

DISTANCE EDUCATION GUIDELINES

Distance Education Management

The chief administrative officers and governance organizations of the originating institution bear the fiscal and administrative responsibilities, through the active leadership of the library administration, to fund, staff, and supervise library services and resources in support of distance learning programs. As the principal and direct agent of implementation, the librarian-administrator should, minimally:

1) The librarian-administrator should assess and articulate, on an ongoing basis, both the electronic and traditional library resource needs of the distance learning community, the services provided them, including instruction, and the facilities utilized.

In the fall of 2006, Office of Institutional Research began distribution of a library survey for students and faculty. The survey is conducted electronically and includes questions pertaining to the remote access of library resources. Additionally, the library addressed distance education technology issues within the 2005-2007 Technology Plan.

Watson Library:

http://www.nsula.edu/watson%5Flibrary/meeting_minutes/Technology_Plan_for_the_Watson_Library.pdf

Shreveport:

http://www.nsula.edu/watson%5Flibrary/meeting_minutes/Shreve_Tech_Plan.pdf

Leesville:

http://www.nsula.edu/watson%5Flibrary/meeting_minutes/Technology_Plan_LEESVILLE.pdf

2) The librarian-administrator should prepare a written profile of the distance learning community's information and skills needs.

Up-to-date distance education enrollment figures, compiled by the Office of Institutional Research indicate that as of fall 2007, over 51% of enrolled students take at least one distance education course (i.e.: Internet, LPB, CV, or Desktop Learning).

3) The librarian-administrator should develop a written statement of immediate and long-range goals and objectives for distance learning, which addresses the needs and outlines the methods by which progress can be measured.

NSU Libraries does not have a current written statement of immediate and

long-range goals and objectives for distance learning. The overall library goals and objectives apply to distance learning where applicable.

4) The librarian-administrator should promote the incorporation of the distance learning mission statement, goals, and objectives into those of the library and of the originating institution as a whole.

NSU Libraries acknowledge the importance of distance education and all goals, and objectives for information access apply equally to on-campus, remote and branch campus and distance education students within its ability to accomplish them.

5) The librarian-administrator should involve distance learning community representatives, including administrators, faculty, and students, in the formation of the objectives and the regular evaluation of their achievement.

Watson Library cooperates with the University's Department of Electronic and Continuing Education (ECE) to provide distance education students with necessary information resources. The ECE website links to the library's Distance Education Services webpage, as well as Watson Library's homepage and databases. Although the library does not currently publish DE goals and objectives, current consultation with ECE on their creation and routine evaluation will likely produce a partnership.

6) The librarian-administrator should assess the existing library support for distance learning, its availability, appropriateness, and effectiveness, using qualitative, quantitative, and outcomes measurement devices, as well as the written profile of needs.

Although the Office of Institutional Research provides the NSU Library system with library specific data from comparative schools, which does address several areas related to distance education, the library does not have an assessment in place to evaluate how DE students' perceive the support services provided to them. However, the present self-study will provide feedback in those specific library and information service areas and operations, which support distance education services, and provide insight, as well as advisory assessment and evaluation of services by a library consultant. Additionally, the Reference Department keeps statistics on e-mail reference questions, which will facilitate the assessment of distance support services.

7) The librarian-administrator should prepare and/or revise collection development and acquisitions policies to reflect the profile of needs.

The current collection development policy was revised in 1993, and although it does include provisions for collecting non-print and electronic

resources, the policy needs to be updated to reflect current collecting practices, as well as the needs of distance education courses.

8) The librarian-administrator should participate with administrators, library subject specialists, and teaching faculty in the curriculum development process and in course planning for distance learning to ensure that appropriate library resources and services are available.

Watson Library is cooperating with ECE on several projects targeting distance education. These include a web-based library tutorial, accessible to students on the library's website and via Blackboard; a three credit hour library science course, which will be included as the research component for a newly proposed minor in computer information systems; and a library podcast. (A podcast is a digital media file distributed over the Internet for playback on portable media players and personal computers.)

9) The librarian-administrator should promote library support services to the distance learning community.

NSU libraries promote remote access of library resources to all students. Services such as interlibrary loan, remote reference, and reciprocal borrowing for distance education students are emphasized. The library website features a webpage dedicated to library services for distance learners including electronic library user guides, a list of branch libraries, and helpful tips on how distance students can access library resources.

10) The librarian-administrator should survey regularly distance learning library users to monitor and assess both the appropriateness of their use of services and resources and the degree to which needs are being met and skills acquired.

The electronic library survey issued by the Office of Institutional Research is distributed by e-mail to all students with NSU e-mail accounts. The survey includes several questions pertaining to the remote access of library resources. In order to better identify the opinions of distance education students, the library might consider distributing a similar survey with additional distance education specific questions via Blackboard course software.

11) The librarian-administrator should initiate dialogue leading to cooperative agreements and possible resource sharing and/or compensation for unaffiliated libraries.

The NSU Library system is a member of LOUIS: The Louisiana Library Network consortium, which negotiates contracts, handles licensing, and gathers statistics for electronic resources. LOUIS offers both statewide and "A-La-Cart" purchasing options and provides software/system support in several areas including the integrated library system (ILS) and interlibrary loan (ILL).

Additionally, the library participates in the AMIGOS consortium and uses its membership privileges through AMIGOS to purchase electronic NetLibrary e-books. The NSU Library system participates in cooperative ILL services, which provide distance students with resources from all three NSU libraries as well as from other institutions. The NSU libraries are also a member of the Louisiana Academic Library Information Network Consortium (LALINC), which allows NSU students to obtain reciprocal borrowing privileges through other member libraries within the state. Additional services and special borrowing privileges, beyond the designated level of reciprocity, may be available for properly identified distance education students at the reciprocating library.

12) The librarian-administrator should develop methodologies for the provision of library materials and services from the library and/or from branch campus libraries or learning centers to the distance learning community.

NSU participates in LANTER a statewide courier service through the State Library of Louisiana. LANTER helps facilitate ILL services within the state. In addition to the three fully functioning NSU libraries located in Natchitoches, Shreveport, and Leesville, NSU students have access to a partnering library at the Learning Center for Rapides Parish (LCRP) in the Alexandria/CENLA area. LCRP provides a non-circulating collection including research, reference, and reserve type materials, along with computer access.

13) The librarian-administrator should develop partnerships with computing services departments to provide the necessary automation support for the distance learning community.

NSU's Student Online Support (SOS) help desk is available to students seven days a week. Spring 2008: Sunday · 2pm - 10pm, Monday · Thursday 8am - 8pm, Friday · 8am - 5pm and Saturday · 10am - 5pm. The SOS website offers telephone and e-mail help, as well as online tutorials to help students with common problems.

14) The librarian-administrator should pursue, implement, and maintain all the preceding in the provision of a facilitating environment in support of teaching and learning, and in the acquisition of lifelong learning skills.

NSU Libraries are dedicated to supporting the current and future needs of distance education students through the provision of physical and electronic resources, innovative library instruction and assessment, as well as cooperative agreements for shared resources and facilities.

Distance Education Finances

The originating institution should provide continuing, optimum

financial support for addressing the library needs of the distance learning community sufficient to meet the specifications given in other sections of these “Guidelines,” and in accordance with the appropriate ACRL Standards and with available professional, state, or regional accrediting agency specifications.

Although the NSU Library system does its best to support distance education through the implementation of services and the purchasing of electronic resources, the allocated library budget does not provide funding earmarked specifically for distance education; therefore, all monies used for the support of distance education are taken from the NSU Libraries’ book and continuing resources budgets. Because the institution’s budget is control by the State of Louisiana and the state has had budgeting issues for sometime, the NSU Libraries, as well as the entire institution is under-funded.

Distance Education Personnel

Personnel involved in the management and coordination of distance learning library services include the chief administrators and governance organizations of the originating institution and the library administration and other personnel as appropriate, the librarian-coordinator managing the services, the library subject specialists, additional professional staff in the institution, support staff from a variety of departments, and the administrator(s), librarian(s), and staff from the distance learning site(s).

The originating institution should provide, either through the library or directly to separately administered units, professional and support personnel with clearly defined responsibilities at the appropriate location(s) and in the number and quality necessary to attain the goals and objectives for library services to the distance learning program, including:

- 1) The institution should provide a librarian-administrator to plan, implement, coordinate, and evaluate library resources and services addressing the information and skills needs of the distance learning community.**

The NSU Libraries support distance education as best they can through a variety of services and resources; however, at this time, funding is not available to hire a Distance Education or Electronic Resources Librarian. Watson Library has a Reference/Library Instruction Librarian, who is responsible for distance education on a less than part-time basis. The NSU Libraries also employ professional librarians at the Shreveport and Leesville branch libraries, as well as an in-house webmaster at the Natchitoches location who maintains the libraries’ websites and the distance education webpage.

2) The institution should provide additional professional and/or support personnel on site with the capacity and training to identify informational and skills needs of distance learning library users and respond to them directly.

All professional librarians at Watson Library are responsible for multiple jobs; therefore, very little collaborative time is available to devote to distance education initiatives. There are no support personnel available to help with distance education responsibilities.

3) The institution should provide classification, status, and salary scales for distance learning library personnel that are equivalent to those provided for other comparable library employees while reflecting the compensation levels and cost of living for those residing at distance learning sites.

As mention previously, funding for a distance education or electronic resources librarian is not available at this time. However, the NSU Libraries have applied the additional positions.

4) The institution should provide opportunities for continuing growth and development for distance learning library personnel, including continuing education, professional education, and participation in professional and staff organizations.

NSU Libraries are normally able to provide some travel and continuing education funds to employees.

Distance Education Facilities

The originating institution should provide facilities, equipment, and communication links sufficient in size, number, scope, accessibility, and timeliness to reach all students and to attain the objectives of the distance learning programs. Arrangements may vary and should be appropriate to programs offered. Examples of suitable arrangements include but are not limited to:

1) The institution should provide access to facilities through agreements with a nonaffiliated library.

As mentioned previously, the NSU libraries are a member of the Louisiana Academic Library Information Network Consortium (LALINC), which allows NSU students to obtain reciprocal borrowing privileges though other consortia member libraries within the state. Additional services and special borrowing privileges, beyond the designated level of reciprocity, may be available for properly identified distance education students at the reciprocating library.

2) The institution should provide designated space for consultations, ready reference collections, reserve collections, electronic transmission of

information, computerized data base searching, interlibrary loan services, and offices for the library distance learning personnel.

The NSU Library systems' main library and branch libraries, as well as the LALINC reciprocating libraries and the LCRP partner library help provide distance students all over the state of Louisiana with access to physical library collections, reference resources, and reserves. All NSU students, faculty, and staff have remote access to the NSU Libraries' electronic resources including the library catalog, databases, e-books, online government documents, and ILL request forms.

3) The institution should provide a branch or satellite library.

NSU library system consists of three physical libraries with the main library located on the Natchitoches campus, one branch library located on the Shreveport Nursing campus, and the other branch located on the Leesville campus. Additionally, NSU has several continuing education sites including satellite sites in Jonesville, Jena, Coushatta, Vidalia, Winnfield, Many, Mansfield, Marksville, and Col. Some of these sites include computer and Internet access, as well as fully functioning distance education classrooms.

4) Virtual services, such as Web pages, Internet searching, and using technology for electronic connectivity.

The library maintains a library web page, which includes links to the OPAC, databases, and other electronic resources. All three libraries provide access to computers for conducting academic research. Additionally, some of the continuing education sites do provide Internet connectivity. With Internet connectivity, all NSU students and faculty can access all of the libraries' electronic resources, such as databases, e-books, user guides, etc., remotely from anywhere. However, the library is not an Internet service provider.

Distance Education Resources

The originating institution is responsible for providing or securing convenient, direct physical and electronic access to library materials for distance learning programs equivalent to those provided in traditional settings and in sufficient quality, depth, number, scope, currentness, and formats to:

- 1. Meet the students' needs in fulfilling course assignments (e.g., required and supplemental readings and research papers) and enrich the academic programs;**
- 2. Meet teaching and research needs;**
- 3. Facilitate the acquisition of lifelong learning skills; and**

4. Accommodate other informational needs of the distance learning community as appropriate.

When more than one institution is involved in the provision of a distance learning program, each is responsible for the provision of library materials to students in its own courses, unless an equitable agreement for otherwise providing these materials has been made. Costs, services, and methods for the provision of materials for all courses in the program should be uniform.

As a member of LALINC, the NSU Libraries are able to provide distance students and faculty who are not in proximity to the main or branch libraries with access to physical library collections. Many reciprocating libraries allow member institutions to place items on reserve for use by distance education students. Additionally, through the LOUIS consortium, the NSU Library system has been able to acquire access to a variety of electronic resources and databases, which can be accessed remotely by all NSU students and faculty. The library's website provides access to electronic library user guides, e-mail and telephone reference services, library instruction tutorials, and ILL request forms. Presently, the Reference/Library Instruction Librarian is partnering with ECE to create an online library instruction tutorial, which will be available on the library website for all students and can be linked to Blackboard courseware.

Distance Education Services

The library services offered to the distance learning community should be designed to meet effectively a wide range of informational, bibliographic, and user needs. The exact combination of central and site staffing for distance learning library services will differ from institution to institution. The following, though not necessarily exhaustive, are essential:

1) Reference assistance.

The library provides a toll free phone to make reference services available for distance students during normal operating hours. Reference assistance is also available via e-mail.

2) Computer-based bibliographic and informational services.

The NSU library catalog, the LOUIS union catalog, e-books, e-journals, electronic government documents, and databases can all be accessed remotely by NSU distance education students twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

3) Reliable, rapid, secure access to institutional and other networks, including the Internet.

Approximately 13 Internet equipped computer labs are available to distance students within the central and northwest portions of Louisiana. Outside of these labs, distance students are responsible for securing a computer with Internet access, as needed, to complete their course work. Once Internet connectivity is established, students can remotely access electronic resources via their My NSU account, Blackboard courseware, and EZProxy validation.

4) Consultation services.

Consultation services are available for distance students via e-mail or telephone.

5) A program of library user instruction designed to instill independent and effective information literacy skills while specifically meeting the learner-support needs of the distance learning community.

At this time the library instruction librarian is working on an online tutorial designed specifically for distance education students to explain how to use the online catalog and databases.

The library instruction librarian is also working on an online course that will be part of an interdisciplinary minor with Computer and Information Systems. This class will be available not just for students taking this minor, but also as an elective for anyone.

6) Assistance with and instruction in the use of non-print media and equipment.

Electronic library user guides, library instruction tutorials, e-mail and telephone reference, as well as the student help desk are available for distance education students who need assistance with electronic resources and equipment. User Guides can be downloaded from the libraries' webpage and as hard copy, are available at Watson Library and the branches in Shreveport and Leesville.

7) Reciprocal or contractual borrowing, or interlibrary loan services using broadest application of fair use of copyrighted materials.

Both LALINC services and ILL services are available for distance students.

8) Prompt document delivery, such as a courier system and/or electronic transmission.

The library uses a state-wide courier system, LANTER, for physical item delivery; whenever possible, electronic documents are sent directly to student and

faculty e-mail addresses.

9) Access to reserve materials in accordance with copyright fair use policies.

Faculty can use persistent links to full-text materials within Blackboard. The faculty member is responsible for copyright compliance; however, the library has a guide on copyright, which is available in both paper and online. A link to the American Library Association website on intellectual freedom is available under “useful links” on the webpage.

<http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=oif>

10) Adequate service hours for optimum access by users.

During regular fall and spring semesters, physical and telephone library services are available 80 hours per week.

11) Promotion of library services to the distance learning community, including documented and updated policies, regulations and procedures for systematic development, and management of information resources.

The primary means of promotion of library services is the library webpage. In addition, the library has made use of Messenger to send e-mails to faculty, staff, and student. The reference librarians distribute flyers on library instruction workshops at Blackboard instruction. Collapsible links to the library are included on the student portal. The library has also printed and distributed bookmarks to distance education.

The primary management “document” is the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP). The librarian-administrator should develop methodologies for the provision of library materials and services from the library and/or from branch campus libraries or learning centers to the distance learning community.

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