

CONSUMER HEALTH LIBRARY SERVICE PROVIDED BY AN OUTREACH LIBRARIAN

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Last year, an excellent new consumer health library opened in Wilmington, North Carolina on the East Coast of the USA. This library contains all the library resources one could expect to find in a well stocked consumer health library — a good book collection and magazine collection, pamphlet files, Internet and electronic access for patrons on library supplied computers, its own web site. What is unique about this consumer health library is that it has coordinated with a traditional medical library to provide consumer health information to a large geographic area.

The medical library, the coastal AHEC Library, has employed an Outreach Librarian since 1972. The Outreach Librarian visits mental health centers, health departments, hospitals, physician offices, nursing homes, clinics and doctor offices. She visits an area spanning over 100 miles and visits 54 places every two weeks. The mission of the medical library has always been to serve the information needs of health professionals.

By joining the excellent resources of the new consumer health library to the previously established visits of the Outreach Librarian, an innovative new way of providing the public consumer health information has come into being. The paper will provide an overview of this new library service and the difference it has made to the people it has served.