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## Off-Campus Library Services in Higher Education in the United Kingdom

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### ABSTRACT

THIS ARTICLE IS A CRITICAL survey of the library services currently provided for off-campus courses by higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. A short section on the general administrative and educational background of the main types of institutions—universities, polytechnics, and colleges of higher education—is followed by a definition and brief history of off-campus library services. The central part of the article consists of a description and assessment of the relevant library services offered by these bodies. Much of the material presented here is based on the results of a survey carried out in 1989. After a description of the Open University and its library support, the article concludes with a short summary of current practice and problems, a prediction of future developments, and some recommendations.

### HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM: ORGANIZATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

There are two main sectors in the system covering England, Scotland, and Wales (Great Britain). The first is the fifty “conventional” universities. Responsibility for distributing central government funds to this group lies with the new Universities Funding Council (UFC), accountable to the Department of Education of Science (DES). Also within this sector are the Open University and Cranfield Institute of Technology, which are funded directly by the DES. The two universities in Northern Ireland are funded directly

by the Northern Ireland Department of Education. The UFC was established in 1989 under the terms of the Education Reform Act (1988) as the successor to the University Grants Committee (UGC). Under the UGC there was a considerable expansion of the university system in the 1960s. Traditionally, universities have a large degree of autonomy, although the level of central government control is thought to have increased in recent years.

The other main education sector consists of polytechnics and colleges of higher education. Until 1989 this was regarded as the "public sector," as these institutions formed a part of the local government education service and were funded by local education authorities. The Education Reform Act, however, set up the new Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council, which (for England and Wales) is their equivalent of the UFC and under which they have become higher education corporations run by executive-style governing bodies. There are thirty polytechnics in England and Wales, and their equivalent in Scotland is the six central institutions, funded (as before) directly by the Scottish Education Department. There are fifty-four colleges of higher education in Great Britain and two in Northern Ireland.

Most of the polytechnics were established in the 1960s. They have developed substantial programs in mainly vocational subjects at both degree and sub-degree level, largely complementing the work of the universities. In educational terms, however, the distinction between universities and polytechnics has, in recent years, become less clearly defined. Most of the colleges of higher education were formerly (and many still are primarily) teacher training colleges having been restyled and renamed in the late 1960s and early 1970s in order to diversify.

#### OFF-CAMPUS PROGRAMS

Most of the off-campus education provision of these institutions, where it exists, falls under the general heading of adult and continuing education, since it is aimed mainly at working adults or other members of the general public. In universities the main providers have been, and still are, the extramural departments, previously funded directly by the DES but now funded by the UFC. This provision consists mainly of nonexamined "liberal" adult education. University continuing education as a whole has a higher profile under the UFC, but the main expansion currently is on campus in professional and industrial updating courses. The polytechnics and colleges have been more flexible than universities in their development of opportunities for part-time and modular study. Because of their links with industry and the professions, polytechnics are particularly strong in the

provision of sandwich courses, part-time day and evening courses, and short courses in general, both at degree and sub-degree level. Most polytechnics operate from multiple or split sites, and some of their courses are offered on a franchised basis at local colleges of education; the term *off-campus* is thus more difficult to define in this context. Similarly, many colleges of higher education are involved in open learning programs, in which students study more or less independently, mainly at home and at their own pace, and with a flexible timetable of attendance at college. Most also offer in-service training courses for teachers, which are usually a mixture of school-based and college-based learning. Although the term *off-campus* is only tenuously applied to these programs, it was decided to include them in the survey.

There are two other major programs which are relevant here. One is London University's External Degree Programme, begun in 1858. This is mentioned later in the context of universities. The other is the Open University, established in 1969. The latter has filled a large gap left by conventional universities, and it is now the main provider of distance teaching in higher education in the United Kingdom. It has a unique role in this context and is dealt with later in this article as a separate unit.

#### OFF-CAMPUS LIBRARY PROVISION: DEFINITION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The following definition of off-campus library services was adopted for the 1989 survey and is maintained here:

Library support provided by a campus library (either the main or a departmental library) for students who are enrolled on courses which involve either class meetings at a distance from the main campus, or independent study at home (distant education), or a combination of the two and who are unable to visit or use the campus libraries on a regular basis. The courses may be either award-bearing (certificated, degree, etc.) or non-examined liberal education. Courses held at branch campuses which have their own branch library are excluded.

In historical terms it is only the universities' extramural departments which have made any significant off-campus library provision in the United Kingdom in this century. The Open University's provision is in a different category, and London's External Degree does not have a specific library support service. Extramural courses, with the aim of extending the scholarship and resources of universities to the general public, were first developed in the late nineteenth century, and for many years a small number of universities (e.g., Oxford, Cambridge, London), often in collaboration with the Workers Educational Association (WEA), offered courses for the public in locations away from their main campuses. In the 1920s and 1930s,

library support for these courses, in the form of book-boxes—class collections (from which students could borrow) deposited on site for the duration of each course—came mainly from the Central Library for Students (this later became the Adult Class Department of the National Central Library, and now absorbed into the British Library Document Supply Centre), and also from public (mainly county) libraries. After World War II the provision of courses to students who were “outside the walls” greatly expanded and the extramural departments of universities were designated as responsible bodies, each with a clearly defined geographical area to serve. At that time most of the larger extramural departments set up their own libraries specifically to service these courses, as the scale of operations had outgrown the existing resources of the National Central Library and county libraries. These extramural libraries have largely continued the book-box system first developed in the 1920s, and they still constitute the main off-campus library provision in higher education.

### THE 1989 SURVEY

Apart from the work of extramural departments and their libraries (on which the Standing Conference of Extramural Librarians produces annual figures), little information has been available on a national scale about the off-campus provision and library support of other university departments and of polytechnics and colleges. The writing of this article provided an opportunity to obtain more detailed information by means of a survey. A questionnaire was issued to the relevant librarians in 200 higher education institutions (Harrold, 1989). Of its twenty-five survey questions, six related to the size and nature of institutions’ programs of courses, eighteen related to the nature and administration of the supporting library services, and one asked for general comments.

#### *Results of the Survey*

Of the 105 questionnaires sent to universities, 71 (68 percent) were returned; of the 36 sent to polytechnics, 24 (66 percent) were returned; and of the 56 sent to colleges, 37 (66 percent) were returned.

*The Size and Nature of Off-Campus Programs.* Perhaps surprisingly, only about half of the responding institutions claimed to offer a program of off-campus courses (Table 1). The number and distance of off-campus teaching sites also vary greatly with each institution (Table 2).

TABLE 1  
PROVISION AND TYPE OF OFF-CAMPUS COURSES

| Type of institution | Offer off-campus courses |    | Have separate external department | Have face-to-face teaching | Have distance teaching |
|---------------------|--------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
|                     | Yes                      | No |                                   |                            |                        |
| Universities        | 34                       | 37 | 26                                | 27*                        | 7**                    |
| Polytechnics        | 14***                    | 10 | 2                                 | 10                         | 4                      |
| Colleges            | 17                       | 20 | 1                                 | 14                         | 9                      |

\*These are predominantly the extramural departments.

\*\*These are predominantly the newer universities without extramural departments.

\*\*\*Three of these included "placement of sandwich-year students," i.e., students assigned to a place of work (and continuing to study) between their periods of full-time study.

TABLE 2  
OFF-CAMPUS TEACHING SITES

| Type of institution | No. of separate sites |       |       |       |     | Distance (in miles) of furthest site from main campus |       |       |     |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|---|-------|-------|-----|
|                     | 1-9                   | 10-19 | 20-39 | 40-59 | 60+ | 1-9   | 10-29 | 30-49 | 50+ |
| Universities        | 9                     | 2     | 2     | 3     | 11  | 1   | 3     | 5     | 18  |
| Polytechnics        | 9                     | -     | 1     | -     | -   | 4   | 2     | 1     | 4   |
| Colleges            | 16                    | 1     | -     | -     | -   | 3   | 3     | 5     | 6   |

The large number of locations which some universities use includes some very small centers (perhaps housing only one course a year in a small town or village) as well as some large adult education centers (many of which offer a large program in their own right). Of the polytechnics, only Lancashire has over twenty off-campus sites. The distances from main campuses are small by North American standards, but even twenty miles in the United Kingdom could represent a formidable obstacle to students if they were obliged to travel this distance to a class or library on campus.

The number of institutions offering award-bearing courses off campus is small but slowly increasing. However, the opportunities for adults to study off campus for a degree offered by a conventional university are still very limited. It is partly for this reason that London University's External Degree Programme continues to attract large numbers of students—in 1988-89 it had 23,778 first degree students (including overseas) and 788 higher degree students. But its emphasis is very much on independent study—students are largely left to teach

themselves. It is therefore neither classroom teaching nor distance education and strictly falls outside the definition of off-campus education provision.

The opportunities to study on a liberal (non award-bearing) course offered off campus by extramural departments are much greater. It is calculated that there is a nationwide total of over 200,000 students enrolled in about 10,000 off-campus liberal adult education courses (offered by universities) in any one year. Most of these courses consist of ten or twenty weekly meetings, and their subjects range from botanical sciences through literature and local history to theology.

### PROVISION OF OFF-CAMPUS LIBRARY SERVICES: CURRENT PRACTICE

#### *Universities*

Of the thirty-four universities with off-campus courses, twenty-seven provide a library service to support them. Of the seven which do not, only Stirling is currently formulating plans for providing one.

*Delivery of Materials.* Many off-campus students are busy people, with work and domestic commitments and without easy access to an academic library (or in some cases to any library). They therefore need to have the required books available where their classes meet. The book-box system exists to serve this need and is based on the idea of immediacy. Without this system most students would be unable fully to benefit from their courses. It has stood the test of time and is still the most popular method of supply—the library goes to the students rather than vice versa. Thus nineteen universities send core collections of books and articles to the class centers and deposit them for the duration of the courses for students to use. The scale of this operation is generally larger at those universities which have separate extramural libraries as Table 3 indicates.

Table 3 reveals that the collections of core materials sent out in this way are usually not very large. Since in most cases students rely heavily on these temporary “mini-libraries” for the materials they need, the provision should be far more substantial, and more resources should be put into the service. The dependence (in many cases) on the willingness of lecturers to transport collections as the main method of delivery is symptomatic of the low level of funding. Also symptomatic of this is the fact that at two universities the selection of books for book-boxes is made entirely by lecturers choosing books from the shelves (without a librarian’s involvement). At fourteen institutions, however, it is a librarian who selects (and

TABLE 3  
UNIVERSITIES' PROVISION OF OFF-CAMPUS CLASS COLLECTIONS (BOOK-BOXES)\*

| University | Has separate<br>extramural<br>library | Operates<br>from main<br>library | Average<br>number<br>of courses<br>supplied<br>per year | Average<br>number of<br>books in<br>each class<br>collection | Main method of delivery |          | Main method of<br>book selection |                                  |
|------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|-------------------------|----------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|            |                                       |                                  |   |  | Van                     | Lecturer | Librarian<br>with<br>booklist    | Lecturer selects<br>from shelves |
| Bath       |                                       | ✓                                | 1-9   | 1-19   |                         | ✓        |                                  | ✓                                |
| Birmingham | ✓                                     |                                  | 450   | 37   | ✓                       |          | ✓                                |                                  |
| Bristol    | ✓                                     |                                  | 180   | 34   | ✓                       |          | ✓                                | ✓                                |
| Cambridge  | ✓                                     |                                  | 250   | 38   | ✓                       |          | ✓                                |                                  |
| Dundee     |                                       | ✓                                | 1-9   | 1-19   |                         | ✓        |                                  |                                  |
| Durham     | ✓                                     |                                  | 46  | 38   |                         | ✓        |                                  |                                  |
| Glasgow    | ✓                                     |                                  | 34  | 10   | ✓                       |          | ✓                                |                                  |
| Kent       |                                       | ✓                                | 10-29   | 1-19   |                         | ✓        |                                  |                                  |
| Leeds      | ✓                                     |                                  | 155   | 31   |                         | ✓        |                                  |                                  |
| Liverpool  | ✓                                     |                                  | 124   | 46   | ✓                       |          | ✓                                | ✓                                |
| London     | ✓                                     |                                  | 450   | 38   | ✓                       |          | ✓                                |                                  |
| Manchester | ✓                                     |                                  | 103   | 26   |                         | ✓        |                                  |                                  |
| Newcastle  | ✓                                     |                                  | 90  | 38   | ✓                       |          | ✓                                | ✓                                |
| Nottingham | ✓                                     |                                  | 455   | 23   | ✓                       |          | ✓                                |                                  |
| Oxford     | ✓                                     |                                  | 180   | 42   | ✓                       |          | ✓                                |                                  |
| Sheffield  | ✓                                     |                                  | 170   | 50   |                         |          |                                  |                                  |
| Sussex     |                                       | ✓                                | 10-29   | 1-19   |                         | ✓        |                                  | ✓                                |
| Warwick    | ✓                                     |                                  | 163   | 20   | ✓                       |          |                                  | ✓                                |
| York       |                                       | ✓                                | 1-9   | 20-39  |                         |          | ✓                                | ✓                                |

\*In a very few cases the information requested was not given, and where a range of numbers (e.g., 1-19) is given, this is an answer taken from the questionnaire results while the specific figures are taken from the annual statistics produced for the Standing Conference of Extramural Librarians.

orders) books on the basis of a list compiled by the lecturer; this is a much more sensible arrangement as it is the librarian who has a long-term overview of past, present, and likely future needs. At five of these fourteen institutions there is a combination of the two systems.

Four universities provide some permanent core collections on site (where there is a continuity of subject provision from year to year). Only three universities—Cranfield Institute, Jordanstown (Ulster), and London (via its constituent colleges)—provide off-campus access to the catalogs of the central campus libraries. This is still a rare facility, and none of the extramural libraries yet has the resources for it. The University of London's central library is, in theory, available to all students of the university wherever they are registered. In practice this means that students at the university's constituent colleges and institutes can consult the university library's catalog at their own institution but would normally have to visit the library itself in order to borrow.

No library claims to use telefacsimile (FAX), or any technology, for either its main or its subsidiary method of document delivery to classes. With regard to delivery to individual students, nine universities lend books by post; the scale of this operation is very small—only Jordanstown supplies over 200 items a year in this way. There are no separate postal loan figures available for London external students.

*Library Organization and Other Services.* Of the twenty-seven universities providing an off-campus library service, fourteen have separate libraries for this purpose (see Table 3). Since all of these are the libraries of extramural departments, it may be concluded that a small program of courses does not justify a separate library to service it. However, none of the remaining thirteen has a separate budget for its off-campus service; this is a serious weakness, indicating a low priority. All the extramural libraries have their own regular budgets, although this funding has to include service to their on-campus courses and is generally inadequate for the purpose required. One big advantage of a specialized library is that a librarian is designated for the work. However, staffing levels are low. The number of professional librarians who have specific responsibility for off-campus library services is 0-0.5 at sixteen universities, 0.6-1.0 at eight universities, and 1.1-2.0 at two universities (Birmingham, London). This again indicates the low level of resources (in some cases almost nonexistent) which most universities are putting into this work.

Visits to off-campus centers by library staff are not made on a regular basis at any university. Library instruction to off-campus

students is given by only eight libraries (none of these the extramural libraries); in all cases this consists of lectures and displays given on campus when students visit the university. In no instances, therefore, are any students seen by a librarian in their own off-campus location. For the liberal extramural program it can be argued that the sheer number of courses, students, and locations makes such personal contact impossible. Clearly this lack of contact makes the regular evaluation of library services particularly important, especially in view of the very small number of librarians directly involved in this work. But only seven universities regularly review their service; in six of these the library evaluation forms a part of the course evaluation by lecturers so that student opinion is rarely sought directly. (Student opinion formed an important part of the survey carried out at Birmingham in 1987. A summary of the report of the survey was published in 1989 [Fisher, 1989]). At no university is a librarian involved in the academic planning and development of new off-campus courses but there are signs that this situation might improve with the introduction at many institutions of formal machinery for the maintenance and monitoring of academic standards.

Mention should be made here of some other library services which are related but which were strictly outside the scope of the survey. At most university medical schools, students spend some time away from their university at various hospitals as part of their course work; during these times they use the libraries of the hospitals and the postgraduate medical centers. In addition, most medical libraries provide a regional service and offer library privileges to members of their regional health authority who may work some distance from the university. Similarly most university education libraries offer membership to all practicing teachers who work in the surrounding area. Schools of education have developed their own courses for working teachers, and their libraries usually support these with a postal service to individual students together with interlibrary loan facilities. Some university departments have off-campus outposts to complement their work on campus. One example is Birmingham's Shakespeare Institute which has a major base at Stratford-upon-Avon; the latter has its own permanent core collection but is served primarily by the institute's library on the main campus.

#### *Polytechnics and Colleges*

Of the fourteen polytechnics with off-campus programs, only six claimed to provide library services to them. The usual arrangement is that courses are taught on the premises of other colleges, and students have access to these college libraries. In these cases the polytechnic will validate the library collections and services at the

local college, and some colleges also supplement these collections from their own stock. Only Wolverhampton sends core collections to the course meeting places. Three polytechnics, on request, send specific items to individual students at home but only on a small scale. No polytechnic has a separate library for off-campus courses. Only Birmingham has a separate budget for the service because it is for "self-funding full cost courses." Five polytechnics provide library instruction to off-campus students on a regular basis, mainly by on-campus lectures. Only two regularly evaluate their service as part of course evaluations by students.

Of the seventeen colleges with off-campus courses, thirteen claim to provide library services for them. Nine colleges deposit core collections (usually twenty to thirty-nine items) at the meeting place for the duration of the course, but none supplies more than nine collections a year. Two colleges have permanent collections at off-campus sites. All materials provided come from the main libraries' stocks. Four colleges provide access to campus catalogs at their off-campus sites. Only North Riding College has a separate budget. At Northern College (Belfast), the library buys multiple copies of books for the standard packages which the course director sends to individual students, and this is the only college to have a staff member with specific responsibility for off-campus services. Eight colleges regularly evaluate their service. Jordanhill College (Glasgow) planned to conduct a survey into the library needs of its distant students in 1989-90. It is remarkable that at five colleges (and at only two polytechnics and at no universities) a librarian is regularly involved in the academic planning and development of new off-campus courses.

### *The Open University*

In terms of the scale of operations, the off-campus work of polytechnics, colleges, and some conventional universities fades into insignificance when compared with the work of the Open University. In 1988, the latter offered a total of 140 undergraduate courses (in which 82,765 students were enrolled), 10 diploma courses (2,382 students), and various higher degrees (1,402 students in taught courses, 640 in research). What also separates the Open University from other institutions is that its entire operation is distance education—the whole country is its campus, and its headquarters at Milton Keynes houses only staff. All its undergraduate courses (and its nondegree continuing education courses for "associate students") are highly structured correspondence courses, based on learning packages, and include radio and television broadcasts. For its undergraduate courses, it operates a modular system with credits—six credits for an ordinary degree, eight for an honors degree—the 140 undergraduate courses

being made up of full- and half-credit components and involving four graded levels of study. This modular system is one which most conventional universities have only recently started to emulate.

Although the open university was a major innovation at its inception, it continues to experiment. A recent development is a new Master of Business Administration three-year course, and there are plans to move into new subject areas such as languages and environmental studies. Currently there are proposals to widen access by encouraging attendance by more ethnic minorities and working class students, and more women to science and technology courses.

The Open University is therefore open in the sense that it has broken down barriers to higher education. But it does not deal in open learning; once committed to a course, a student follows a closely controlled syllabus and course structure, carrying out regular assignments and keeping to strict deadlines. Apart from residential summer schools (at present compulsory), each student works individually at home with occasional meetings with tutors or counselors as required.

Students are therefore highly dependent on the smooth working of the system of correspondence (assignments and their assessment) and on the packages of prescribed learning materials. In another sense, however, they are independent in that they work as individuals and in some degree of isolation. And in the context of library use and library support, this sense of independence is actively encouraged by the university. How, then, is library support provided for Open University students in practice?

All students receive by post, packages containing correspondence texts, notes on broadcasts, and assignment questions. Before their courses start they are also sent a list of specific books which they are expected to buy, and a list of book dealers. For many courses at the "foundation" level it is not necessary for students to go beyond this material. For several courses (at all levels), however, additional lists of "recommended reading" are provided. The importance of these varies from course to course, but for some, and particularly at the higher levels, they are almost essential. It is especially for these items that students are encouraged to use their "local library" which in most cases will be a public library. New students are sent an "introductory library form," which they can use in order to discuss their needs in detail with their local librarian. Many higher degree students can use their nearest university library, but a fee is normally charged for membership.

This encouragement to independence in library use can result in problems for some students especially those living in remote areas—e.g., long and expensive journeys to libraries, inconvenient opening

hours, and interlibrary loan delays (Simpson, 1983, p. 108). These students cannot resort to their own university's library at Milton Keynes, whose purpose is to provide a service to academic staff (in respect to course production and research) and not to students. Rather, they can contact a counselor in their region who will arrange for the regional center staff to take up the problem with the local libraries on their behalf. The Open University is organized on a regional basis—there are thirteen regions, each with a director and a team of course tutors and tutor-counselors, and each region has within it several study centers. The main purpose of study centers (of which there are over 250) is to enable students to meet their tutors or counselors as well as other students; they are usually situated in local educational institutions and available to open university students on weekday evenings. Most of them hold complete sets of all current course units. Several also have computer terminals for use by students doing courses requiring a computer. But ultimately the heavy dependence on public libraries for most of the “wider reading” materials can prove to be a major weakness in the system for some students. More investigation of this problem is needed.

One direct service which students find useful is the Broadcast Programme Loan Scheme. This service, operated from the Open University's headquarters, provides loan copies of radio programs and certain television programs for home use. An indirect service is the publication of library use guides and literature on various subjects. These have been prepared by the Open University library staff and now number over sixty. The philosophy behind these guides is stated in the student handbook:

The use of libraries is a vital part of your education. The most important purpose of a university education is to teach you to think for yourself. This implies learning where information can be found and, in particular, how to use the literature of your subject effectively. If you do not have command of that literature you can neither extend your studies to fields not covered by the course nor keep abreast of new developments in the subject after the course is over. A real effort is needed to master the bibliographies, abstracting services, catalogues, indexes and other means which enable you to search the literature systematically. To help with this some courses include guides to the use of libraries and literature. (Open University, 1989, p. 6)

These guides are excellent for those students who have access to a good library, but they may add to the frustrations of those who do not.

Can the Open University serve as a model to others? It has already served as a model to many other countries which have set up similar institutions. It could also be a model to those conventional universities in the United Kingdom which are now planning to offer their own distance education courses, and especially in respect to course

preparation, structure, and presentation; credit transfer; and the delivery of essential materials. And its guides to the use of libraries and literature are a model which could be adopted by other universities for the benefit of their part-time and off-campus students. But there is still room for improvement in the context of wider library support for its undergraduates.

### GENERAL SUMMARY OF CURRENT PRACTICE AND PROBLEMS

Because of the complex structure of higher education in the United Kingdom, present provision of off-campus education is rather fragmentary. The only programs of any substance which genuinely fit our definition are those of university extramural departments. The library services supporting these programs have been, and still are, traditional in the sense that they consist mainly of book supply to classes, with a minimum of support from the new technology. But university extramural libraries operate these services with a minimum of funds and staff, largely because their work, in supporting liberal adult education, has been seen as peripheral to the main role of universities. In addition, the previously heavily subsidized liberal adult education programs now have to compete with the more lucrative vocational short courses. This is the climate in which off-campus library services, never given the priority which they deserved in the past, now have to be shown to be an essential component in the provision of university courses for adults. Librarians will have to look at the kind of service likely to be required over the next decade.

In comparison, the off-campus work of polytechnics and colleges is on a much smaller scale, but for this different reason it too has received only minimal attention from librarians. The Open University operates within strict financial constraints; in addition, with its lower level courses being largely self-contained, and with its policy of encouraging student independence in library use, it has found it unnecessary to devote large resources to a library support service to its undergraduates.

### NATIONAL GUIDELINES AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Because of the fragmentary nature of the work in the universities' context, and the low priority given to extramural libraries by many universities, the Library Association (1978) published some standards for these libraries in an attempt to focus the minds of the authorities on the need for improvement. This was the first attempt to quantify the resources required; previously, two descriptive pamphlets (Pritchard, 1961; Fisher, 1974) had been the only relevant publications of any substance. But the standards appeared just before a national

economic recession and were largely shelved as being too idealistic. The Library Association now favors guidelines rather than quantitative standards, and a general work (Fisher, 1988) has emanated from the work of its Sub-Committee on Adult Learning and Libraries. The aim now should be to produce more detailed guidelines specifically on the work of university extramural and adult education libraries but also taking in the role of university main libraries and other libraries in this context in an attempt to spell out the rationale behind the concept of library services to adult university students both on and off campus.

The time is right for universities to move more positively into the provision of off-campus part-time degree and diploma courses. This should be predominantly by traditional face-to-face classroom teaching, partly because this is what conventional universities are best at, but also because the Open University already provides highly structured distance teaching. But this move would require a firm commitment by universities to give proper library support. A start could be made now toward formulating such a commitment based on the existing work of extramural libraries and on new guidelines (as recommended above), but also involving closer coordination with the Open University and with the London University External Degree Programme. This coordination should be concerned with course provision as well as library support, with the objective of reaching a national system to replace the present fragmentation.

The Open University should also look at the library implications of its own plans to recruit more disadvantaged students to its courses. It is precisely such students who are likely to have the greatest difficulty in library use. Again, a commitment is needed for putting more resources than presently available into its library support system.

The strength of the polytechnics, in terms of library service, lies in their service to part-time (on-campus) students; in this respect they have shown more initiative and have now had far more experience than the universities. But, for our purposes, the most significant development is likely to be the imminent establishment of the Open Polytechnic which will be aimed at attracting new part-time students and which will provide open learning opportunities in association with work-based learning. It will consist of a consortium of all those polytechnics wishing to participate. At the time of this writing, the Open Polytechnic plans to produce and test materials in business, management, law, nursing, social work, and languages by September 1990 and to introduce degree courses over a five-year period. An element of off-campus or distance learning is likely to be involved. The establishment of the Open Polytechnic is likely to give polytechnic libraries an opportunity to extend their services to individual students

in the community. Exactly how this will be done remains to be seen, but the experiences of some of the educational consortia in North America (see, for example, Latham, 1987) should be taken into account.

As with polytechnics, the genuinely off-campus work of colleges is on a much smaller scale than that of universities. However, some have plans for expanding their distance-learning courses, and they will need additional resources and services for this. Jordanhill plans to survey the library needs of students on further education and other similar courses, possibly with a view to establishing a postal loan service. It is also establishing a computer system, and this will enable off-campus students to have online access to the library catalog via their local schools and colleges. This is one example of a college library taking positive action to help its distant students, and it is hoped that others will follow its example.

Consideration should be given to the setting up of regional libraries (cf. Fisher, 1971) to serve all off-campus students in a locality, or to the establishment of branch libraries at sites where there is a concentration of courses.

In all types of institutions the new communications technology should play a more important part. The United Kingdom is somewhat behind the United States in this respect. In due course, all off-campus sites and individual students should be computer linked to their main campuses for catalog access, information services, literature searches, and electronic mail. New teaching methods could include teleconferencing and domestic interactive video. These developments, however, should, in most cases, complement, and not be a substitute for, the traditional and well tried face-to-face teaching and the classroom book-box system.

The future therefore holds opportunities for some exciting developments in this area of library services involving a combination of innovation and tradition. Librarians should take up the challenge and produce some wide-ranging national guidelines applicable to all types of higher education libraries similar to those of the United States' Association of College and Research Libraries (1982).

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