed your organizations documents and profile page. Top 10 Web Requests refers to your documents that were requested directly from the InfoShare website. Top 10 e-mail Requests refers to your documents that users requested as e-mail attachments. Document Statistics provides information on each document entered.

Edit Your Account Information and Your Organization's Website Profile

Your organizational profile can be edited by clicking on the "Edit Your Account Information" link on the administration page. You may change your organization's description, password, or the administrative e-mail list. If you desire, you may also change your partner Web page URL by going to the "URL Short Name" line. The edits you make to your account information will be reflected on your organization's profile page on the InfoShare website.

Exercises

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I. Becoming Familiar With Various Listservs

Visit the websites for the listservs listed in the packet. Familiarize yourself with the different discussion groups to explore if any of them might be appropriate for you.

- ☺ Which ones match your interests?
- ☺ Would any of them be appropriate venues for you to communicate information about your work?
- ☺ How would you go about doing this in a strategic manner? Through general discussion? By providing information about new findings? Announcing an upcoming conference or meeting?

1. Select one listserv that is relevant to your work.
2. View a recent discussion.
3. Think about and formulate a message that would be appropriate for the topic at hand and that would allow you to contribute information about your work.

II. Exploring the Different User Features of InfoShare

By understanding the various user features of InfoShare, you will be able decide whether joining InfoShare as a partner would benefit you and your organization.

1. Go to the InfoShare website www.phishare.org.
2. View the different ways of browsing for documents. First browse documents by topic. Then browse by partner organization. Finally, select Documents from the top menu bar and browse documents according to several criteria at once.
3. See how to view and receive documents. Select one document and view it on the website. Then go back and see how to receive it as an attachment via e-mail.
4. See how users can sign up for e-mail updates.
5. Visit the partner registration page to see what information is required to join. Select Become a Partner from the right hand menu.