

# History of Data Collection, Management and its Impact of Public Health Laboratories

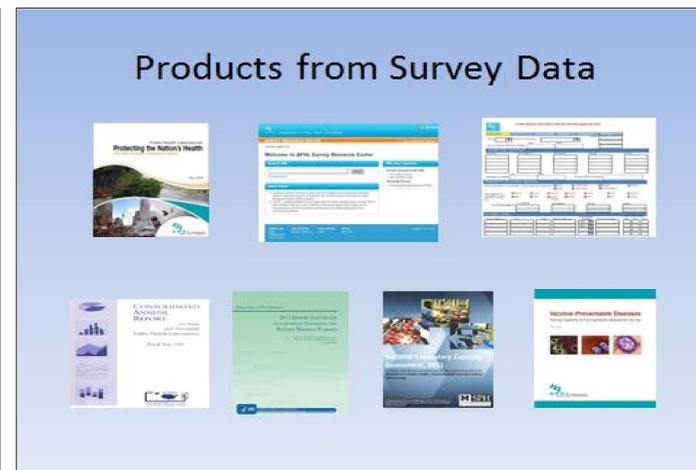
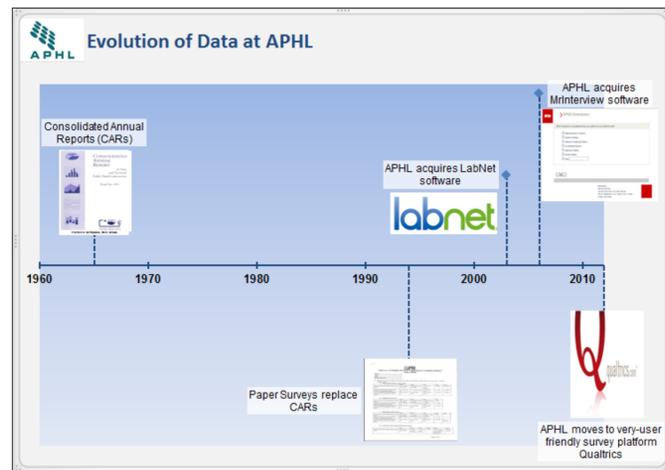
## KMC Committee

### BACKGROUND

The Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) has been collecting data on public health laboratories and the public health laboratory system for decades. Data has been collected via surveys on a variety of topics including the capacities, capabilities, workforce, test services, funding, test methodologies and test volume of public health laboratories. APHL has collected this data in a variety of forms and methods beginning with paper then moving to electronic mechanisms. The change in data collection methods increased its access and use.

### METHODS

Since the 1960s, APHL and its partners began collecting information on Public Health Laboratories (PHLs) regarding their personnel, expenditures, funding sources and services provided. A few years later the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) joined the effort and initiated a method to collect this data annually from public health laboratories in the form of a report named the Consolidated Annual Report (CAR.) The CARs were paper reports collected until the early 2000s, when the mode of collection changed. APHL began collecting additional information regarding the capacity and capabilities of PHLs through shorter data collection mechanisms. Rather than creating long reports, the data was collected in the form of surveys, though still done with paper. In early 2006, APHL acquired the survey software *LabNet*, which allowed PHLs to complete surveys in an electronic format. An email with the survey link access information was provided to PHL directors to complete the surveys. Having an electronic format to collect data increased survey participation and access to data and made data management easier. In 2006, APHL acquired an improved data collection tool, *MriInterview*, a survey platform that allowed users to easily complete surveys. In order to keep-up with newer technology, in 2012, APHL moved to an even more user-friendly survey platform, *Qualtrics*. This platform has many features that make the survey experience much easier. Furthermore, this platform provides better management and faster data analysis.

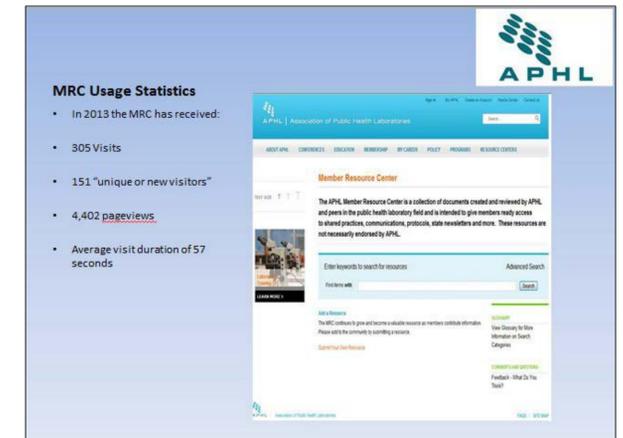


### RESULTS

Moving toward an automated and electronic data collection mechanism allowed for easier data access and utilization.

Numerous products were created using survey data:

- Data on public health laboratories became readily available for analysis and reporting to members and stakeholders to use for a variety of purposes;
- APHL created the Survey Resource Center (SRC), a central repository to house survey data collected through the years. The SRC is a searchable online database that allows users to use data for trending, benchmarking and profiling across laboratories. Members can view their survey results as well as search for data from other laboratories;
- As part of the SRC the Laboratory Profiles (LP), which contain critical information on every state and local member public health laboratory, were developed. Laboratory directors will update their information on a yearly basis.
- Numerous reports and publications were created based on survey data, including the yearly All Hazards report, Vaccine Preventable Disease and the National Laboratory Capacity Assessment.
- A laboratory director salary toolkit was developed using the workforce survey data. The toolkit provides salary information on laboratory staff based on field of study, degree and regional area.



### CONCLUSION

As the Association moved from collecting data in paper format to electronic collection, the benefits became enormous for public health laboratories. The availability of electronic public health laboratory data has facilitated access and utilization and proven valuable to create a variety of reports, publications and tools to aid public health laboratories. The promotion and utilization of such products is essential for its value and resources among leaders of public health laboratories to further expand their mission.



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