



## Instructional Support Services

A SPEC Kit compiled by

Carolyn A. Snyder  
Professor, Library Affairs  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Susan Logue  
Associate Dean for Support Services, Library Affairs  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Howard Carter  
Manager of Instructional Support Services, Library Affairs  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Mickey Soltys  
Management Analyst Programmer, Library Affairs  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale

October 2001

Series Editor: Lee Anne George

SPEC Kits are published by the

Association of Research Libraries  
OFFICE OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT SERVICES  
21 Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 800  
Washington, D.C. 20036-1118  
(202) 296-2296 Fax (202) 872-0884  
<<http://www.arl.org/olms/infosvcs.html>>  
<[pubs@arl.org](mailto:pubs@arl.org)>

ISSN 0160 3582

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October 2001

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# SURVEY





## Executive Summary

### **Introduction**

As academic institutions develop and expand web-based and other distance education programs, libraries are implementing increasingly sophisticated instructional support services. Discussions of the philosophy and practice of library-based instructional support services in academic institutions have appeared in the literature since the late 1980s. Major (1987) outlined procedures for establishing a flexible, user-oriented instructional development system under the auspices of a community college library. For Major, the library was the most desirable location for such a system because the library had a long history of providing instructional development services. It was also the center of rapidly emerging interactive instructional technologies. Koltay, Trelease, and Davis (1996) report that at Cornell the library was chosen to house these services because the library staff was able to assess and develop information literacy skills; had a thorough understanding of information-seeking behaviors; understood modern information technology; and was used to collaborating with faculty and other diverse populations.

Mitchell (1990) defined instructional technology as encompassing “instructional design, courseware creation, faculty development, and media services in support of teaching and learning.” He argued that since computing and media have come together into a single technology, the organization should reflect a similar integration. The staff of this new hybrid department would need technical expertise together with an understanding of the goals of instructional design in teaching and learning to support emerging instructional technology. Kelley and Dowell (1996) reiterated that instructional support staff would need to have expertise with

both the technology and the pedagogy to effectively manage instructional technology projects.

During the last several years the survey authors have experienced a growing demand for information about the instructional support services offered by Library Affairs at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. That demand led them to develop this survey to gather information about the changes that have taken place during the last five years in the services other libraries offer to support instruction on campus and in the library. For this survey, instructional support services were defined as those that help faculty meet their teaching objectives partially by incorporating new technologies to augment their instruction. This survey also was designed to gather information about partnerships created between libraries and other campus units to provide these services.

### **Types of Instructional Support Services Offered, for How Long, and for Whom**

This survey was distributed to 121 ARL member libraries in June 2001. Fifty-eight libraries (48%) responded to the survey. Of these, slightly fewer than half (28 or 48%) indicated that they offer instructional support services as defined, although one institution did not identify which type of service it offers.

The survey gathered information about eight types of instructional support services plus an “other” category. (See the Survey Results for a fuller definition of each type of service.) The total number of services offered by an individual institution ranges from one (web course development or digital imaging by four respondents) to all eight types (three respondents). The majority offer four to six categories of service (14 respondents or 52%). The most commonly offered services

are digital imaging and graphics (21 responses or 78%), provision of instructional technology equipment (74%), and web course development (70%). These categories are followed closely by support for the development of distance learning courses (59%), custom web programming (52%), and assistance from an instructional designer on strategies to improve teaching (48%). Video production services are offered by a little more than a third of the respondents (10 or 37%), while only a handful (5 or 19%) provide instructional evaluation assistance. Ten respondents indicated they offer other services including: electronic reserves service; user education/instruction; librarians working with faculty to integrate appropriate information resources into their course web pages; interactive video conferencing; knowledge management tools; and hiring two faculty members for part-time instructional design.

The earliest instructional support service reported was the provision of audiovisual equipment at Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) beginning in 1949. SIUC added instructional development in 1960, instructional evaluation in 1979, and video production in 1981. The institutional changes that occurred at SIUC in the 1990s to support faculty in delivering quality instruction through web-based and multimedia projects are detailed by Logue and Preece (1999).

While five other libraries report being early providers of audiovisual services, responses indicate a steady growth in all types of instructional support services—except instructional evaluation—in the 1990s with one or two libraries adding a new service each year. There was a spurt of growth in 1996 when three libraries began digital imaging and graphics services and four started offering new instructional technology services. Another growth spurt between 1998 and 2000 was driven by additional web course development, custom web programming, digital imaging, and distance learning services.

Not surprisingly, the responses indicate that libraries give strong instructional support to librarians and other library staff, providing them each of the services offered, with very few

exceptions. Digital imaging is most often provided, followed closely by web course and/or distance learning support. Instructional technology support is also high on the list. Overall, libraries report offering somewhat fewer instructional support services to faculty and other instructional personnel, though the top categories are the same as for library instructors. The strongest contrast between services provided to librarians and those provided to other faculty is in the area of custom web programming service. While all but one of the 14 libraries that offer this service provide it to library staff, only half provide it to other instructional staff.

### **Collaboration with Other Campus Units**

Twenty libraries report collaborating with another campus unit to provide instructional support services. These collaborations cover the whole range of service categories. The most frequent collaborations occur for web course development (12 or 60%) and instructional technology and distance learning support (11 or 55% each). Collaborations on custom web programming and video production are less frequent (5 responses or 25% each).

Some libraries report collaborating with other library units. The nonlibrary units that are part of collaborations vary, but generally include the following:

- ◆ Information Technology/Computer Center
- ◆ Academic Computing and Network Services
- ◆ Office of Instructional Services/Center for Teaching and Learning
- ◆ Distance Learning Technology Programs/Center for Distance Education
- ◆ Art Department, and
- ◆ Computing services in colleges and academic departments.

### **Staff Charged with Offering Services**

When librarians or other professionals are specifically charged to provide instructional support services, respondents most often report a range from less than half to two FTE. A few larger respondents skew the averages, though. For example, the Library of Congress reports

that 80 librarians are involved in custom web programming. When all responses are considered, the greatest number of librarians is working in the areas of custom web programming and web course development, followed by instructional development and distance learning. The greatest number of administrators and other professionals is working in the areas of instructional technology, custom web programming, and distance learning. However, when the Library of Congress is omitted from the analysis, custom web programming drops from first place to seventh for librarians and the areas for administrators and other professionals change to instructional development, instructional technology, and digital imaging.

The data from the Library of Congress did not impact the data for the “support staff,” “student assistants,” and “other” categories of staff. The greatest number of support staff is working in the areas of other services, custom web programming, and instructional technology. Student assistants are concentrated in the areas of instructional technology and instructional development. Other staff is concentrated in the areas of custom web programming and instructional development.

### **Positions Added or Reallocated**

Only 16 libraries report having added library staff during the last five years to provide instructional support services. Across all responses, some staff was hired for each category of service. New hires ranged from one half to four FTE staff. The greatest number of positions was added for web course development (15.3), distance learning support (10.1), instructional technology (9.0), and instructional development (8.8). The mean for positions added range from a low of 1.37 for digital imaging to a high of 4.0 for other instructional support services or expertise. Sixteen libraries—including all but four of the libraries that added staff—also reallocated staff to provide instructional support services. Staff was reallocated for every type of service except instructional evaluation. The greatest number of reallocations was for instructional technology (12.4), web course development (12.1), and digital imaging (10.6).

The reallocation means range from a low of 1.00 for custom web programming to a high of 5.30 for other instructional support services or expertise.

### **Budget**

Twenty-three libraries responded to the question about the amount budgeted for instructional support services. Of these, eight report that there is no separate budget allocation for these services and three report that the information is not available. The remaining twelve respondents report allocations ranging from \$15,000 to \$2,000,000. Two libraries with budgets greater than \$1,000,000 again skew the mean. When their budgets are excluded, the mean drops from \$346,664 to \$181,730.

All 26 responding libraries report that the library budget is the main source of instructional support services funding. In addition, 12 libraries (46%) cite grants as a funding source. Other libraries report funding from university general funds (23%), departmental budgets (23%), and endowments (4%). Five libraries (19%) indicated other funding sources such as student computing fees and various special allocations for specific programs.

### **Promotion and Evaluation**

The library web page is used to promote instructional support services by 24 or 89% of the reporting libraries. E-mail is used by 78% and brochures are used by 70%. Publicity is also distributed through the campus newspaper and newsletters, at workshops and committee meetings, and by lots of word of mouth.

The techniques used most frequently to measure the quality of library instructional support services are informal feedback (89%), usage statistics (78%), and user surveys (63%). Formal evaluations, interviews/focus groups, suggestion box comments, and comparison with peer institutions are techniques used by one quarter to one third of the responding libraries.

Question 15 asked respondents to indicate their expectations of the *minimum* level of instructional support service they consider to be adequate for a research library to provide and their expectations of the *desired* level of service. They were then asked

to indicate their impression of the quality of their library's instructional support services relative to these expectations. Respondents' expectations of the minimum level of instructional support service that should be offered (with two exceptions) covered the entire range on the scale of 1 to 9. The same was true of expectations for the desired level of service. Overall, respondents seem to have a higher expectation that research libraries will provide distance learning, digital imaging, instructional technology, and web course support, but have a lower expectation for instructional evaluation and video production. Perceptions of performance also covered the range from 1 to 9. While some respondents perceived that their library did not meet their expectations for minimal levels of certain services, in the aggregate, respondents' perceive that performance exceeds minimum expectations but leaves plenty of room for improvement to meet desired expectations.

## **Conclusion**

The survey data show that there has been a steady growth in the number and variety of instructional support services offered by libraries to library and other instructional staff. Provision of these services typically has been absorbed within the duties of existing library staff and within existing budgets. New and reallocated staff was most often assigned to web course development, digital imaging, distance learning, and instructional technology support. New funding came from grants or university sources. A number of respondents report that—in addition to or instead of the library—a variety of units across the institution have responsibility for providing this range of services, for example, Technology Training Centre, Center for Teaching Effectiveness, Audiovisual Services, Multimedia Instructional Development Center, and Office of Information Technology.

The types of services that are most often provided to both library and other staff are the same ones that respondents indicated have the highest desired service level, namely digital imaging, distance learning and web course

development, and instructional technology. Distance learning, web course development, and instructional technology are also the services that experience the most frequent collaboration between the library and another institutional unit.

Libraries rely on a variety of informal and inexpensive techniques to promote and evaluate their instructional support services. While a number of respondents believe that their library is performing well, others see considerable room for improvement.