



S Y S T E M S A N D P R O C E D U R E S E X C H A N G E C E N T E R

Flyer 234

Distance Learning
Transforming Libraries 6: September 1998

INTRODUCTION

Transforming Libraries no. 6, *Issues and Innovations in Distance Learning*, explores the diverse ways that libraries currently support distance learning, both in its traditional and newer Internet-based forms. Library support for distance learners and their instructors, like for the distance learning programs themselves, is characterized by a multiplicity of forms. Furthermore, a wide range of problems and issues confront institutions that establish distance learning programs. To some extent, the older problems of physical delivery have given way to newer problems created by web-based instruction. Both faculty and students need to be technologically capable and have access to hardware and software that is compatible with that of the institution offering the distance learning program. However, these needs pose questions about costs and the problem of quickly changing technologies. Finally, the legal and accreditation issues that accompany distance learning programs have yet to be answered.

Despite these problems, many have chosen to focus on the positive, long-term societal benefit of distance learning—bringing a previously disadvantaged population into the educational experience—rather than trying to make these programs profitable.

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

The Reports from the Field section highlights an array of initiatives, plans, and implementations that promise to transform the delivery of higher education, particularly through web-based distance learning programs. Ten programs report in this section:

- The University of Maine System Network (UNET) is a centralized agency that offers more than 96 courses per semester at over 100 locations. Library participation in these courses is centralized for the University System through the Off-Campus Library Services (OCLS) Office.
- Unique among universities offering distance learning, the University of Maryland University College's (UMUC) entirely web-based program is organized as a separate campus. The UMUC library serves undergraduate and graduate students through three primary areas of service: reference, document delivery, and instruction.
- Western Governors University (WGU) will serve first as a conduit for individual providers and, second, for its own competency-based degrees. The General Library at the University of New Mexico is moving toward a three-year contract to provide library services for WGU.

- The distance learning program at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, (UCCS) library has a fee-based service that includes interlibrary loan and document delivery. It has recently partnered with Jones Intercable to provide more services and will be using some of the WGU offerings.
- University of South Florida–Tampa houses the Reference Referral Center (RRC). The RRC, funded by the state of Florida, serves all students enrolled in distance learning programs offered by Florida schools. Another feature of the Florida Distance Learning Library Initiative is inter-institutional borrowing.
- Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) has worked to establish a connection between the distance learning programs and the library in a project establishing policy, conducting research, and creating videos for distance learners.
- The University of Illinois Graduate Library School provides online teaching through its distance learning program, LEEP3.
- SUNY–Buffalo’s School of Library and Information Science offers six or seven distance learning courses and requires students to be on campus part of the time. Its program was established after conducting the Educational Technology Initiative (ETI), a study of the feasibility of delivering course materials via the Internet.
- The University of Minnesota Library has been awarded a three-year grant to implement services for distance learning.
- The University of Iowa Library is running a pilot program to provide service to the master’s degree program in the School of Social Work.

Details about the activities at these institutions, as well as links to other distance learning sites, are available on the Transforming Libraries’ accompanying website for this issue:
<<http://www.arl.org/transform/dl/index.html>>.

This SPEC Kit was written by William G. Jones, Assistant University Librarian & Associate Professor, University of Illinois at Chicago, with editorial advice from Joan K. Lippincott, Associate Executive Director, Coalition for Networked Information.

The electronic component of Transforming Libraries can be found at <<http://www.arl.org/transform/index.html>>.

SPEC Flyer (ISSN 0160 3574) © 1998 by the ASSOCIATION OF RESEARCH LIBRARIES. ARL grants blanket permission to reproduce this information for educational use as long as complete attribution is given. For commercial use, requests should be sent to the ARL Publications Department, Association of Research Libraries, 21 Dupont Circle, Washington, DC 20036. SPEC Kits and Flyers are available by subscription and single issue.

