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Are Some Students More Equal than Others?

Equity for Distance Learners in Academic Libraries

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Abstract

Distance learning (DL) is becoming increasingly prevalent in colleges and universities. This has raised the issue of equitable library services for the distance student who cannot easily visit the library. Though investigation reveals that services are not generally equitable at this time, many libraries and librarians are working hard to create equity. This case study examines how some academic libraries are providing access to equal library services for their distance learner student population. The researchers report on the DL situation at California University (CU), examine funding and cost issues, and explore some possible solutions.

Are Some Students More Equal than Others?

Equity for Distance Learners in Academic Libraries

Higher education today is undergoing change regarding how courses are delivered to students. While distance learning (DL) has been an alternative method for course delivery since the 1960s, the Internet and course management software have enabled universities to increase the number of classes they offer online, particularly within the last five years. DL has compounded the academic library's traditional role of providing instructional and information services to faculty and students and housing the university's collection. The library's mission has expanded to include providing services to faculty and students at a distance. This case study explores the problems libraries have meeting these objectives in the midst of change by addressing the issue of equity in library services to DL students.

Analysis of the Problem

The Higher Education Amendments of 1998 define distance learning as an educational process that is characterized by the separation, in time or place, between instructor and student (U. S. Department of Education, 2000). Regis University defines DL students as anyone taking courses at a location other than the main campus or online students living more than 10 miles distance (Riedel, 2002).

The literature on online education reveals that in public and private institutions DL courses are increasing in number. In 1995, Regis University in Colorado offered 5% of its classes online, but by 2000 25% of all classes were offered online resulting in 10,000 enrollments (Riedel, 2002). By 2002 North Seattle Community College had developed nearly 100 online classes, taught by more than 50 different faculty, with an average enrollment growth rate of 25 percent per year over the past five years (Mundell, 2003). Stallings (2002) states "*online distance education is here to stay, . . .the e-learning revolution is accelerating*" (p. 48).

"[T]he goals of the university [are] critical thinking, computer literacy, problem-solving, and life long learning" (Frederiksen, 2002, p. 336-7). For the library to "remain central to academic effort," it must provide services that enhance the goals of the university (Mundell, 2003, p. 62). Parnell (2002) lists the services offered by a reputable university library.

- Twenty-four hour, seven days a week access to online library and information resources including library catalogues, citation and other indexes and full-text electronic journals
- Direct access by students to materials contained in general and research collections as well as to resources referred to in reading lists
- Assistance from professional librarians via email, telephone, fax and face-to-face
- Delivery of documents to students, both electronically and via courier or regular postal services
- Training and user education programs and resources via the Web, email, telephone, and face-to-face (including offshore)
- Filtered access to websites via subject and course based virtual libraries
- Facilitated access to the physical collections of other institutions (Value section, ¶ 2)

Parnell (2002), citing Unwin, Bolton, and Stephens (1996), offers a powerful reason for achieving equitable access: “[S]ignificant differences in accessibility of learning resources and experience across study modes should raise serious questions within universities about the appropriateness of offering the same academic award to those students without equivalent access to learning resources” (Value section, ¶ 5).

Evans, Layzell Ward, & Rugaas (2003) bring out that “legal, legislative, and political factors impact on managerial decisions” (p. 76). Because public university libraries receive funding from government, the funding agency is in a strong position to direct and control operating decisions. State legislatures have passed laws and state agencies have implemented regulations that address equity in distance education. State legislatures mandate that “[d]istance education . . . programs must be comparable in content, faculty and resources to those offered in residency” and that “graduates of distance education exhibit the skills and knowledge equivalent to resident programs of a similar nature” (U. S. Department of Education, 2000, p.5).

State agency regulations require that institutions establish “[a]ccess to a library or comparable resources that can provide students with the materials necessary for successful completion of the course” (U. S. Department of Education, 2000, p. 11). Accrediting agencies are concerned with addressing students’ library access and library skills (U. S. Department of Education, 2000). Accrediting agencies are

asking, “Can institutions that . . . deliver instruction using different learning modes respond in a comparable way?” (Stallings, 2002, p. 51).

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) compiled Guidelines that identify DL library services equal to those provided on campus (2004). The Guidelines help libraries connect their objectives with the goals of the larger institution. “[T]he primary outcome for Distance Learning library services [is] the establishment of lifelong learning skills through bibliographic instruction and information literacy” (Frederiksen, 2002, p. 337). Librarians feel they must “emphasize information literacy instruction and the importance of the teaching role of librarians” (Mundell, 2003, p. 62). Providing DL students with equal services is core to maintaining the library’s central position in fulfilling the university’s mission.

The ACRL Guidelines (2004) state that “[l]ibrary resources and services in institutions of higher education must meet the needs of all their faculty [and] students . . . regardless of where they are located” (Introduction section, ¶ 1). “Members of the DL community are entitled to library services and resources equivalent to those provided for students and faculty in traditional campus settings” (Philosophy section, ¶ 1). The Guidelines list 11 essential DL library services, which include reference assistance, bibliographic and information services, information literacy instruction, prompt document delivery, access to reserve materials, and promotion of library services to the DL community (Services section, ¶ 2). The foregoing research leads to an examination of the distance library services at California University (pseudonym).

Library Services for DL Students at California University (CU)

According to ACRL Guidelines for Distance Learning Library Services, “equitable distance learning library services are more personalized than might be expected on campus” (ACRL, Philosophy section, ¶ 1). These personalized services are established in accordance to “[t]he requirements and desired outcomes of academic programs”(¶ 2). These statements indicate that a service more tailored to individual needs should be available to DL students.

In order to investigate whether this “different” service is also “equivalent” service, interviews were conducted with faculty at CU’s School of Library and Information Science (SLIS), which has moved to a predominately DL modality to deliver its curriculum. Researchers also interviewed the librarian in the SLIS subject area discipline and the DL librarian at CU to provide alternative viewpoints

Interviews with Faculty

The following four questions were sent by e-mail to 14 full-time faculty in SLIS. The results presented here are collective opinions from half of the faculty members who have responded. Two faculty members suggested the researchers direct questions to the school’s director, whose response is included in the following paragraphs (SLIS faculty, personal communication, 2004, Oct. 3 to 8).

1. Are SLIS students categorized as distance learning students?
2. Why are SLIS LIBR classes not listed as Distance Learning classes on e-campus website? Is there a major reason that the school chooses to deliver its online courses through Blackboard rather than WebCT, as with the rest of the e-campus courses at the university?
3. Do you regard students who take classes online getting equal access to library resources compared to students who take classes on campus?
4. Faculty at SLIS deal with reserved readings and books by way of the SLIS restricted readings on SLIS Web. Why doesn’t SLIS faculty take part in a campus-wide reserved books and readings mechanism? Can students at SLIS have access to this restricted reading website anytime for research purposes?

No faculty regards SLIS students taking courses online as having DL status. They emphasized that DL is a method to deliver education. As to why SLIS uses a different management software to support online courses, faculty explained that they tested several systems, including WebCT and Blackboard, and chose Blackboard because it is comparatively easy to use and more suitable for graduate level courses. In addition, faculty also prefers the flexibility afforded by maintaining a course delivery system that is independent of the campus-wide e-campus program.

Faculty members think online SLIS students get equal services as long as the resources are available in the library. Several think the choice of the class format is in students’ hands, even if students are forced by personal needs rather than preferences. Compared to the 1970s and 80s, if students have a

proper home computing environment, they have easy access to library resources. Some faculty suggests that students visit the library; it being the place, after all, where most of them will work in the future.

Concerning how SLIS faculty deals with reserved readings, faculty believes there is no campus-wide e-reserve system available at the university, and SLIS had already established its own service by this time. SLIS hires its own technical staff to maintain the SLIS Web site and dedicated server and pays scanning fees to copyright holders. However, material on the reserved readings site can be used only for teaching purpose as required by copyright. Professors grant access via user name and password to students who currently enroll in particular classes. In general, faculty regards this e-reserve format to best suit the needs of online classes.

Interviews with Librarians

A set of different questions was designed to interview the SLIS librarian on the phone (personal communication, 2004, Oct. 6), and the DL librarian at CU in person (personal communication, 2004, Oct. 13). The questions and summary of response follows.

1. Are SLIS students categorized as distance learning students?
2. Does University's e-campus or SLIS inform you about classes that are going online? Are you part of the planning process?
3. Though distance learning students can get library materials through ILLiad and Link+, it takes several weeks (ILL) or days (Link+) for students to get those materials. Do you regard students who take online classes, under this circumstance, getting equal services from the library?
4. How does faculty deal with reserved books and readings when teaching courses online? Is there an e-reserve section on the web like the reserve desk at the library?
5. On average, do you receive reference questions more from on-campus students or distance learning students?
6. How do you deal with distance learning students' technology literacy problems?

Regarding SLIS students categorized as DL, the SLIS librarian stated that there is no clear definition of DL students at the university, and SLIS is very much independent in its DL classes. However, she is part of the SLIS curriculum committee and is involved in course planning. Nevertheless, it is hard for her to reach many of the program's part-time faculty. The DL librarian gave a similar answer

to the status question, but she does not participate in the course planning for the university-wide e-campus program. However, she has engaged in outreach activities such as focus groups for DL faculty to make them aware of the library resources available for DL students.

Concerning whether DL students are getting equal services, the SLIS librarian responded that in the strict sense, no equity exists, since it is still not as convenient for DL students to get many library materials as on-campus students. The DL librarian held the same opinion, but both agreed that librarians are making efforts to make the services better with a limited budget. SLIS librarian considered DL education harder than its traditional counterpart, requiring a substantial amount of planning. For instance, in the case of ILL at the university, students should request materials at least two weeks ahead of time. Unlike Link+, which is an automated system delivering materials through a special courier service, ILL materials are sent through U.S. mail. Delivery time depends on the participating schools' processing time. Faculty who teach online classes should be aware of the time needed to deliver course documents, and ought to leave enough time for students to get materials not available online (articles before 1996) or put articles on the SLIS e-reserve Web site for student retrieval.

On the issue of electronic reserve, both librarians said that no campus wide electronic reserve mechanism is currently available through the library. The DL librarian states that SLIS faculty are currently using a mix of methods, on-campus and online, to deal with course reserve materials. As long as copyright guidelines are followed, librarians will put reserve materials online for faculty. The SLIS library liaison said that SLIS faculty can use the library's on-campus reserve desk too, but most faculty ask students to search the library's online database or put their course reserve material on the SLIS maintained e-reserve site. However, because of copyright, whole books cannot be digitized and uploaded. In her opinion, a SLIS-maintained site for e-reserve generally works well since a large number of SLIS students take primarily online classes. As a result, she receives reference questions from SLIS students either by phone or via e-mail, but for other departments, she provides more in-person reference services. The DL librarian did not give a definite answer concerning reference services question, because students usually do not identify themselves as DL students when asking questions by phone or e-mail.

Concerning students' technology literacy problems, the SLIS library liaison mentioned that SLIS students are expected to have computer literacy before entering the program. Although there is no way to "test" this knowledge before admission decision are made, students who pretend to possess the necessary skills will not succeed in the program. As to other DL students at the university, the DL librarian said she keeps trouble-shooting lists with her, and works with IT staff, if necessary, to assist students in dealing with technology literacy problems.

Analysis of the Interviews

Overall, faculty at CU SLIS believe, in a broad sense, that students taking online classes get equal services from the library, and that the department is doing its best to accommodate most students' needs. On the other hand, both librarians did not hesitate to admit that there is room for improvement concerning services for DL students, especially regarding document delivery through interlibrary loan.

In the researchers' opinion, the librarians should be more proactive in introducing services for DL students. They ought to recognize their change of role from passive interviewees to active promoters when interacting with DL students (Gandhi, 2003). Running usability tests on the library's Web site to evaluate its effectiveness from DL students' standpoint is also important (Battleson, Booth & Weintrop, 2001). However, limited budgets is another major obstacle that prevents libraries from providing better services for DL students. The budget issue will be the focus of our next section.

Budgeting and Financial Accountability for DL Library Services

"Equity" allows for various interpretations. However, in order to determine how closely libraries approximate the ACRL Guidelines (2004), equity must be assessed in terms that are measurable, such as financial resources. How do budgets for on-campus library services compare with those for distance learning? The Guidelines assign the academic institution originating the DL program the responsibility of "provid[ing] continuing, optimum financial support for addressing the library needs of the distance learning community"(2004, Finances section, ¶ 1). Financing for distance learning library resources should be "designated and *specifically identified* [italics added] within the originating institution's budget and expenditure reporting statements" (2004, Finances section, ¶ 2). To measure compliance with these

guidelines, the ACRL recommends that the library “should have available current copies of . . . comprehensive budget(s)” (2004, Documentation section, ¶ 1).

The researchers interviewed librarians at a number of statewide academic library systems to learn whether distinct budgets are maintained for DL library resources at their institution and, if so, how the special needs of DL students for library resources were calculated in their budgets. We also asked librarians whether they thought their libraries complied with the ACRL Guidelines. The researchers interviewed librarians at Canadian universities for international comparisons.

Interviews with Librarians at U.S. Universities

CU’s library does not maintain a budget that delineates resources designated for DL students. According to the SLIS Liaison Librarian, the needs of DL students are “considered” in the budget process (personal communication, 2004, Oct. 4, 5). One problem with creating a separate budget is that library records don’t differentiate between DL and on-campus students, making quantifying equity in services and resources difficult. For example, library statistics don’t break out DL requests for ILL and Link+ from on-campus student requests. In addition, the ILL mechanism for distinguishing DL from “regular” student is self-monitoring; any student can select DL status. The total expenditure for ILL for the California State University Libraries for 2002-03 was \$15,724, a rather modest sum (California State University [CSU], 2004). By contrast, another service on which DL students rely, electronic current serial subscriptions, cost \$614,464--five times more than that spent on printed serials subscriptions, \$122,524 (CSU, 2004). The librarian believes that their policy is in keeping with the “spirit” of the ACRL Guidelines.

CU is not unique in not identifying budgetary resources allocated to library services for DL students. The Oregon State University (OSU) libraries keep only one budget for library resources. According to an OSU librarian, the library receives “small sum[s] of money from . . . extended campus to assist with delivery of resources” (personal communication, 2004, Oct.8). This reality exists despite recommendations from the Interinstitutional Library Council of the Oregon University System calling for

libraries to “prepare a budget for off-campus programs” (Oregon State System of Higher Education Interinstitutional Library Council, 1995, ¶ 1).

Some libraries do have special budgets for DL services. Central Michigan University (CMU) delivers DL library services through its Off-Campus Library Service (OCLS) with a budget of over \$1,000,000. The OCLS has a unique arrangement with the individual participating colleges to deliver off-campus programs. The programs are owned by the colleges, but the OCLS is the central delivery mechanism. It is self-operating with no subsidization from on-campus. The library service uses the on-campus collections, but money is allocated to the OCLS budget for developing those collections for DL needs. The new materials are placed in the on-campus libraries. According to the Director of OCLS, this relationship is “symbiotic” and she reports to both the Dean of Libraries and the Vice President of the Off-Campus Delivery Unit (personal communication, 2004, Oct. 12).

2003-2004 OCSL Budget

\$ 753,214 Staff salaries and benefits (7 professional librarians and 7.5 support staff)

\$ 26,909 Student staff

\$ 281,248 S/E (includes small equipment, some collections, paper, other supplies)

\$1,060,742 Total (Director, OCLS, personal communication, 2004, Oct. 12)

This budget reflects CMU’s unique situation. CMU has a large and growing off-campus DL program, offering off-site classes around the country. Regional librarians staff field libraries with two half-time office support staff to handle document delivery and copyright permissions requests. This fall OCLS began charging DL students a \$25 per course fee. The Director believes that CMU’s budget “does conform well with ACRL guidelines” but emphasizes that it an “ideal” and not suited to all universities (personal communication, 2004, Oct. 12).

The University of Maine (UM) also maintains a separate budget for providing library services for DL students. According to the Assistant Dean, the Off-Campus Library Services office provides library services for all of the seven UM campuses, and is “explicitly based” on the ACRL Guidelines (personal communication, 2004, Oct. 12).

Interviews with Librarians at Canadian Universities

The Canadian Library Association (CLA) has also established Guidelines for Library Support of Distance and Distributed Learning in Canada (2000). According to these Guidelines, the academic institution “should provide appropriate, *separately designated* [italics added] funding to ensure that its distant learners receive library support which is equivalent as possible” to that of on-campus students (Finances section, ¶ 1). DL services have “distinct costs that cannot easily be subsumed under a library's regular operating budget,” (2000, Finances section). Additional funding is the responsibility of the academic institution. In cases where other campus agencies subsidize costs, the DL budget is still the library's responsibility.

According to a librarian at a university in western Canada, the library budgets for and provides resources to support DL library services (personal communication, 2004, Oct. 13). This includes one full-time DL librarian, one full-time support person, and money to travel to regional areas to provide library instruction twice a year. Some resources for the service, not separated out, but still covered by the library budget include equipment and supplies such as paper, as students are not charged copying fees. The library has offices at distance regional locations with daily courier delivery to those locations; students are not charged delivery costs. According to the librarian, the library “tries” to follow the CLA model, and she “suspects that most Canadian universities do” (personal communication, 2004, Oct. 13).

A distance education (DE) committee within the Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries (COPPUL) recently polled academic libraries in Canada about the question of fees for services and the disparities between institutions (2004). There were four questions: what are the fee models; what are the service packages; is there is an added fee on tuition for DE services; and, are costs are covered by central funding. The results indicate that there is a patchwork of different policies among the institutions.

Analysis of the Interviews

All of the librarians believed that their institutions are trying to provide equity in library services for DL students. Some are trying to conform to the ACRL and CLA Guidelines calling for budgets for DL students to be specifically designated as separate from the regular library budget. Others maintain that the

Guidelines can only be followed as an ideal, given the complexity of distinguishing between library services for on and off campus students. At present, no universally applicable model exists for budgeting DL library services.

There are good reasons for separately budgeting off campus library services. According to S. M. Edge and D. Edge, “[w]ithout a separately funded operation for provision of library services to distance learners, concerns about whether distance learners are being supported at the expense of on-campus students may arise” (2000, Barriers to Integration section, ¶ 11). Many problems with establishing equity can be avoided if budgets for DL library services are clearly designated.

Solutions for Equitable Access for Distant Learners

Fundamentally, equivalent library services for distance learners involve access to and retrieval of materials and access to reference services. Imagine the virtual equivalent of walking into the library, using the catalog, retrieving a book or serial from the shelf, checking out the book or photocopying an article from the serial, stopping by the reference desk for assistance, visiting the rare book room or other special collection, with the same degree of convenience and timeliness of an actual library visit. To provide this “equivalent service,” the library needs to do the legwork of the walk-in patron on behalf of the distance learner, an expensive time- and labor-intensive process. Even with all the online resources available, there are still many resources that can be accessed only by actually visiting the library. For some areas of research, nearly all reference materials may be available only in the library.

Measurement, Marketing, and Collaboration

ACRL Guidelines (2004) state “Members of the distance learning community are entitled to library services and resources equivalent to those provided for students and faculty in traditional campus settings” (Philosophy section, ¶ 1). A starting point to making access equitable is measuring the need. As previously mentioned, distinguishing DL students from all students who access the library on-line can be difficult. Gandhi (2003) describes distance learners as students “who live more than an hour's drive away from their institution's campus and cannot access the physical collections and in-person services offered by their campus libraries” (p. 139). In the case of CU, an official definition of distance learner has yet to

be formulated. In the absence of such a definition, the library could survey all students to learn how far they live from the campus and how they use library services. A mailed survey could be narrowed down to students with addresses other than the city in which CU is located. An alternative would be to incorporate the survey into the library Web site.

The ACRL Guidelines offer some suggestions for measurement (ACRL, 2004; Frederiksen, 2003). Along with assessing the needs of distance learners, the library should assess existing support for distance learning using methods such as: user surveys, user focus groups, tracking usage, and peer institution comparison (ACRL, 2004). Mook succinctly states two basic reasons for evaluation: “to improve future organizational performance (*management*) and/or to measure benefits already realized (*impact*)” (Mook, 2003). Marketing, or promoting, services for distant learners is related to measurement, for students must be aware of available services if they are to use them (Jones, 2002; Lebowitz, 1997; Gandhi, 2003). Lebowitz writes “most students do not think about library services *until* they encounter a problem or realize that they do not know how to use the library and its resources effectively” (Lebowitz, 1997). A year-long study of 17 distance learning students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign revealed these concerns about library services: expedited document delivery, asynchronous service (i.e., during off-hours), responsiveness and single contact points, technology training and support (Kazmer, 2002).

With no centralized office coordinating University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire’s distance learning and online courses, the library worked to identify and support the increasing number of DL classes (Markgraf, 2002). The library developed a distance education (DE) librarian position in 1999 charged with promoting the library’s services by identifying distance courses being offered by the various departments and communicating with DE faculty. The library’s goal was to inform students and faculty about the services it offered. The DE librarian began attending technology assistance workshops where the instructional design team worked with faculty to convert courses to the online environment. A university-wide effort to support online education resulted in the instructional design staff being put under library management. By the second year the instructional design team included the DE librarian.

“[Library] politics is . . . figuring out how your organization works, becoming part of the group that makes it happen, and then using your understanding to help achieve the overall goals of the [library]” (Jaillet, 1993, p. 48).

The DL program at Regis University in Denver provides classes at six remote teaching sites. Although the DL librarians designed a Distance Learning Library Services Web page, they discovered that many students were nearing the end of their studies before becoming aware of the resources available. They also discovered that faculty suggested inappropriate resources to their DL students and were not aware of library resources in their fields (Riedel, 2002). So the DL librarians created a series of “Recommended Online Resources by Subject” containing full guides to library resources and instructions for accessing them, which they located on the library DL Web site, with the goal of linking them to the online courses (Riedel, 2002). At the same time faculty asked for the library’s feedback on a commercial electronic reserves service. When the library determined that this service would duplicate existing resources and pass costs to students, the library saw an opportunity to prepare its own e-reserves service “that would enhance [online] course content at no extra cost to students” (Riedel, 2002, p. 482). This opened up collaboration between the DL librarian, the DE online development team, and DE faculty, which led to the DL librarian’s becoming a member of the online course development team (Riedel, 2002, p. 482).

Some Solution Scenarios

The ideal solution for equitable access requires separate and sufficient funding to provide equivalent library services. ACRL and other authors (e.g., Lebowitz, 1997) recommend instituting a dedicated distance learner library service with its own budget and qualified librarian. By qualified librarian, the ACRL Guidelines mean a librarian who has earned a degree from an ALA-accredited library school and who specializes in distance education (2004). With sufficient funding the DL service could hire staff to do the necessary legwork and could purchase equipment for scanning, digitizing, and distributing materials. The scanned documents can be posted on a file-transfer protocol (FTP) site for students to “pick up” from their home computers or sent to students by email. A monograph digitization

project could be implemented, such as BOOKS2U!, described by Mühlberger (2002). The BOOKS2U! project supersedes supplying monographs via interlibrary loan by mail, and, at the same time, builds the library's digital collection, preserves paper and print monographs, and makes items available to many users at once. However, even with sufficient funding, the library must use resources efficiently, for example, hiring student workers for some of the labor-intensive tasks required to provide equitable access.

Though better planning and more funding can build new resources, in the absence of dedicated or adequate funding a number of small changes could be made to move closer to the ideal of equitable access. Following are a number of ideas that may improve current resources to approach equitable access. Scan tables of contents and indexes of books for viewing on-line and have publishers include digitized tables of contents and indexes for new books. This method would be less expensive than having the entire book online and supplies information that supplements catalog records. The library could offer practical opportunities for library students. For example, a student could act as a "para-librarian" (Lebowitz, 1997), offering basic reference services at hours suitable to distance learners; another could operate the retrieval and distribution system for items not available online. To provide access to student and faculty unpublished research, the library could create a digital repository, such as the University of California eScholarship program described by Hughes, (2004).

Another solution is to plan and build a digital library. At the University of Massachusetts (UMass), a major driving force behind the development of their digital library was the creation of the distance education arm, UMassOnline (www.umassonline.net) (Ferguson, 2002). First funded in 1999 through "state Information Technology Bond opportunities," in 2000 the five campus libraries began planning a combined UMass Digital Library (p. 318). Of five task forces formed under the guidance of the heads of the five campus libraries, three were heavily involved with the development and implementation of the digital library: Collection Development, Extended Reference, and Web Site Development. One of the assignments of the Extended Reference Task Force was to come up with a real-time reference service, which they did by adapting LivePerson, chat room software. The Collection

Development Task Force chose among on-line resources with an emphasis on full-text and a view to the future expansion of resources. The Web Site Development Task Force worked with an outside contractor to design a website interface that had a distinctive appearance yet maintained the UMass identity. Each of these areas involved careful planning to make the most of the available funding and, notably, to allow for future development and change.

Conclusion

To successfully provide equitable access to library services for distance learners, a library must obtain sufficient funding, hire a specific distant learner librarian, identify its customers, and market the service to users, faculty, and administration. A dose of innovative thinking can invigorate the planning process. Evans, et al. (2000) describes innovative thought as “relatively unstructured,” even seeming illogical, but “necessary to keep an organization dynamic”(p. 131). And, there has been some progress in providing equitable library services. Examining equity in 1997, Dugan wrote, “the distance education student will not receive equitable services to that of the on-campus student when it comes to the immediacy of access and availability of material, and the skills learned through one-on-one interaction with a librarian” (p. 317). In 2004, although equitable access for distance learners has not been widely achieved, some libraries have narrowed the gap significantly. Among most there is a strong consciousness of the need to improve this area of service. In the area of librarianship, the distance learning field offers new opportunities as “Distance Librarian” becomes a familiar job title. As digital technology grows more sophisticated and, it is hoped, more convenient for users, library school curricula will need to include DL librarian training. CU distance students can then learn to be distance librarians bringing full circle equitable library services for distance learners.

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