Is having your library in the cloud enough? Impact of new library space on a large hospital system

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Citation
Samsundar, Devica; Reynolds, John; and Figueredo, Carrie, "Is having your library in the cloud enough? Impact of new library space on a large hospital system" (2014). All Publications. Paper 268.
http://scholarlycommons.baptisthealth.net/se-all-publications/268

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OBJECTIVE
To thrive and survive, medical libraries have had to move to the electronic environment. Given this migration to digital libraries, is there still value in using physical spaces in hospitals for libraries? In the past three years, Baptist Health South Florida added two new libraries at the Doctors Hospital (DH) and Homestead Hospital (HH) facilities. To measure the impact, usage data relating to reference requests is reviewed.

METHODS
The volume of literature searches and documents delivered for the year prior to and the year following the openings is reviewed for Doctors Hospital and Homestead Hospital. The percent change at each location and change in proportion of system-wide totals were compared to determine whether the trends identified were unique to the two locations where new libraries were added.

RESULTS
Although staff at all BHSF hospitals have always had access to electronic resources and reference services, opening new libraries was correlated with dramatic increase in the use of library services by staff at both hospitals compared to the existing locations. Literature searches delivered increased approximately 1000% at Doctors Hospital and 300% at Homestead Hospital in the first 12 months after opening a library. Document delivery increased approximately 430% at DH and 230% at HH. Although located at two of the system’s smaller hospitals, library-service use increased from 2% of the system-wide total to 10% each.

CONCLUSION:
The opening of physical library spaces had a significant impact on the usage of library resources and services at the sites where they were added. Therefore, the value of physical library spaces should not be underestimated. With so many physical libraries closing, an area for further research is what made our experience so successful?