Mental Health Bridges – enabling health literacy skills for people with mental health issues.
An online tool created collaboratively by librarians and mental health professionals.

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BACKGROUND - Research has demonstrated (Rotondi AJ, 2007) that persons with serious mental illness use the Internet differently than most people. Those with a mental illness often experience siloed health care with their mental health taking priority over their physical health. The aim of this project was to build a website designed specifically for persons with mental illness that would teach users health literacy concepts in order for them to better understand both their mental and physical health. This project also demonstrates the effectiveness of librarians working in collaboration with other experts – in this case, behavioral health practitioners and researchers. Use the QR codes found throughout this poster to learn more.

HEALTH LITERACY - Statistics demonstrate that in the United States, 36% of the population is considered to be health illiterate. The World Health Organization reports similar data. This number is even greater in persons with mental illness. Lack of adequate health literacy can impact a person’s ability to communicate with a practitioner, read discharge instructions, or even interpret information on a bottle of prescribed medication. Through text written at an appropriate grade level, handouts and/or activity sheets, or simple videos, the Mental Health Bridges site gives persons with mental illness skills to become more health literate, and how these concepts are applied on the site.

COLLABORATION - A multi-disciplinary project team was instrumental in making Mental Health Bridges happen. This project began at the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School in 2015. From the beginning, staff from the library as well as faculty and staff from the school’s Department of Psychiatry joined together to submit a grant proposal to the National Library of Medicine. This group became the project development team. The librarians were able to focus on the informational aspects of the project while the psychologists were able to better understand the needs of the target population. Many of these individuals continue to be involved with the project today. Pictured to the left are:

Top row, L to R: Joanne Nicholson PhD (co-PI), Len Levin MS LIS (Project Manager), Elaine Martin DA (co-PI), Kathleen Biebel PhD (initial co-Project Manager)

Bottom row, L to R: Zlatina Kostova PhD, Yasmina Kamal, Luciana Witowski, Jenna Lepczyk MLIS

For a full list of all who have interacted with this project, scan this QR code.

Scan QR code to view full abstract

Scan QR code for extended project narrative
https://guides.library.harvard.edu/MHB_IFLA_23

Scan QR code to the full Mental Health Bridges site
https://www.mentalhealthbridges.org

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