



Guidelines for Distance Learning Library Services

Approved by the Board of Directors, Association of College & Research Libraries, June 29, 2004

Introduction

Library resources and services in institutions of higher education must meet the needs of all their faculty, students, and academic support personnel, regardless of where they are located. This is the undergirding and uncompromising conviction of the "Guidelines for Distance Learning Library Services." The principle applies to individuals on a main campus, off campus, in distance learning or regional campus programs, or in the absence of a campus at all. The principle likewise applies to courses taken for credit or non-credit, in continuing education programs, in courses attended in person or by means of electronic transmission, or any other means of distance learning. The "Guidelines" delineate elements necessary to achieving this and the other closely related precepts provided in the Philosophy section.

Concern for ensuring the delivery of equivalent library services to college and university faculty, students, and other personnel in remote settings has indeed been the primary motivation for establishing and maintaining the "Guidelines," since their original inception in 1963, and throughout their more than four decades of revision, expansion, and use. These "Guidelines" have been under particularly frequent revision and expansion in the past decade.

Incentive to adapt and expand the "Guidelines" has stemmed from the following increasingly critical factors: non-traditional study having rapidly become a major element in higher education; an increase in diversity of educational opportunities; an increase in the number of unique environments where educational opportunities are offered; an increased recognition of the need for library resources and services at locations other than main campuses; an increased concern and demand for equitable services for all students in higher education, no matter where the "classroom" may be; a greater demand for library resources and services by faculty and staff at distance learning sites; and an increase in technological innovations in the transmittal of information and the delivery of courses. To these may be added shifts away from central campus enrollments, the search for more cost-effective sources for post-secondary education, and the appearance and rapid development of the virtual or all-electronic university, having no physical campus of its own.

The "Guidelines" are intended to serve as a gateway to adherence to other ACRL Standards and Guidelines in the appropriate areas and in accordance with the size and type of originating institution. The most recent editions of these Standards and Guidelines may be found at:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/standardsguidelines.htm>.

The audience for the "Guidelines" includes administrators at all levels of post-secondary education, librarians planning for and managing distance learning library services, other librarians and staff serving distance learning students or working with distance learning program staff, faculty, and sponsors of academic programs, as well as accrediting and licensure agencies.

Definitions

Distance learning library services refers to those library services in support of college, university, or other post-secondary courses and programs offered away from a main campus, or in the absence of a traditional campus, and regardless of where credit is given. These courses may be taught in traditional or nontraditional formats or media, may or may not require physical facilities, and may or may not involve live interaction of teachers and students. The phrase is inclusive of courses in all post-secondary programs designated as: extension, extended, off-campus, extended campus, distance, distributed, open, flexible, franchising, virtual, synchronous, or asynchronous.

Distance learning community covers all those individuals and agencies, or institutions, directly involved with academic programs or extension services offered away from a traditional academic campus, or in the absence of a traditional academic campus, including students, faculty, researchers, administrators, sponsors, and staff, or any of these whose academic work otherwise takes them away from on-campus library services.

Originating institution refers to the entity, singular or collective, its/their chief administrative officers and governance organizations responsible for the offering or marketing and supporting of distance learning courses and programs: the credit-granting body. Each institution in a multi-institutional cluster is responsible for meeting the library needs of its own students, faculty, and staff at the collective site.

Library denotes the library operation directly associated with the originating institution.

Librarian-administrator designates a librarian, holding a master's degree from an ALA-accredited library school, who specializes in distance learning library services, and who is directly responsible for the administration and supervision of those services.

Philosophy

The "Guidelines" assume the following precepts:

- Access to adequate library services and resources is essential for the attainment of superior academic skills in post-secondary education, regardless of where students, faculty, and programs are located. 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.
- The instilling of lifelong learning skills through general bibliographic and information literacy instruction in academic libraries is a primary outcome of higher education. Such preparation and measurement of its outcomes are of equal necessity for the distance learning community as for those on the traditional campus.
- Traditional on-campus library services themselves cannot be stretched to meet the library needs of distance learning students and faculty who face distinct and different challenges involving library access and information delivery. Special funding arrangements, proactive planning, and promotion are necessary to deliver equivalent library services and to achieve equivalent results in teaching and learning, and generally to maintain quality in distance learning programs. Because students and faculty in distance learning programs frequently do not have direct access to a full range of library services and materials, equitable distance learning library services are more personalized than might be expected on campus.
- The originating institution is responsible, through its chief administrative officers and governance organizations, for funding and appropriately meeting the information needs of its distance learning programs in support of their teaching, learning, and research. This support should provide ready and equivalent library service and learning resources to all of the institution's students, regardless of location. This support should be funded separately rather than drawn from the regular funding of the library. In growing and developing institutions, funding should expand as programs and enrollments grow.
- The originating institution recognizes the need for service, management, and technical linkages between the

library and other complementary resource bases such as computing facilities, instructional media, and telecommunication centers.

- The originating institution is responsible for assuring that its distance learning library programs meet or exceed national and regional accreditation standards and professional association standards and guidelines.
- The originating institution is responsible for involving the library administration and other personnel in the detailed analysis of planning, developing, evaluating, and adding or changing of the distance learning program from the earliest stages onward.
- The library has primary responsibility for identifying, developing, coordinating, providing, and assessing the value and effectiveness of resources and services designed to meet both the standard and the unique informational and skills development needs of the distance learning community. The librarian-administrator, either centrally located or at an appropriate site, should be responsible for ensuring and demonstrating that all requirements are met through needs and outcomes assessments, and other measures of library performance, as appropriate, and as an ongoing process in conjunction with the originating institution.

Effective and appropriate services for distance learning communities may differ from, but must be equivalent to, those services offered on a traditional campus. The requirements and desired outcomes of academic programs should guide the library's responses to defined needs. Innovative approaches to the design and evaluation of special procedures or systems to meet these needs is encouraged.

When resources and services of unaffiliated local libraries are to be used to support information needs of the distance learning community, the originating institution is responsible, through the library, for the development and periodic review of formal, documented, written agreements with those local libraries. Such resources and services are not to be used simply as substitutes for supplying adequate materials and services by the originating institution. The distance learning library program shall have goals and objectives that support the provision of resources and services consistent with the broader institutional mission.

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. 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;
2. prepare a written profile of the distance learning community's information and skills needs;
3. 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;
4. 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;
5. involve distance learning community representatives, including administrators, faculty, and students, in the formation of the objectives and the regular evaluation of their achievement;
6. 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. Examples of these measures include, but are not limited to:

a) conducting general library knowledge surveys of beginning students, re-offered at a mid-point in the students' careers and again near graduation, to assess whether the library's program of instruction is producing more information-literate students;

b) using evaluation checklists for librarian and tutorial instruction to gather feedback from students, other librarians, and

teaching faculty;

c) tracking student library use through student journal entries or information literacy diaries;

d) asking focus groups of students, faculty, staff, and alumni to comment on their experiences using distance learning library services over a period of time;

e) employing assessment and evaluation by librarians from other institutions and/or other appropriate consultants, including those in communities where the institution has concentrations of distance learners;

f) conducting reviews of specific library and information service areas and/or operations which support distance learning library services;

g) considering distance learning library services in the assessment strategies related to institutional accreditation;

h) comparing the library as a provider of distance learning library services with its peers through self study efforts of the originating institution;

7. prepare and/or revise collection development and acquisitions policies to reflect the profile of needs;
8. 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;
9. promote library support services to the distance learning community;
10. 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;
11. initiate dialogue leading to cooperative agreements and possible resource sharing and/or compensation for unaffiliated libraries;
12. 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;
13. develop partnerships with computing services departments to provide the necessary automation support for the distance learning community; and
14. 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.

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. This financing should be:

1. related to the formally defined needs and demands of the distance learning program;
2. allocated on a schedule matching the originating institution's budgeting cycle;
3. designated and specifically identified within the originating institution's budget and expenditure reporting statements;
4. accommodated to arrangements involving external agencies, including both unaffiliated and affiliated, but independently supported, libraries;
5. sufficient to cover the type and number of services provided to the distance learning community; and
6. sufficient to support innovative approaches to meeting needs.

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. a librarian-administrator to plan, implement, coordinate, and evaluate library resources and services addressing the information and skills needs of the distance learning community;
2. 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;
3. 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; and
4. opportunities for continuing growth and development for distance learning library personnel, including continuing education, professional education, and participation in professional and staff organizations.

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. access to facilities through agreements with a nonaffiliated library;
2. designated space for consultations, ready reference collections, reserve collections, electronic transmission of information, computerized data base searching and interlibrary loan services, and offices for the library distance learning personnel;
3. a branch or satellite library; and
4. virtual services, such as Web pages, Internet searching, and using technology for electronic connectivity.

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.

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;
2. computer-based bibliographic and informational services;
3. reliable, rapid, secure access to institutional and other networks, including the Internet;
4. consultation services;
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;
6. assistance with and instruction in the use of nonprint media and equipment;
7. reciprocal or contractual borrowing, or interlibrary loan services using broadest application of fair use of copyrighted materials;
8. prompt document delivery, such as a courier system and/or electronic transmission;
9. access to reserve materials in accordance with copyright fair use policies;
10. adequate service hours for optimum access by users; and
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.

Documentation

To provide records indicating the degree to which the originating institution is meeting these "Guidelines" in providing library services to its distance learning programs, the library, and, when appropriate, the distance learning library units, should have available current copies of at least the following:

1. printed user guides;
2. statements of mission and purpose, policies, regulations, and procedures;
3. statistics on library use;
4. statistics on collections;
5. facilities assessment measures;
6. collections assessment measures;
7. needs and outcomes assessment measures;
8. data on staff and work assignments;
9. institutional and internal organization charts;
10. comprehensive budget(s);
11. professional personnel vitae;
12. position descriptions for all personnel;
13. formal, written agreements;
14. automation statistics;
15. guides to computing services;
16. library evaluation studies or documents;
17. library and other instructional materials and schedules; and
18. evidence of involvement in curriculum development and planning.

Library education

To enable the initiation of an academic professional specialization in distance learning library services, schools of library and information science should include in their curriculum courses and course units in this growing area of specialization within librarianship.

Revising the guidelines

Today's "Guidelines" are the culmination of the following series of documents, the first of which originated in processes initiated in 1963: "Guidelines for Library Services to Extension Students," 1967; "Guidelines for Extended Campus Library Services," 1981; "Guidelines for Extended Campus Library Services," 1990; "Guidelines for Distance Learning Library Services," 1998; "Guidelines for Distance Learning Library Services," 2000.

Why the short span from 1998 to 2000? The 1998 "Guidelines" were approved with the proviso from the ACRL Standards and Accreditation Committee (SAC) that efforts be undertaken immediately upon their final approval to make the "Guidelines" more outcomes oriented through a minor rhetorical revision that would not require as complete a subsequent approval process as would a more thorough revision. This minor outcomes revision was actually initiated during the 1998 approval process, when the Distance Learning Section (DLS) Guidelines Committee members began reviewing the draft document for possible outcomes additions and then Chair, Harvey Gover, Washington State University Tri-Cities, prepared an additional precept for the "Guidelines" Philosophy section acknowledging the importance of instilling lifelong learning skills through information literacy instruction for students in extended academic settings. With the approval of SAC, that precept was incorporated into the final draft of the 1998 "Guidelines."

The outcomes revision continued through Annual 2000, when it was approved by SAC and the ACRL Board of Directors. Those Guidelines Committee members who participated actively in the outcomes revision throughout this time included Committee Chair Jean Caspers, Oregon State University; and Geraldine Collins, University of North Florida; Linda Frederiksen, Washington State University Vancouver; Lisa Hinchliffe, Illinois State University; Mae O'Neal, Western Michigan University; Bill Parton, Oklahoma Tech University; and Bernie Sloan, University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign. Susan Maltese, Oakton Community College, then liaison from SAC to DLS, and Barton Lessin, Wayne State University, Chair of SAC, also contributed suggestions and guidance. Harvey Gover, DLS Chair and Consultant to the Guidelines Committee, monitored the entire outcomes revision process, and prepared the final revision draft submitted to SAC just prior to Annual 2000. The final revision draft was based upon a draft insert that had been prepared by Jean Caspers and submitted to the Guidelines Committee for review on June 6. Gover's final draft consisted largely of an incorporation of Caspers' insert throughout the entire 1998 "Guidelines" text and was forwarded to Susan Maltese on June 9 for submission to SAC.

During the approval process for the outcomes revision, it was suggested by members of SAC that the "Guidelines" introduction needed strengthening and recommended that an additional minor revision be prepared, rewriting the introduction. During the process of revising the introduction, it became evident that the Revising the Guidelines section would also require some corresponding strengthening and revision. These efforts were initiated and prepared by Harvey Gover, Washington State University Tri-Cities, Consultant to the Guidelines Committee, with input from members of the Guidelines Committee, Linda Frederiksen, Chair, Washington State University Vancouver; Betty K. Bryce, University of Alabama Libraries; Deborah F. Cardinal, WiLS OCLC; Catharine Cebrowski, ITESM – Tec De Monterrey; Geraldine Collins, University of North Florida; Marie F. Jones, East Tennessee State University; Melissa H. Koenig, DePaul University; Debra Lamb-Deans, Cornell University; and Bernie Sloan, University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign.

From the beginning, those undertaking preparation or revision of the "Guidelines" have sought the widest possible input from everyone involved in all aspects and on all levels of distance teaching and learning in higher education.

The decision to revise the 1990 "Guidelines" was made initially by DLS Guidelines Committee. Then the official mandate came from the DLS Executive Board at its final 1996 Midwinter meeting. The revision of the 1990 "Guidelines for Extended Campus Library Services," which produced the 1998 "Guidelines for Distance Learning Library services," was prepared by Harvey Gover, then Chair of the DLS Guidelines Committee. The revision was based upon input from members of the Guidelines Committee, members of the DLS Executive Board, the general membership of DLS, and other librarians and administrators involved in post-secondary distance learning programs from across the nation and around the world.

Members of the Guidelines Committee who initiated or contributed to the revision process for the 1990 "Guidelines" included: Stella Bentley, University of California at Santa Barbara; Jean Caspers, Oregon State University; Jacqueline A. Henning, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University; Sharon Hybki-Kerr, University of Arkansas, Little Rock; Gordon Lynn Hufford, Indiana University East; Ruth M. Jackson, West Virginia University; Chui-Chun Lee, SUNY—New Paltz; G. Tom Mendina, University of Memphis; Virginia S. O'Herron, Old Dominion University; Mae O'Neal, Western Michigan University; Bill Parton, Arkansas Tech University; Mercedes L. Rowe, Mercy College; Dorothy Tolliver, Maui Community College Library; and Steven D. Zink, University of Nevada, Reno.

Others outside the Committee who contributed significantly to the cycle of revision of the 1990 "Guidelines" included: Thomas Abbott, University of Maine at Augusta; Janice Bain-Kerr, Troy State University; Nancy Burich, University of Kansas, Regents Center Library; Anne Marie Casey, Central Michigan University; Tony Cavanaugh, Deakin University, Victoria, Australia; Monica Hines Craig, Central Michigan University; Mary Ellen Davis, ACRL; Tom DeLoughry, Chronicle Of Higher Education; Jill Fatzer, University of New Orleans, ACRL Board, Task Force on Outcomes; Jack Fritts, Southeastern Wisconsin Information Technology Exchange Consortium (SWITCH); Barbara Gelman-Danley of SUNY Monroe Community College, Educational Technology, and the Consortium for Educational Technology for University Systems; Kay Harvey, Penn State, McKeesport; Maryhelen Jones, Central Michigan University; Marie Kascus, Central Connecticut State University; Barbara Krauth, Student Services Project Coordinator for the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunication of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE); Eleanor Kulleseid, Mercy College; Rob Morrison, Utah State University; Kathleen O'Connor, Gonzaga University; Alexander (Sandy) Slade, University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada; Mem Catania Stahley, University of Central Florida, Brevard Campus; Peg Walther, City University, Renton, Washington; Virginia Witucke, Central Michigan University; Jennifer Wu, North Seattle Community College and College Librarians and Media Specialists (CLAMS).

Special recognition is due Virginia S. (Ginny) O'Herron who served throughout the cycle of revision for the 1990 "Guidelines" as both a member of the Guidelines Committee and as Chair of the ACRL Standards and Accreditation Committee (SAC). In this dual role O'Herron was instrumental in securing the placement of the Guidelines draft on the agendas not only of SAC, but also of the ACRL Board and the ALA Committee on Standards. In addition to her considerable contribution to the revision process as a member of the Guidelines Committee, O'Herron was then the primary facilitator of the final approval process.

Major portions of the input for revision of the 1990 "Guidelines" came from two open hearings: the first held on February 17, 1997, at the Midwinter Conference of the ALA in Washington, D.C. and the second on June 28, 1997, at the ALA Annual Conference in San Francisco, California.

In response to requests for revision suggestions—which appeared in widely read national academic and library publications, distance education listservs, through the DLS Web site, and print publications—numerous other individuals, consortia, and representatives of professional and accrediting associations provided information on their own efforts to ensure excellence of library services for post-secondary distance learning programs.

Among the groups responding were: the Canadian Association of College and University Libraries of the Canadian Library Association; College Librarians and Media Specialists (CLAMS); the Commission on Colleges of the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges (NASC); The Consortium for Educational Technology for University

Systems (CETUS); the Interinstitutional Library Council (ILC) of the Oregon State System of Higher Education (OSSHE); Libraries and the Western Governors University Conference; the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS); and the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE).