

University of Illinois at Chicago

Sharing Healthcare
Resources Via
RefWorks Folders



Needing an efficient way to organize information resources and respond to ad hoc requests, medical departments at University of Illinois at Chicago created a smart repository by using shared folders in Ex Libris RefWorks.

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Mary Keehn, University of Illinois at Chicago



About The University of Illinois at Chicago

Located in the heart of one of the world's great cities, the University of Illinois at Chicago is the city's only public research university, educating 33,000 students across its 16 colleges. Seven of the colleges are devoted to health professions, and are affiliated with UI Health, the university's associated hospital and health sciences system. Throughout the state of Illinois, one in three physicians, dentists and pharmacists, one in four social workers, and 8,000 nurses trained at UI Health.

A Complex, Multi-Faceted Field

Interprofessional education in healthcare is about fostering collaboration and mutual understanding between practitioners across Healthcare professions disciplines. Because of the inherent breadth of the topic, information related to a specific profession can be time-consuming to find. At the University of Illinois at Chicago, Mary Keehn often found herself serving as the go-to resource. She serves as the Director of Interprofessional Education & Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs. Over time, she and her colleagues realized that they could find resources, organize and disseminate them, and respond to queries efficiently by using shared folders in Ex Libris RefWorks. Shared folders make it easy to create and share collections of information resources with a select email group or via a public URL, whether recipients have a RefWorks account or not.

Dealing with a Growing Repository of Information

Keehn explains how the use of RefWorks came about. “It was around 2007, here at the UIC,” she recalls. “We had a group of faculty that were involved in promoting interprofessional education. We started thinking about how to share information, because we had 13 different programs involved in our efforts. There were other programs we could also engage, if we had more resources.

“We wanted to create a repository — a place where we could send someone when they asked a question about interprofessional education. We started collecting articles and put a subject guide on our webpage. At first, people were going to just post Word documents with lists of articles. Then we decided we would create a shared folder to embed in the subject guide with more resources. Someone from the library was a member of the group and suggested using shared folders in RefWorks.”

As the effort grew, the use of RefWorks blossomed. Keehn began creating more folders and subfolders, added new references, and shared more discrete, discipline-, profession- and topic-specific information and resources.

“RefWorks allows me to capture all these resources in a place where I can find them much more quickly than anything else I've ever tried.”

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Streamlined Response to Individual Queries

RefWorks allows Keehn to quickly locate and deliver appropriate resources. She explains, “Someone emails and writes, for example, ‘Do you know anything about interprofessional education in Neonatal Intensive Care? Can you help me get started?’ I go to my RefWorks folders. I put in a few keywords and scan the related articles. It’s easy for me to find references of the most relevant articles, and create and share a new set of resources targeted to a subject area.”

She currently has stored approximately 2,800 articles in all, and one article can be applicable to multiple queries, as she describes. “For instance, an article on using simulation in interprofessional education (IPE) for HIV prevention could end up in three folders: simulation, IPE, and HIV.” Her method for

storing, accessing and returning results perfectly supports the goal of interprofessional education. “I purposefully include articles that are from different professional perspectives, even if they’re about the same topic,” she shares. “People realize that they come from different perspectives, written by multiple people.”

Moreover, the dedicated folders save her the time of creating an exhaustive list for each request. “I highlight a few articles that I know will get the point across and create a bibliography. I send that and tell the person that there’s a shared folder in RefWorks that they can look at for more information.”

The logo for ExLibris RefWorks. It features the word "ExLibris" in a dark grey serif font, with a rainbow-colored arc above the "i". Below it, the word "RefWorks" is in a blue sans-serif font.

On the Lookout for New Efficiencies

While Keehn doesn't teach any classes herself, she interacts with individual students, faculty and colleagues from other universities. So she is always on the alert for new ways to use RefWorks and make sharing information more efficient. For example, "On our interprofessional education website, I am going to include a section for frequently asked questions. I'll include a link to the shared folder in the answer, but I'll also probably periodically put written bibliographies there because those come from people outside the university." Colleagues outside the UIC can access the shared folders as well through a public url. She is also exploring the use of tags to make finding references in her folders easier, because her folders are quite large.

Ultimately, Improving Patient Outcomes

Keehn speaks to interprofessional education and its importance. "The unique thing about healthcare professions is that we have traditionally been educated in silos and we've also said that the

most important thing is your individual competence and your autonomy. That's what makes you a professional. We're trying to move people to think about the idea of collective competence and shared responsibility, to not make assumptions about another profession's role or responsibilities, and to communicate effectively with peers. The medical literature shows improved outcomes for patients when there is a high level of collaborative practice, whether it's intraprofessional or interprofessional." And what is RefWorks' role in that effort? She summarizes: "Because this is an evolving area of teaching and practice, information is always coming out and it arrives from many different directions. You don't want to miss something that's important, that's still developing. That's why it's important to be able to look at it in a centralized way. RefWorks allows me to capture all these resources in a place where I can find them much more quickly than anything else I've ever tried."



About Ex Libris

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