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Not Always a Straight Line: Connecting Information-Literacy Instruction to Online Students

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Not Always a Straight Line: Connecting IL Instruction to Distance and Online Students

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Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge that this conference is taking place on unceded ancestral land of the Musqueam people.

As a US-American I work on ceded land of the Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota peoples.

I honor those people's elders and the rising voices of their youth.
Distance education trends

• Online education represents a significant trend within higher education in both Canada and the United States.

• In Canada “90% of universities and 80% of colleges offer distance education... [and] 98% of the institutions offering distance education offer online courses” (Usher, The Advance of Online Education in Canada, 2018).

• In Canada “online enrolments have expanded at a rate of 10%-15% per annum over the last five years; online learning now constitutes between 12%-16% of all post-secondary teaching for credit” (Bates, Results from the Canadian Survey of Online Learning Now Available, 2017).

• US distance-education grew from 8% of undergraduate courses in 2000 to 59% in 2016 (National Center for Educational Statistics, Distance Learning, 2018).

• 33% of US students are enrolled in at least one online course (NCES, 2018).*

• Higher education in both countries offers degrees obtainable entirely online.

*There are difficulties in obtaining reliable online course enrollment data for Canada; most institutions are not systematically tracking this, and there are variations among provinces.
Why the increase in distance/online education?

• For students
  • Increased educational access and opportunities
  • Greater convenience, choice, and flexibility
  • Easier combination of work and learning

• For institutions
  • Diversity/equity/inclusivity initiatives
  • Financial advantages/efficiencies
  • Increased enrollments

• More innovative teaching
Online and distance education in our context

The University of South Dakota (USD) has 40 distance and online degree programs.

• F2F students at satellite campus
• Off-site online students

In addition, on-campus students can register for online sections of many courses.

• Freshman Composition
• Advanced Writing
  • Advanced Composition
  • Business Writing
  • Creative Writing
• Public Speaking
USD developmental IL program - example

• Freshman English composition – on campus
• Hybrid instruction
  • Flipped instruction: online lessons & exercises
  • Two embedded F2F assignment-focused instructional sessions
    • Synthesis essay – keyword searching
    • General research paper – subject-term searching
• Instructional goals
  • Instrumental
  • Relational
Librarian’s perspective: Sustainability and scalability of distance and online instruction

Students at satellite campus
- complete the online lessons & exercises
- receive only one F2F instructional session

Time spent on travel versus teaching
- on-campus librarians travel two hours for an hour of instruction
- absence from on-campus instruction & other professional activities

Online distance-education students
- might complete the online lessons & exercises
- receive no F2F instruction

Librarian availability vs. 24/7 online learning context
Summing up

• **Distance students** at satellite campuses or in online-only courses **do not receive comparable instruction** to on-campus students.

• Reduced IL/research skills **disadvantages** these students and **complicates inclusivity efforts**.

• Lesser/reduced services can lead to **disconnect from USD** as students’ home university.
ACRL’s Standards for Distance Learning Library Services (2016)

ACRL’s “access entitlement”

“All students, faculty members, administrators, staff members, or any other members of an institution of higher education are entitled to the library services and resources of that institution, including direct communication with the appropriate library personnel, regardless of where they are physically located in relation to the campus; where they attend class in relation to the institution’s main campus; or the modality by which they take courses. Academic libraries must, therefore, meet the information and research needs of all these constituents, wherever they may be.”
“Library requirements”

• **Instruction:** The library must provide information and digital literacy instruction programs to the distance learning community in accordance with the ACRL standards and other ACRL documents relating to information literacy. The attainment of lifelong learning skills...is a primary outcome of higher education, and as such, must be provided to all students.

• **Direct Human Access:** Library personnel must be made directly available to the distance learning community through instruction, interaction, and intervention in the provision of library services...particularly electronic resources requiring computer and digital literacy, and information literacy skills.

• **Availability for All Users:** 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, both current and anticipated, are encouraged.
ACRL’s “Bill of Rights for the Distance Learning Community”...sustainability and creativity

...existing on-campus library services and personnel cannot simply be stretched in an attempt to meet the library needs of the distance learning community without any additional investment.

Special funding arrangements, specialized staffing, 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.
Services for Distance Learners

The University Libraries are committed to providing high quality library services to all USD students and faculty. This mission includes USD off-campus students. You can take advantage of our specialized liaison services no matter where you are. Meet your library liaison and schedule a consultation (including online consultations) to receive personalized help.

- Meet your library liaison / request a research consultation appointment
- Reference assistance: Use our Ask-A-Librarian services

Access University Libraries Resources from Off-Campus

You have access to library services and resources (including e-books, full text articles and much more) without a trip to the library.

Just go to University Libraries to access resources for your research, when prompted, log in using your user ID name and password (the same as your USD email and any USD).

For more information about or help with your user ID name and password, contact the ITS Help Desk.

Library Services

Faculty, staff and students currently enrolled in or employed by a USD distance education program are eligible for the same services as other USD faculty, staff and students. This includes Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery Services (ILLiad).

- Interlibrary Loan Services
- Document Delivery Services
- Borrowing Library Materials
- Renewing Library Materials

Research Guides and Tutorials

University Libraries librarians have developed specialized Research Guides and tutorials to support research in almost every discipline. Try a guide to get started with your research.

- Research Guides
  Not sure where to start? Try a research guide.
- How do I...
  Tutorials and guides covering important library services and research skills
Having access isn’t enough

Current thinking about distance-learning services focuses on student-driven use of accessible resources with little or no instruction.

Having access doesn’t mean students learn or know...
• what resources they can/should use,
• where to find those resources, and
• how to use them.

That’s why IL instruction is required for writing and speaking skills courses at USD.

And more generally...
Call to action

Teaching critical-thinking literacies, including IL, is everyone’s responsibility.

Equal access to critical-thinking literacy instruction is everyone’s right.

What “proactive planning,” “innovative approaches,” and “direct human contact” can promote scalable, sustainable IL instruction in distance/online education?

Train the trainer!
Communication model: Network theory

Individual

Strong ties

Weak ties

Absent ties
Strong ties vs. weak ties (Granovetter, 1973)

Strong ties = closer, more direct relationships

Friends

Weak ties = more distant, less direct relationships

Friends of friends
On-campus teaching: strong vs. weak ties
Distance education/online teaching

Instructor

Student

Student

Student

Librarian

Student

Student

Student
Library liaison-instructor relationships

Librarian

Instructor

Instructor
Proposed Train-the-Trainer model

Librarian - Instructor - Student

Student

Student
Teaching flows along strong ties

- Librarians teach IL pedagogy and research resources to instructors.
- Instructors teach IL skills and research resources to their students.
- Instructors support their students’ research.
- Librarians support instructors’ teaching and back up instructors’ research support.
- Students learn IL skills and resources from their instructors.
- Students can access librarians when they are available if needed.
Advantages for students

• They receive IL instruction and support from someone
  • with whom they have a relationship.
  • who is directly available.
• They receive IL instruction and support
  • at point of need.
  • that is assignment-focused.
Advantages for instructors

- **Greater control** over curriculum, teaching, and assessment
- Increased **ability to help students** at point of need
- **Training and support** from an IL teaching and assessment expert
  
  [http://libguides.usd.edu/instructors_il_guide](http://libguides.usd.edu/instructors_il_guide)
- **Collaboration** with librarians in the creation and assessment of research-based assignments
- **Membership** in a community of practice
- Greater **self-efficacy** and **employability**
Advantages for librarians

- **Sustainability and scalability** of distance/online instruction
- **Increase** in numbers of students with IL skills
- **Increased effectiveness** of inclusivity efforts
- **Increased/improved relationships** with distance/online faculty
- Ability to **influence and help design/assess** research-based assignments
- **Increased status and visibility** of librarians as IL pedagogy experts and consultants
- **Greater influence** in the distance/online education world
Thanks for your attention! Questions?

Let’s develop strong ties!

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