



Department of Veterans Affairs VA Library Network (VALNET)

The Veterans Affairs Library Network (VALNET) is the largest health care library network in the United States. VALNET library staff provide knowledge-based information for clinical and management decision-making, research, and education to enhance the quality of care for Veterans enrolled in the VA health care system. VA librarians have led the nation in innovative library programs such as clinical medical librarianship, consumer health services, therapeutic use of books (bibliotherapy) and information therapy. The services they provide contribute to evidence-based practice and VHA's patient-centered care, empowering Veterans through information and education. VALNET serves a diverse group of users: Veteran inpatients and outpatients, their families and caregivers; VA staff and employees; researchers; and students and trainees in affiliated teaching programs.

LIBRARIES IN THE VA SYSTEM

The American Library Association established the VA Library Service as a part-time activity under the Public Health Service during World War I. In 1923, when the program became part of the Veterans Bureau, the forerunner of the VA, many library operations were centralized. After 1940, as individual VA medical centers became more specialized, their libraries became more autonomous. VALNET was established to ensure that the unique resources available at different VA libraries were accessible to users across the entire network.

The VA health care system is organized into 21 geographically-distinct Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs), made up of VA Medical Centers, community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs), Community

Living Centers, Domiciliaries and VetCenters. VALNET libraries are usually located in medical centers, but provide services to all VHA sites of care. Most VA medical centers are affiliated with one of the nation's medical, nursing, or allied health schools. Many are located in large urban areas, while others serve rural areas.

Due to the unique clinical, research, and educational mix at each facility, variations exist in the size and scope of the library collections and services in VALNET. Many libraries offer consumer health information services, computer-assisted instruction, clinical librarianship, end-user database searching, training in internet navigation skills, therapeutic reading resources for Veterans, and more. In some settings, the physical library is very small, with many services provided electronically. A smaller, more traditional library may be staffed by a nonprofessional, subscribe to a few core medical journal titles, and house a collection of standard health science texts. A larger library may be staffed by a mix of professional librarians, technicians, and clerical personnel, and maintain an extensive collection of journals, monographs, audiovisual (AV) programs and other multi-media formats, and electronic resources.

LIBRARY NETWORK OFFICE

The Library Network Office (LNO) supports the VA Library Network by advocating for library issues at the VA Central Office level, and serves to unify the diverse library network. The Office provides advice and consultations to medical center administrations and library staff on the provision of information resources and services in the VA.

For cost-effectiveness and efficiency, centralized resources and services are funded through the LNO.

RESOURCES

The collective resources of VALNET offer significant resource-sharing opportunities for users through a shared catalog, as well as participation in local and national resource-sharing networks. Libraries in a VISN may cooperate in the selection and retention of journal holdings, as well as collection development and interlibrary loan responsibilities.

Individual VALNET libraries have established a variety of sharing agreements with academic institutions, hospitals, public agencies, Department of Defense facilities, and research centers in their states or local communities.

SERVICES

All VALNET libraries provide reference/research service, mediated literature searching, data curation, marketing, instruction, document delivery, and collection development.

All electronic library resources are available to clinicians and VA staff via the desktop, and most are accessible remotely through any computer with internet access.

Most VA libraries provide service to Veterans and their families and caregivers. Services can range from information prescriptions from physicians, to a patient-centered oasis of information and assistance. Collections are created based on information literacy levels and learning styles. Subject content can range from life skills, military service issues, and general health to recreational reading.

For additional information about VALNET, contact:

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