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DISTRIBUTED LEARNING  
AND  
INSTRUCTION AND REFERENCE SERVICES

On January 07, 2002, a meeting was held to discuss the impact of distributed learning on the Library's reference and instruction services. Attended by 22 library staff, the goal was to explore the role of instruction and reference services in supporting faculty and students who are involved in technology-mediated instruction. This document summarizes the issues discussed during this meeting and includes a number of recommendations as suggested next steps.

WHAT ARE THE REFERENCE AND INSTRUCTION SERVICES THAT WE CAN OFFER TO FACULTY WHO ARE USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES TO ENHANCE THEIR TEACHING?

Currently, there are several library services being offered or developed by reference divisions, including webliographies and course web pages with links to various library resources. The O/K/U Reference is experimenting with 24x7 live chat reference. The Law Library places e-reserves on their website as a standard service, including information about other Law Library services. Vet Library will make exams available online via the Library Web site. As our suite of supporting services grow, we need develop a strong public relations program to inform faculty of the existing and upcoming services. We also need to clarify what services are offered and not offered to faculty and students.

It will be useful for library staff to know more about the use of digital resources in teaching. For example, we'd be better prepared if we knew ahead of time what assignments faculty give to their students that require digital resources.

WHAT ARE THE REFERENCE AND INSTRUCTION SERVICES THAT WE CAN OFFER TO DISTANCE LEARNERS?

The continuing education students (residential or distance) who are taking courses through the School of Continuing Education or other Cornell divisions need quick orientations as they usually have limited time. We can accomplish this goal through virtual library tours, welcome letters targeting continuing education students, and also by providing students with links to websites in the public domain.

WHAT ARE THE RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS OF DISTRIBUTED LEARNING SERVICES?

There is a growing need for personalized, one-to-one consultancies for faculty. A successful example is demonstrated by the Law Library, which assigns library liaisons for each faculty member to support the development of webliographies and other course-support services. This is an ideal model, nevertheless difficult to achieve for Cornell libraries with higher faculty-to-librarian ratio. The O/K/U Reference targets new Arts & Sciences faculty in their approach. We may need to broaden our consultancy pool by exploring the role of other library staff as library liaison, such as collection development librarians.

WHAT KIND OF SKILLS DO WE NEED TO SUCCESSFULLY ASSIST FACULTY IN THEIR DISTRIBUTED LEARNING PROJECTS?

We need to find ways to better implement what we are learning in workshops. It is important that the new skills we acquire through our continuing education efforts are integrated into our core skill sets. It is increasingly becoming hard to be jack-of-all-trades. We need to develop a more systematic approach, which allows us to specialize in certain service areas and rely on each other's expertise in design, development, and implementation. It may be useful to maintain an inventory of staff skills and expertise.

Usability and interface design are highly specialized areas and it is important to develop skills in these areas. As we are often involved in creating Web pages, it will be useful for us to gain a better understanding of instructional design principles so that we are developing systems that support teaching and learning.

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Outcome oriented service delivery model is another issue to consider. For example, in terms of instruction, we need to be able to determine the goal of an assignment, resource and format requirements, and need for contact information or online help (e.g., video demo).

#### HOW CAN WE BETTER PROMOTE OUR DISTRIBUTED LEARNING SERVICES TO FACULTY?

We should explore creative and efficient channels to publicize our services. For example we may build on our traditional services, such as course reserve letters, for this purpose. We may publicize other library services in the course reserve letter that is regularly sent to faculty at the beginning of the term. This would also facilitate the building of a stronger relationship between access and reference services.

One of our key obstacles is the faculty's time limitation. Some of them would love to use our services but do not have time. We need to identify ways to link the library services to instruction without requiring much time commitment from faculty. For example, it would be useful to have a "procedural way" of linking the library to distributed learning courses, such as using the External Links section of CourseInfo.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a comprehensive and systematic publicity policy to inform faculty of our reference and instruction services that would support their distributed learning projects. The role of CUL in these areas is further articulated in the following tutorial:  
<http://www.library.cornell.edu/DL/tutorial>
- Work closely with ATC in developing procedures to systematically include the CUL services and programs in CourseInfo. Develop a set of minimal library resources that should be linked to course Websites.
- Examine the Cornell libraries' current faculty liaison programs and personalized consultancy services to evaluate their effectiveness in meeting the new needs. Consider broadening the consultancy team beyond reference and instruction staff to deliver a more customized approach.
- Continue supporting faculty using various modes of assistance (online help, face-to-face consultancies, online interactive tutorials, general workshops, course-related library instruction, etc.) to meet their varying needs.
- As 24x7 access becomes ubiquitous, provide users with updates on any expected service interruptions in advance (e.g., let users know if ILL service will be down during the winter break).