

inula notes

Indiana University Librarians Association

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"The Quality Factor: Information Support for Distance Education" a system-wide videoconference via IHETS, November 15, 1994 9:00 am - 11:30 a.m.

by Pat Steele

This videoconference is the result of system-wide planning directed at making IU Librarians aware of the issues immediately facing us in relation to distance education initiatives in Indiana. In her 1993 guide, Vicky York makes some excellent points about the critical need for library involvement to provide the uniformly high threshold of quality necessary for distance education. She states that, "One of the challenges to distance learning programs is to foster library and information literacy among off-campus students and to provide library resources that will allow them equivalent access to materials and services as their on-campus counterparts."

Courses are being presented throughout Indiana as part of the Indiana Partnership for Statewide Education. All IU campuses are involved in moving the agenda for distance education forward. Kathy Krendl, Dean of Continuing Studies is taking the lead for the system in this area. Library support has not been a viable component in planning to date. As librarians, we must interject ourselves into the process or risk being circumvented as distance education programs grow. If the information component is neglected or short-changed, the learners will pay the price.

An example of the ways in which the library support issue has drifted to the side is the fact that an IHETS

Technology Sub-committee was requested to form a library committee and to address the following charges:

- recommend criteria for library support
- recommend policies, procedures and strategies to meet the criteria
- recommend how student and faculty information needs can be enhanced by using electronic information resources and tools

The videoconference is designed to inform ourselves of the issues and ways to construct an appropriate information support system. Four speakers will present the morning video session: Dean Jim Neal, Dean Kathy Krendl, Sherrill Weaver (Walden Library Liaison) and Sarah Vaughn (Extended Campus Librarian for the University of Kentucky). These speakers will provide the theoretical as well as the practical focus on distance education support. Viewers throughout the eight IU campuses as well as Ball State University and Franklin College will have the opportunity to view and ask questions.

After the morning video session, there will be workshops on each campus. The purpose of this portion is to begin specific planning for library support on the various campuses. All campuses will work through a set of questions to direct thinking and planning.

Many universities are providing creative, pro-active support for distance education initiatives in their institutions. Elements in the service models out there include:

- appointed off-campus librarians
- access to library services from central remote sites, home or office, and public libraries, or other school and college libraries
- toll-free numbers to access library services
- electronic mail capability
- access to online library catalog and indices
- dial-in to local area networks
- access to state-wide library networks of public or academic libraries
- document delivery

These universities promote library services to students and faculty through a number of mechanisms, including:

- information included in instructor's class materials
- letters, brochures, and packets sent directly to learner
- video tape describing library services
- orientation sessions by librarian for students and faculty
- visits to faculty
- collaboration in course design

At Indiana University we need a commitment to integrate library services and resources into the distance education process. This means that planning, focused on learner needs and coordinated with faculty, must begin. Decisions about the Learning Center model being implemented by the Statewide Partnership must be made - What service can/should we provide? How can we assure equitable treatment? What service support configuration is feasible?

Answering such questions and ensuring the information component for the distant learner will mark the IU program as one of quality and equity. As library services reach beyond the library walls, quality services to the remote user, whatever the program connection, are not only possible but critical.

The November 15 videoconference, "The Quality Factor: Information Support for Distance Education", is co-sponsored by the IU Libraries and InULA. Members of the planning committee include: Barbara Fischler, Frances Livingston, Bob Moran, Dick Ardrey, Gino Brancolini, and Pat Steele.

Please check on your local campus to find out about both the location of the IHETS receipt site and plans for the afternoon session. On the Bloomington campus, there will be a luncheon session (in the Ground Floor Conference Room) immediately following the video portion (in room 174). Sherrill Weaver will be the Bloomington facilitator for the luncheon session.

Campus facilitators are:

- IUPUI - Janet Feldman
- IUK - Dick Ardrey
- IUE - Lynn Hufford
- IUSB - Jim Mullins
- IUSE - Nancy Totten
- IUPFW - Larry Griffin
- IUNW - Bob Moran
- IUB - Sherrill Weaver

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York, Vicky. *A Guide for Planning Library Integration into Distance Education Programs*. Boulder, Co.: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1993.

InULA Notes is a publication of the Indiana University Librarians Association. Letters and comments should be addressed to

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The Partnership for Statewide Education

by Kathy A. Krendl

Mission Statement

The partnership for Statewide Education will design and establish a cooperative system of educational program alternatives to serve Hoosier residents, business, and industries through the use of a wide array of distance education delivery systems, ranging from traditional print materials to computer conferencing and audiographics. The postsecondary institutions of Indiana are committed to this effort, which will require the coordination of institutional resources, programs, and instruction. The design of this system responds to the expanding needs within the state for universal access to lifelong education. The limitations of economic circumstances, family constraints, and employment responsibilities, in effect, close the doors of our postsecondary institutions to many Indiana citizens whose needs can be better addressed through the delivery of instructional content directly into the home, neighborhood learning center, or work environments. In designing this system, the Partnership adopts the position that the delivery of both degree and non-degree courses via technology and associated support services can provide a fully credible educational experience. Given this assumption, the Partnership will assess and evaluate distance education programs and courses to guarantee that the quality of the instruction delivered via technology will be equal to or greater than that of traditional postsecondary instruction.

General Background

With this mission statement as its guide, the seven public institutions of higher learning in Indiana launched a unique collaborative program in 1992 called the Indiana Partnership for Statewide Education (IPSE) which committed itself to delivering and supporting high-quality instructional programming and to equalizing educational opportunity for learners

throughout Indiana. Of particular significance in this undertaking is the additional commitment of the member institutions that courses offered by one institution will be transferable among partners.

By providing administrative coordination and course information, the Partnership avoids unnecessary duplication and ensures the availability of essential student support services. Services include general advising, help with registration, use of communication equipment, and access to library materials. Most IPSE courses are presently delivered via the Indiana Higher Education Telecommunications system (IHETS). In this system, one-way video, two-way audio classes are delivered via satellite from university campuses to local sites, usually "live" with the opportunity for interaction. The future is likely to include additional delivery options including cable television and computers utilizing the internet.

The Partnership's goals for 1994 include: 1) increased access by students throughout the state; 2) enhanced program and curriculum development; 3) extended inter-institutional collaboration; 4) improved student support; and 5) complete needs assessment. Among its accomplishments to date, students can now enroll in sufficient classes to complete an associate degree by distance education. In the next two years, more than 100 courses, leading to associate's, bachelor's and master's degrees will be available through IPSE.

The Partnership has the potential to have a major impact in the state. Indiana routinely ranks near the bottom of all national comparisons on educational achievement of its citizens. Its educational needs are profound. By providing educational opportunities throughout the state, the Partnership creates a gateway to higher education for people who would otherwise simply not be able to pursue postsecondary education.

for higher education in general.

Of course, the question is whether students will come. The preparation of Indiana's "electronic university" and the design and development of courses have been and will be expensive. IPSE cannot and should not long survive if the demand for its services is not there. Initial enrollment figures permit cautious optimism. In fall 1994, the Partnership experienced a 44 percent increasing enrollment in undergraduate courses over fall of 1993. Total increase, including undergraduate, graduate, and high school courses, was 53 percent.

The Learning Center Conference: The Nitty Gritty

A key component of the Partnership is the learning center. Located throughout the state both on university campuses and at many off-campus sites, the learning centers are designed to complete the IPSE promise of and commitment to universal access to postsecondary education. The Learning Center's function is to provide the student support services traditionally available to on-campus students and critical to student success.

Recently IPSE sponsored a one-day conference for learning center coordinators and university administrators for the purpose of clarifying the complex procedures involved in assuring a student anywhere in the state receives proper information, textbooks, and assignments in timely manner and receives proper credit when the course is completed. Participants included, in addition to learning center coordinators, registrars, bursars, financial aid counselors, and others. Topics covered included grades, fees, loans, enrollments, course scheduling, class rosters, and textbooks (ways to order, deliver, and pay for them).

To demonstrate the need for such a conference consider this: Student X enrolls at State University A to pursue a degree there and takes a televised course from State University B that will count toward the desired degree. However, the course, originating from State University B, has a different course name, amount of tuition fee

and semester attendance dates than University A. In addition, the student is unable to reach campus and enrolled a community-based Learning Center far from University A or B. How is the necessary information to be entered on the student's transcript? How does the instructor at University B (the course originator) learn of the existence of Student X who enrolled at a learning center as a University A student? How does Student X learn of the first assignment? How does Student X get course materials? How will the student's grade be generated? The complexity of the undertaking is considerable, yet if done properly, Student X will be able to pursue a degree otherwise inaccessible to her.

Library Services

Noticeably absent in this discussion of the Partnership, and particularly of its student support services arm, the Learning Centers, is the critical role of university, school, and public libraries in providing distance education students with a complete educational experience. This is not because the Partnership does not understand the importance of library services for postsecondary students. The problem has been that the special challenges of getting this kind of service to students is in itself almost as complex as organization of the original Partnership. However, we remain committed to providing a complete service. We know that many librarians agree with us that access to libraries is critical to a high-quality learning experience. It is time to tackle this issue. Together we must use the technology available to bring the library to the students in much the same way as we have brought the rest of the university to them.

Members Welcome!

InULA welcomes new members anytime throughout the year. If you're interested in joining, contact Maggie Harter, Kinsey Institute Library, IUB (email: harterm@indiana.edu)