
Introduction

WILLIAM AGUILAR AND MARIE KASCUS

DURING THE LAST DECADE, observers of academic trends may have noticed a definite increase in the number of off-campus sites and educational programs across the country. The rationale for this increase, however, varies from one location to another.

On the East Coast, for example, demographic patterns reflect a diminishing population in the eighteen to twenty-two year old category. A consequence of this trend is that enrollment at many eastern campuses is constant or declining. One strategy for counteracting this decline and balancing the enrollment scale is to provide off-campus educational programs that tap a new market of potential students. On the West Coast, the proliferation of off-campus programs is more often motivated by over-enrollment at existing institutions in conjunction with the burgeoning of whole new communities that lack educational facilities. The accelerated rate of growth has often taxed academic institutions to the limit of their resources so that the establishment of off-campus programs provides a viable solution to their immediate needs. This is an instance of a win-win situation, for very different reasons, however, than the East Coast one. On the East Coast, the underlying assumption is that education can be tailored and packaged for the end-user as part of a broader educational mission that includes community outreach. In effect, off-campus sites and educational programs here become a win-win situation in which both the academic institution and the community benefit mutually from the arrangement.

It is clear, however, that the establishment of off-campus programs is not motivated solely by demographic patterns or overloaded facilities. Many other factors can and do influence the decision-making process that provides the rationale for an expanded campus. Such factors, to cite just a few examples, include the application of political pressure by those with political leverage; the recognition that not all potential students can afford full-time status or are willing to make long-distance commutes to acquire an education; and the realization that there are needs to serve those populations that are geographically isolated. Perhaps the single most influential factor in the recent expansion of off-campus programs is the impact of technology.

Given these and other evolving conditions, the expectation is that the number of off-campus sites will continue to grow and that the plateau for this growth has yet to be reached. Educational programs located at off-campus sites are considered to be a good way of predicting the probability of success for full-fledged academic institutions. If off-campus program sites are well attended, there is a greater likelihood that a permanent educational facility will flourish at that location. The value and potential of off-campus education for solving problems related to changing demographic patterns, for responding to the educational needs of a different student population, and for overcoming institutional constraints are immense.

The increase in this type of programming is not without its critics or its problems. The issues facing administrators are many and complex and range from the philosophical to the pragmatic. Something as elementary as a workable definition of distance learning has yet to be agreed upon. While the threshold for distance learning may be defined in Australia as over 500 miles, that definition is not relevant to large metropolitan areas where travel of more than 30 miles may be impractical if not impossible. The most basic concern is the compatibility of such programs relative to the educational mission and objectives of the institution involved. There is an ongoing debate in academe about the quality of off-campus education, and equity remains one of the most pervasive and difficult dilemmas to resolve. How does an academic institution ensure that the education delivered to students at remote sites is equivalent to the education delivered on the main campus? Assurances must be given to students, faculty, and governing boards as well as licensing and accrediting bodies. Equally important is how does an academic institution ensure that an off-campus program does not become a parasite usurping local resources and thereby diminishing the quality of instructional programs on the main campus?

Central to this discussion is the need to provide library services and to deliver resources to students and faculty participating in these programs. The principle that library services and resources are an integral component of higher education is one that is rarely challenged; however, it is often circumvented. This can be particularly true with off-campus programs. Administrators face difficult decisions in choosing what level of services to provide to support students and faculty participating in these programs. The issue of level of services is resolved differently by each academic institution providing off-campus programs and is primarily decided by the financial resources committed, the attitude of administrators, and the creativity of librarians. Given the high cost of building and maintaining libraries in terms of physical plant, books, periodicals, reference materials, and staff, the reality is that few off-campus programs have the financial resources to equip and staff libraries at levels recommended by regional licensing and accrediting bodies. At issue is whether access to information is sufficient, or whether access is part of a larger issue that considers library use and academic research both as forms of education in themselves and as elements of the outcome measures that determine the success of academic programs.

Even though students enrolled in off-campus programs receive the same degree as on-campus students, participants and observers are concerned about the quality of the education received. Critics of off-campus programs cite instances where students are left to fend for themselves in gaining access to the information and resources needed to complete assignments. There is a further concern that some academic institutions are benefiting from the services, resources, and staff of other libraries without acknowledging or compensating them. Critics also cite instances where instruction is packaged in such a way as to require little more than a basic textbook to complete the course. The concern is that students are being spoon-fed and are not rigorously challenged. These concerns are raised most frequently by observers and participants who feel that library use and academic research are an integral component of the educational process. They are concerned that off-campus students denied the opportunity of exploring the full range of library resources available to their on-campus counterparts may not become information literate in the process, so that, while they receive the same degree, they may not have received the same quality of education.

Librarians have traditionally operated under a set of guidelines wherein the information seeker comes to the library to use resources in multiple formats. Academic administrators and librarians sensitive to the issues outlined earlier have recognized that traditional modes of library access are not wholly relevant to programs at a distance.

Since students are unable, in many instances, to access readily central library resources, and institutions find it impossible to finance, equip, and staff off-campus facilities at desired levels, innovative approaches to the delivery of library services are necessary to resolve adequately the problem of access. In the more successful off-campus programs, administrators and librarians have been creative in devising and implementing alternative ways of providing library resources and services to support students and faculty at remote sites. Examples of innovative library practices include on-site bibliographic instruction, database searching from remote terminals, telefacsimile, reference service via a toll free number, and contracts with other libraries to provide services.

The underlying assumption is that education does not always take place within the confines of a classroom. The objective should be one of developing academic programs that are intellectually sound, that do not diminish standards, and that are sufficiently flexible to make them attractive to both students and institutions. The guiding philosophy in embarking on this special issue of *Library Trends* is that library service is a critical component of quality education regardless of whether the instruction takes place on campus or off campus. While there is a plethora of activity in off-campus library services, most efforts have been localized, nonsystematic, reported outside the traditional library literature, and have not fully capitalized on the international experience in this area. The intention in this issue is to present a state-of-the-art review of the delivery of services and resources to sites located at a distance from the main academic campus, exploring many issues and problems relevant to the delivery of off-campus library services. This issue is organized into five sections: introduction and overview of the topic, standards and accreditation, model programs, international programs, and technological applications.

In the area of standards, there is an ongoing discussion within academia as to whether or not the *ACRL Guidelines for Extended Campus Library Services* should be converted from guidelines to standards. In her article, Lynn LaBrake-Harrison concludes that "the time is not yet appropriate for the development of standards in lieu of ACRL guidelines." The recently strengthened ACRL guidelines are considered to be a good interim solution, and it is expected that they will adequately serve the needs of the extended campus library services community for the next five years.

Howard Simmons has extensive experience with accreditation issues and is well positioned to comment on the application of standards to off-campus programs. He suggests that, all too often, the basis for establishing off-campus programs is rooted in a need

for additional revenue and not a sense of expanded mission or service. External pressure from accrediting agencies may well be the only real leverage which holds academe accountable for these programs.

In the area of model programs, Barton Lessin compares four different models, each successful in its own way, as solutions to the problem of delivering library services at a distance. One of the models is of particular interest since many of its programs are located outside the United States. A second model is noteworthy because of its heavy reliance on technology. A third model addresses and solves the problem with the cooperation and assistance of public libraries. The fourth model is perhaps the most comprehensive example of off-campus library services at their best and a benchmark for other institutions to follow in planning library services at a distance.

Keenan and Power see the public library as a powerful ally directly and indirectly assisting academic institutions that offer programs at remote sites. They suggest that the role of the public library be openly acknowledged so that it can become a better utilized resource in meeting academic library user needs. This could be accomplished via a contract and financial reimbursement which both formalizes and gives recognition to what is already a silent partnership.

While one might assume that off-campus programs are a uniquely American phenomenon, the reality is that they are not. On the international scene, there are many good examples of a similar phenomenon with a longer history and a rationale that has more to do with vast geographic expanses rather than limited physical facilities and human resources. Alexander Slade examines the status of off-campus education, discussing conditions and problems unique to Canada. Slade indirectly suggests that Canada must move forward with its agenda or be forced to turn to its southern neighbor for solutions. In defense of the Canadian initiative, however, large geographic divisions and a relatively small population create problems that have no parallel in the United States.

Raymond Fisher suggests that, while progress has been made to date in the United Kingdom, there is a long way to go before further improvement will be evident. Although the United Kingdom is much smaller geographically, the real barrier to progress seems to be entrenchment in academic tradition. In the United Kingdom, education for the masses is provided through the Open University, and the Open University has not placed a very high priority on library services and resources for its very diverse clientele.

One of the largest and most innovative programs anywhere is located at the University of South Africa. Willemse traces the history of UNISA and its strong commitment to supporting library services

and resources. Clearly this is a university that has adopted the posture that libraries are an integral component of its curriculum and course of studies. The rate of borrowing and lending to off-campus students is staggering, exceeded only by the university's willingness and desire to extend the boundaries of library service even further.

Australia, with a geographic span almost the size of the Continental United States and a population smaller than that of the state of New York, faces some difficult logistical conditions in the delivery of its off-campus programs. Historically, correspondence by mail has been the main vehicle used to reach isolated individuals interested in pursuing a college education. Recently, however, the Australian government has advocated amalgamation of academic institutions and is now calling for greater cooperation among them in providing distance education. To this end, it has identified eight Distance Education Centres which will receive government funding to develop, produce, and deliver off-campus courses. It has also proposed the establishment of a National Distance Education Conference as a coordinating body to monitor and review external studies nationwide.

Jim Healey is uniquely qualified to discuss off-campus programs both from a user's and a provider's perspective. As the Director of San Jose State University's (SJSU) School of Library and Information Science, Healey is clearly concerned with the pedagogical issues. Since SJSU offers an off-campus program in Southern California at California State University-Fullerton, Healey must also involve himself with the same mundane issues and logistical concerns facing other academic administrators. Ironically, however, SJSU is training information professionals who receive much of their support from a home campus which is hundreds of miles away. What will be the results? A group of professionals who are more sensitive to the problems? or, the reverse, We succeeded and so can you? Can library information professionals intellectually afford this type of program? On the other hand, the demand for information professionals in Southern California is high, the University of Southern California has closed its library school, and only UCLA offers such a degree locally. Will SJSU become the norm or at least a model to be emulated?

Technology is easily seen as a means of providing improved access and a quicker response time in meeting information needs. It is relevant to ask whether technology can in fact substitute for a body and if technology can bridge the gap of distance in a manner that is manageable and affordable. Kopp provides numerous examples wherein technology is currently alleviating problems of access at a

distance. He explores other applications of current and future technological developments which may have a significant impact on the success or failure of academic programs at a distance.

Academic institutions have established off-campus programs for a variety of reasons: to counteract the problem of burgeoning populations when funds are insufficient to build new campuses; to compensate for changing demographics and declining enrollments; to find new avenues of revenue enhancement; to respond to political pressure; to meet legitimate needs for populations that are geographically isolated; or to expand services to students and the community, to name a few.

The rationale for establishing off-campus programs may vary from one institution to another or from one country to another, but the problems encountered in administering such programs have much in common. Among the educational issues to be resolved are the need to overcome steadfast academic tradition and faculty reluctance to travel to distant sites; the need to ensure the quality of the instruction and the comparability of degrees; the need for accrediting and licensing bodies to provide regulations that ensure quality education without stifling creativity; the need to deliver library services to remote sites; and the need for the library community to develop standards for off-campus services.

In planning and implementing these programs, some academic institutions have devoted minimal resources and thought to the problem of delivering library services at a distance, while others have established library services as an integral component of the curriculum and as essential to the off-campus educational process.

Accrediting and licensing bodies are beginning to closely address the regulations as they apply to off-campus programs, and there is discussion within the profession as to whether the existing *ACRL Guidelines for Off-Campus Library Services* are adequate or whether the guidelines need to be upgraded to standards.

Solutions to the problems that are not attitudinal are being addressed largely through technological innovation. While technology is not a panacea for all the problems associated with distance learning, it can go a long way toward enhancing library access and document delivery. Emphasis on access through extended communication networks rather than ownership could contribute considerably to the potential of providing library services at a distance. Additional solutions to managing off-campus programs could come from establishing official alliances with local public libraries or other academic libraries which could acknowledge their assistance in serving the needs of off-campus students and compensate them financially for the potential drain on their staff and resources.

Bibliographic utilities might further extend the library's potential for serving users at a distance if their cooperation were solicited in helping networks of institutions that provide off-campus programs to share their resources in new and different ways.

There should be recognition, on the part of the library community as a whole, that off-campus programs are not just a passing phenomenon and may represent a viable model for the education of a new generation of students.

It is recommended that library educators take the lead in recognizing off-campus programs and delivery systems as a specialty area within the library science curriculum. Courses and workshops could then be developed to sensitize prospective librarians to the special needs of off-campus programs and enable librarians to assist college and university administrators in finding acceptable solutions to the types of education issues that must be resolved. By taking the initiative, library educators will be helping librarians to determine how best to deliver library services at a distance when faced with a growing body of information, rapid technological advancements, diminishing staff, and an eroding budget base exacerbated by inflation. At the very least, the inclusion of a course on off-campus library services within the curriculum of library schools could encourage research and scholarship and the creation of a body of literature that could be tested and used to improve the delivery of library services at a distance.

The potential of off-campus education is immense and the ability to provide library services at a distance poses both a challenge and an opportunity. Solutions to the problems created in the process of administering off-campus programs will only come with a heightened sensitivity on the part of library educators and librarians as to the special needs of faculty and students involved in off-campus programs. It is hoped that this issue of *Library Trends* will contribute in some small way to the heightening of sensitivity to the issues and problems inherent in the delivery of off-campus library services.