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Career Paths of Distance Education Librarians: A Profile of Current Practitioners Subscribed to the OFFCAMP Listserv

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SUMMARY. A growing number of institutions are offering courses and degrees via distance education, however distance education librarianship is a relatively new and often less defined field of librarianship. This paper will present the results of a survey to discover career paths leading to distance education librarianship. Based on a survey of subscribers to the OFFCAMP listserv, it asked questions such as: Is there a "typical" career path? Does previous or continuing work in other library units benefit a distance education librarian? What are the most important qualifications for a distance education librarian? Profiles of the education and experience of distance education librarians were analyzed for commonalities. The study concluded that distance education librarians come to their positions from a variety of experience, not always in libraries, but predominately from library public service departments. A typical career path for distance education librarians is not evident at this time.

KEYWORDS. Career paths, distance education librarians, library services, library careers

Growing numbers of institutions are offering courses and degrees via distance education; however, distance-education librarianship is a relatively new and often less-defined field of librarianship. This paper will present the results of a survey to discover career paths leading to distance-education librarianship. A survey of subscribers to the OFFCAMP listserv asked questions such as the following: Is there a "typical" career path? Does previous or continuing work in other library units benefit a distance-education librarian? What are the most important qualifications for a distance-education librarian? Profiles of the education and experience of distance-education librarians were analyzed for commonalities. The study concluded that distance-education librarians come to their positions from a variety of experience, not always in libraries but predominately from library public-service departments. A typical career path for distance-education librarians is not evident at this time.

Introduction

More institutions are now offering courses and degrees via distance education. "In 2000–01, 56 percent of all postsecondary institutions offered distance-education courses (up from 34 percent three years earlier). . . . Course enrollments in distance education have increased as well . . . increasing from 1.7 million to 3.1 million between 1997–98 and 2000–01" (NCES, 2004). Many distance learners are located in isolated rural areas or are unable to travel to a traditional campus. They are generally older students with jobs, families,

and other obligations, who study on their own time. These learners need library materials and services to successfully complete their coursework. Some distance learners may have access to their local public library; however, due to the nonacademic mission of public libraries, the resources there are often inadequate to meet their needs.

What about the librarians who serve distance learners? How does one become a distance-education librarian? Is there a typical career path that leads to becoming a distance-education librarian? The answers to these questions have been unclear because no research about distance-education librarians and their career paths had previously been done. This paper will report the results of a survey of practicing distance-education librarians regarding their career path. In this paper the term "distance-education librarian" will be used to describe those whose titles may include off-campus, extended, or outreach services librarian.

Librarians have been providing service and materials to distance learners via telephone and postal mail for many years and more recently have used e-mail, chat, fax, electronic delivery, and interlibrary loan. Athabasca University in Canada, created in 1970, has been providing library services to distance learners since its inception as an open university. The Off-Campus Library Services Conference has been addressing issues of providing library services to distance learners since 1982, so one could reasonably assume that distance-education librarians have existed for at least a quarter of a century, and probably longer. However, contrary to what one might think, distance-education librarianship is still an evolving and growing field, as witnessed by the following comments typical of librarians new to the distance-education field: "Despite my more than twenty years of experience in a variety of library settings, I had no previous contact with—or even awareness of—this particular type of user" (Goodson, 2001, p. xi). "When I applied for my current position as Extended Campus Services Librarian . . . I had over a decade's experience in libraries, but little with serving off-campus library users" (Jones, 2002, p. 397). Titles of presentations at the Off-Campus Library Services Conference in the last few years also provide evidence of the growing field of distance-education librarianship.

- "The Answer You Get Depends on Who (and What) You Ask: Involving Stakeholder in Needs Assessment"

- "Help! I'm the New Distance Librarian—Where Do I Begin?"

- "Documenting Priorities, Progress, and Potential: Planning Library Services for Distance Education"

- "Starting Small: Setting Up Off-Campus Library Services with Limited Resources"

(Distance Learning Library Services: The Tenth Off-Campus Library Services Conference)

Many programs in library or information studies offer courses or degrees via distance learning, however, a search of the Web sites listed on the Directory of ALA-Accredited Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies revealed that there is very little in the way of specific course work for aspiring distance-education librarians. Hoerman and Furniss (2001) report that "only recently have some institutions developed courses or workshops that emphasize distance services" (p. 249). The University of Maryland University College offers a graduate certificate in Library Services to Distance Learners; however, only one of the four required courses deals with providing library services. When the author began working as a distributed learning services librarian, there was not a body of literature describing career paths for distance-education librarians. Nor were there many resources available for learning about the job or about how to become a successful distance-education librarian. Hoping to discover educational or professional development opportunities, the author decided to do a survey of current practicing distance-education librarians to determine how others prepared for or developed professionally in distance-learning positions.

The population studied for this study included subscribers to the OFFCAMP listserv. This listserv addresses issues in services to distance learners and has been active since about 1991. Barton Lessin, founder of the listserv, recounts that the list was started as a way to maintain communication and foster collaboration during the "long gaps that occurred between the meetings of the OCLS Conference. The purpose then was to make it as easy as possible for off-campus librarians to talk with one another and to share their successes, challenges, and questions with their colleagues" (B.Lessin, personal communication,

July 27, 2005). The survey findings document current practice within this population and provide valuable guidance for those aspiring to enter the field of distance librarianship.

Literature Review and Research Objectives

As has been previously stated, there is not a large body of literature about the career paths of librarians who serve distance learners. A review of the literature reveals a myriad of articles addressing the growth of distance education, along with many articles that address the provision of library services to distance learners. A search of Academic Search Premier, ERIC, and Library and Information Science using the subject term "distance education" or "distance learning" yielded more than thirteen thousand articles. A similar search using the terms "distance education" or "distance learning" and "library services" retrieved more than five hundred articles, some dating back to 1981. However, an exhaustive search of the Library and Information Science Database in Dialog, using various terms for distance education, librarianship, and career paths, yielded very few articles on the topic of career paths of distance-education librarians. Reiten and Fritts (2004) tracked "career paths of attendees and presenters from the first ten OCLSC Conferences," focusing on the effect of distance-education librarian experiences on a librarian's career path. Yang (2005) also interviewed practicing distance-education librarians and briefly described the amount of time they devote to providing services. Another area in the literature describes educational preparation for those entering the field of distance education; again, there are few articles on the topic. The author was interested in determining if a standard educational or career path exists for distance-education librarians. With this in mind, a set of research issues of interest were developed that guided the study (see Appendix A: Research Questions).

Methodology—Research Procedure

The population studied included subscribers to the OFFCAMP listserv as of March 18, 2005. A survey was constructed consisting of twenty-three questions divided into three sections. An open-source product, phpSurveyor, was used to build the survey in a Web format. All sections contained questions that were

either multiple choice or "choose all that apply," and open-ended short-answer questions. The first section consisted of eight questions that asked about rank, job title, how the librarian got his or her current position, the most important qualifications for a distance-education librarian, and if providing services to distance-education students was the sole focus of the position. The second section of the survey, consisting of eleven questions, queried previous library experience, what department the librarian currently reports to, experience with being a distance-education student, education for the job, challenges, successes, and advice to new and aspiring distance-education librarians. The third and final section consisted of four questions that collected demographic data about degrees held, length of employment in libraries and in their current position, and gender (see Appendix B: Career Paths of Distance-Education Librarians).

The survey was sent to the 673 subscribers of the OFFCAMP listserv with two follow-up reminders, one sent a week after the initial request and the second sent a week later. One hundred twelve valid surveys were returned. Analysis of the returned surveys by the Harold B. Lee Library's (HBLL) statistical officer yielded the following: "Normal response rate for Web-based surveys varies between 15 to 30%. The rate for this survey is more towards the low end of that tendency at 16.64%, but [that's] not necessarily bad. Those that did respond provided complete and thoughtful answers based on what was evident in most of the open-ended comment questions. In addition, those that responded were representative of the target population in terms of gender" (B. Roberts, personal communication, July 27, 2005). data were collected in an Excel spreadsheet, and the statistics were tabulated and analyzed using SAS®. For some open-ended questions, responses were grouped into themes for purposes of analysis.

Results

In this section of the article, data will be reported from the survey that answer the research questions developed early in the study (see Appendix C: Summary of Distance Education Survey). Not all respondents answered every question and all percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole percent.

Question 1: What kind of training or education for the position do distance-education librarians have? Did it include being a distance student themselves?

Multiple questions in the survey provided data on training or education that respondents had for their position. When asked about their rank or title, an overwhelming majority, 96 percent (108), responded that they were librarians with an MLS degree. Support staff and "other" accounted for the other 4 percent (4) of responses. Degrees other than an MLS held by respondents varied (see Table 1).

TABLE 1.

Degrees held by respondents

Degree	Number	Percentage
Associate of Applied Science	4	4%
Bachelor's	87	78%
2nd Bachelor's	8	7%
Master's	91	81%
2nd Master's	32	29%
PhD	8	7%

Note: Percentages total more than 100 due to some respondents' holding more than one degree.

Respondents held degrees in a wide variety of disciplines. Those holding associate degrees all reported different disciplines. English and history were the most common disciplines listed as respondents' first bachelor's degree. History was the most common discipline of those with a second bachelor's degree.

Nearly all survey respondents held a master's degree in library/information science, most as their first master's degree, but some as their second master's degree. The MLS degree was the most common among those holding a second master's degree. When asked about PhDs, half of the respondents listed education as the discipline. Other degrees held covered a wide spectrum, as shown below.

- Computer Information Services
- Nursing
- Sociology
- German
- Psychology
- Religion
- Spanish
- Occupational/Technology Information
- Information Technology
- Instructional Technology

- General Studies
- Music
- Economics
- Political Science
- Greek
- Secondary Education
- Translation
- Distance Education
- Instructional Materials
- Aesthetic Studies

More than half, 54 percent, of the survey respondents answered yes when asked if sometime during their career or as part of their education they had been or currently were a distance-education student. A further question asked if they had any education or training specific to distance education. Most, 73 percent (82), answered no, with 27 percent (30) answering yes. Of the 27 percent (30) who answered yes, types of education or training by percentage are illustrated in Table 2.

TABLE 2.

Training or education in distance education

Type of education/training	Number	Percent having training
Distance-education workshops	8	27%
Online course	6	20%
MLS	6	20%
Past distance-education student	4	13%
PhD	3	10%
Other	3	10%

Question 2: Did they have any previous experience in other library units? If so, which experience do they consider the most valuable?

Work in other library units was common among respondents (see Table 3). Respondents were asked to mark all units that they had worked in. Of the respondents, 61 percent (67) had worked in two or more other library units before becoming the distance-education librarian. Most had experience working in public service units, but other areas of the library were represented in the responses. Reference work, with 76 respondents (68%), was the most common response, with instruction or information literacy, chosen by 50 respondents (45%), the second most common response. Subject librarian or bibliographer and access services were third and fourth respectively, with 27 respondents (24%) and 19 respondents (17%). Smaller numbers of respondents indicated that they had worked in other library units, including acquisitions, cataloging, periodicals/serials, government information, library computer systems, and archives/special collections. No respondents had experience in human resources, and 18 respondents (16%) had no experience in other library units.

TABLE 3.

Previous experience in other library units

Library Unit	Number	Percentage
Access services	19	17%
Acquisitions	12	11%

Cataloging	13	12%
Reference	76	68%
Subject librarian/bibliographer	27	24%
Library computer systems	6	5%
Archives/Special Collections	5	5%
Periodicals/serials	11	10%
Government information	11	10%
Human resources	0	0%
Instruction/information literacy	50	45%
Not applicable	18	16%

Note: Percentages total more than 100 due to some respondents' working in more than one library unit.

If respondents indicated that they had worked in other library units, they were then asked which experience had been the most valuable to them. Again, reference work and instruction/information literacy dominated the responses, with 49 percent (54) indicating that reference was the most useful and 12 percent (13) choosing instruction/information literacy. These two categories accounted for 87 of the 112 responses. An interesting finding was that of those who had previous reference experience, 37 percent (41) held a bachelor's degree in either English or history. For those with previous experience in instruction or information literacy, 31 percent (35) held bachelor's degrees in English or history. Ten percent (11) said access services was their most useful experience. Library computer systems, public services, subject librarian/bibliographer, and outreach had percentages of 4 or lower, and 20 percent (22) marked "Not applicable."

Question 3: How did they get into the field of distance education librarianship? Did they start in a new position or fill an existing position?

Responses to this open-ended question varied greatly and were classified into eleven categories. The largest number of respondents (25) indicated that they had taken an open position, and for others distance education librarianship was part of their job description. Some indicated that they got into the field via experience or library duties that evolved into serving distance learners. Others wanted to move on to a new position, and distance-education librarian was the position available or of interest to them. Some saw a need for a librarian to serve distance-education students and either lobbied to have a position created or had

the duties added to their current position. A few respondents indicated that this was their first position post-MLS (see Table 4). Of those currently in distance-education librarian positions, fifty-three respondents filled an existing position and fifty-nine indicated that it was a new position.

TABLE 4.

Entry point into distance-education librarianship

Entry point	Number	Percentage
Took open position	25	22%
Via experience	12	11%
Wanted to move on	12	11%
Added to current responsibilities	10	9%
First position after MLS	10	9%
Nature of position	10	9%
By accident	9	8%
Interest in distributed learning	7	6%
Promoted to position	7	6%
Recruited to position	6	5%
By necessity	4	4%

Question 4: What is the average length of time in the position for distance-education librarians?

While many respondents have been librarians for a number of years, the majority (67%) have been in their current position for five years or less (see Table 5). However, 45 percent (51), have been in the field of librarianship between six and fifteen years. More than 25 percent (30) of respondents have been in librarianship for more than twenty years.

TABLE 5.

Number of years in librarianship compared with number of years in current position

Number of years	Years in librarianship	Years in current position
1–5 years	16%	67%
6–10 years	25%	17%
11–15 years	20%	12%
16–20 years	12%	2%
More than 20 years	27%	2%

Question 5: Is distance education their sole responsibility, or do they have other responsibilities?

Sixty-two percent (69) of respondents said they spend fewer than thirty hours a week working in distance education. The other 38 percent (43) indicated that they spend from thirty-one to forty hours a week working in distance education (see Table 6). When asked the number of hours worked in other library departments, the majority said they spend their time working in reference or as a subject librarian/bibliographer. None of the respondents spend more than twenty hours a week in any other library department, with the exception of one who indicated spending twenty-eight hours per week in library computer systems. A majority of those who responded to the survey, 79 percent (88), report either to a public services department or division or to library administration.

TABLE 6.

Number of hours per week spent in distance education

Hours per week in distance education	Number	Percentage
10 or less	31	28%
11–20	23	21%
21–30	15	13%

31–40	43	38%

When asked about the number of FTE librarians, staff or student assistants employed in serving distance learners, 63 percent of respondents (70) indicated that only one full-time librarian had responsibility for distance education students. About the same number of respondents, seventy-nine (71%), reported one full-time support staff member supporting distance education students. Nearly 100 percent (111) of respondents, whether librarian or support staff, had some student help.

Question 6: What are the most important qualifications for distance-education librarians?

For this question respondents were asked to check all answers that applied. Of the six choices for the most important qualifications for distance-education librarians, technology and outreach skills were the overwhelming choices, both at 75 percent (84). Public service skills and a commitment to public service were close seconds at 72 percent (81) each. The responses are broken out by percentage in Table 7.

TABLE 7.

Important qualifications for distance education librarians

Qualifications	Number	Percentage
Public service skills	81	72
Commitment to public service	81	72
Bibliography skills	26	23
Organizational skills	65	58
Technology skills	84	75
Outreach skills	84	75

Note: Percentages total more than 100 because multiple responses were requested.

Question 7: What challenges do distance education librarians face?

The responses to the challenges faced by distance education librarians varied, from technology to time, from fair services to frequent changes, and from communication to copyright. The responses for this question were analyzed and categorized according to themes. According to the HBLL statistical officer: "Technology was the theme of the single most important challenge facing distance-education librarians. Almost as frequently mentioned was communication, lack of institutional awareness, providing services for distance-education students that are comparable to those offered on campus, and staying abreast of the frequent changes in the field of distance education" (B. Roberts, personal communication, July 27, 2005). See Table 8 for a complete breakdown of responses.

TABLE 8.

Biggest challenges facing distance education librarians

Challenge	Number	Percentage
Technology	19	17%
Communication	14	13%
Lack of institutional awareness	14	13%
Fair services	13	12%
Frequent changes	12	11%
Improving student skills	8	7%
Money	7	6%
Access to materials	5	5%
Definition of distance learners	5	5%
Copyright	4	4%
Knowing students	4	4%
Time	4	4%

Note: Percentages total more than 100 percent because multiple answers were given.

Question 8: What are/have been their biggest successes in distance education?

Responses to this question fell into four major themes—improving relationships, resource improvements, structure improvements (meaning improvements in the functions and processes of distance education), and increased awareness. Eighty-seven percent (97) of the responses fell into these four themes. Improving relationships and resource improvements were both chosen as the biggest success by 25 percent (51) of the respondents. Twenty-one percent (22) said that structure improvements were their biggest success, and 16 percent (16) listed increasing awareness as their biggest success. Other successes mentioned included improvements in skills (5) and others, identified as positive feedback, student increases, and personal rewards. These successes accounted for 13 percent (13) of the responses.

Question 9: What advice would they give to librarians wanting to get into the field of distance librarianship or those new to distance librarianship?

Respondents gave similar responses to both of these questions (see Table 9). Three items dominated the responses: first, being aware of and up-to-date on the technology needed to be a good distance-education librarian accounted for 30 percent (30) of the responses. Second, knowing what is expected accounted for approximately 25 percent (25) of the responses. Third, having good experience or past training accounted for approximately 25 percent (24) of the responses. Having social skills, knowing resources, and miscellaneous other responses accounted for the remaining 22 percent (22) of responses.

When respondents were asked what advice they would give to new distance-education librarians, networking was the top response at 31 percent (31). Knowing what is expected and having good experience/training were second and third again, at 22 (22) and 19 (19) percent respectively. People skills, which could be construed to mean about the same thing as social skills, was fourth at 10 percent (10), and technology skills had 9 percent (9). Being flexible with time and being creative accounted for the other 10 percent of responses (10).

TABLE 9.

Advice for aspiring and new distance-education librarians

Advice for getting into distance education		Advice to new distance education librarians	
Technology skills	30%	Network	31%
Know what is expected	25%	Know what is expected	22%
Good experience/training	24%	Good experience/training	19%
Social skills	10%	People skills	10%
Know resources	8%	Technology skills	9%
Other	4%	Flexible with time	7%
		Be creative	3%

Note: Percentages equal more than 100 because multiple responses were given.

Discussion

The driving question (number 10) for this study was, "Is there a typical career path for distance-education librarians?" The hypothesis was that a standard career path for distance-education librarians is not evident at this time. Distance-education librarians come to their positions from a variety of experience, not always in libraries but predominately from library public-service departments. The survey data indicate that the respondents overwhelmingly hold MLS degrees, but their educational backgrounds are varied, with English and history dominating as the two most common undergraduate degrees. Prior or continuing work in other library units was common among the respondents. A large majority indicated that they had previous reference experience or were currently working in reference in addition to their distance-education duties. The other areas where significant previous or continuing work occurs are in instruction/information literacy and functioning as a subject librarian/bibliographer. This is consistent with the needs of distance-

education students for reference assistance, instruction, and access to a librarian with knowledge of subject-specific resources.

Not surprisingly, less than a third of the respondents indicated that they had any education or training in distance education. However, more than half of those with education or training indicated that they had experience as a distance education student and considered that as a part of their training for the position. Other training consisted of distance education workshops, followed closely by online courses, or training/education received as part of their MLS program. Technology and outreach skills were considered the most necessary qualifications for becoming a distance education librarian, with public service skills and a commitment to public service not far behind. Experience as a distance education student could have honed respondents' technology skills, or at least could have made them aware of the various technologies used to deliver instruction and services to distance education students. A large majority of the respondents indicated that previous work in reference and instruction/information literacy was the most useful experience in their training, perhaps accounting for their belief that public service skills are an important qualification for distance education librarians.

Two-thirds of the respondents have been in their current position for five years or less, but the total time in librarianship varied from one year to more than twenty years. A little more than one quarter of the respondents have been in the profession more than twenty years. Entrance points to the field of distance education librarianship varied, with some respondents indicating that experience of being a distance education student themselves led to interest in working in the field. The percentage of those filling new positions and those filling vacancies was about half and half, with slightly more filling a new position. These findings seem to corroborate the expansion and development of this branch of librarianship.

Distance education librarians, by the very nature of their job, face many challenges. Included in these are learning, using, and troubleshooting technology problems; marketing services to both distance education students and the faculty who teach them; providing instruction in the use of library resources; complying with copyrights; experiencing frequent changes; dealing with inadequate budgets; and coping

with lack of institutional awareness of the need to provide equitable library services for distance learners. Survey respondents confirmed that technology, communication, and lack of institutional awareness are the top three challenges they face. It comes as no surprise that the need to sharpen technology skills is the principal advice survey respondents provided to those wanting to get into the field of distance education librarianship. They advised distance education librarians who are new in their positions to network with those who can assist them in their work. Other advice given to both those wanting to get into the field and those who are new in the field was the same for both groups—know what is expected and have or acquire experience and training related to the position.

Along with the challenges, distance education librarians also experience success in their work. The successes reported in the survey correspond closely with identified challenges. An outcome of addressing challenges in communication resulted in successes such as improved relationships; increased awareness both at the institutional, faculty, and student levels; and development of ways to improve student skills. Success in obtaining resource improvements occurred when tackling challenges related to budgets. Evaluating functions and processes used in providing services, including the technologies used to provide those services, resulted in structure improvements.

Conclusions

This survey verifies that, beyond holding an MLS and a bachelor's degree in English or history and having prior library experience in public services, there is not a typical career path for distance-education librarians in the population studied. Distance education librarians hold a variety of degrees in addition to the MLS. While a large percentage of distance education librarians have more than five years' prior library experience, that experience could be in access services, acquisitions, archives/special collections, cataloging, government information, instruction/information literacy, library computer systems, periodicals, reference, or subject librarian/bibliographer. Slightly over two-thirds of the respondents have been in their current position as distance education librarian for no more than five years. Most report to a public services division or to library administration. Most are one-person operations, while others have some support staff

or serve as coordinators of the service throughout the library, as noted by Backhus and Summey (2003). No standard progression through education or library experience to distance education librarian is evident. However, new positions continue to be created, and through attrition and aging of the librarian population, vacancies will occur in existing positions. At this point, an MLS, a familiarity with technology, and good public service skills can form the basis for a successful career in distance education librarianship.

The continuity of distance librarianship as a specific field is in question with the blurring of distinctions between distance learners versus remote users. If it is determined that distance education librarians perform essential functions that differ from other public service librarians, further research should explore whether a standard career path needs to be established to qualify librarians for practicing distance librarianship and what the steps along that path would be.

Distance education librarians are often charting new courses through unfamiliar waters. Whether they acquire the skills to be successful through formal or informal education or through work experience, or a combination of both, above all, they need to possess the commitment, the vision, and the leadership to develop, deliver, and improve library services for distance learners.

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Appendix A

Research Issues of Interest

1. What kind of training or education for the position do distance-education librarians have? Did it include being a distance student themselves?

2. Did they have any previous experience in other library units? If so, which experience do they consider the most valuable?

3. How did they get into the field of distance-education librarianship? Did they start in a new position or fill an existing position?

4. What is the average length of time in the position for distance-education librarians?

5. Is distance education their sole responsibility or do they have other responsibilities?

6. What are the most important qualifications for distance-education librarians?

7. What challenges do distance-education librarians face?

8. What are/have been their biggest successes?

9. What advice would they give to librarians wanting to get into the field of distance librarianship or those new to distance librarianship?

10. Is there a "typical" career path for distance-education librarians?

Career Paths of Distance Education Librarians

This is a survey to discover how librarians get into the field of distance education librarianship.

Part I

Q1: Which Category best describes your current rank or title? Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐ Librarian (MLS)

☐ Support Staff

☐ Other [   ]

Q2: What is your job title? Please write your answer here:

[   ]

Q3: Was it a new position or did you fill a vacancy? Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐ New Position

☐ Vacancy

Q4: How did you get into the field of distance education librarianship? Please write your answer here:

[   ]

Q5: What are the most important qualifications for a distance education librarian? Please choose **all** that apply

☐ Public service skills

☐ Commitment to public service

☐ Bibliography skills

☐ Organizational skills

☐ Technology skills

☐ Outreach skills

Other: [   ]

Q6: Please indicate the number of FTE staff employed at your library serving distance learners. Please choose all that apply and provide a comment

☐ Librarian(s) (MLS) [   ]

☐ Support Staff [   ]

☐ Student Assistants [   ]

Q7: 7. How many hours a week do you work in distance education? Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐ 10 or less

☐ 11 - 20

☐ 21-30

☐ 31-40

Q8: If you work less than 40 hr per week in distance education, please indicate the number of hours you work, if any, in other library departments/divisions. Please choose all that apply and provide a comment

☐ Access services [   ]

☐ Acquisitions [   ]

☐ Cataloging [   ]

☐ Reference [   ]

☐ Subject librarian or bibliographer [   ]

☐ Library Computer Systems [   ]

☐ Archives/Special Collections [   ]

☐ Periodicals/Serials [   ]

☐ Government Information [   ]

☐ Human Resources [   ]

☐ Not applicable [   ]

Part II

Q9: Before becoming the distance education librarian, did you work in other library units? Please choose **all** that apply

☐ Access Services

☐ Acquisitions

☐ Cataloging

☐ Reference

☐ Subject librarian or bibliographer

☐ Library Computer Systems

☐ Archives/Special Collections

☐ Periodicals/Serials

☐ Government Information

☐ Human Resources

☐ Instruction/Information Literacy

☐ Not applicable

Other: [   ]

Q10: If you worked in another library unit, which experience has been the most useful in your current position? Please write your answer here:

[   ]

Q11: Which department/division do you report to in your library? Please write your answer here:

[   ]

Q12: Based on your response to the previous question , do you think distance education would function more effectively if it were part of a different department/division? Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q13: If you answered yes, in your opinion, where would distance education be placed most effectively? Please write your answer here:

[   ]

Q14: During your education/career, have you been or are you currently a distance student? Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q15: Do you have any education relating specifically to distance education librarianship? Please explain. Please write your answer here:

Q16: What are the biggest challenges facing distance education librarians? Please write your answer here:

Q17: What do you consider your biggest success in distance librarianship? Please write your answer here:

Q18: What advice would you give to librarians wanting to get into distance education librarianship? Please write your answer here:
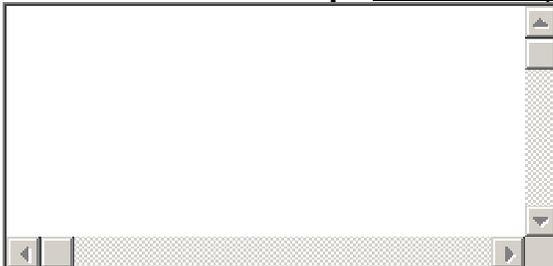
Q19: What advice would you give to new distance education librarians?
Please write your answer here:

[text area]

Part III

Q20: Please check the degrees you hold and indicate the discipline. Please choose all that apply and provide a comment

☐ Associates Degree [_____]

☐ Bachelor's Degree [_____]

☐ 2nd Bachelor's Degree [_____]

☐ Master's Degree [_____]

☐ 2nd Master's Degree [_____]

☐ PhD [_____]

Q21: How long have you been employed (as a librarian or as support staff) in libraries? Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐ 1-5 years

☐ 6-10 years

☐ 11-15 years

☐ 16-20 years

☐ More than 20 years

Q22: How long have you been employed in your current position? Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐ 1-5 years

☐ 6-10 years

☐ 11-15 years

☐ 16-20 years

☐ More than 20 years

Q23: Please indicate your gender. Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐ Female

☐ Male

Submit Your Survey

Thank you for completing this survey. Please fax your completed survey to: by 2005-04-08.

Appendix C

Summary of Career Paths Survey

(n=112)

Q01: Description of rank/title:

Librarian (MLS)	108	96.43%
Other	3	2.68%
Support staff	1	0.89%

Q02: Title classification:

Distance education librarian	45	40.18%
Dean or director	15	13.39%
Reference librarian	15	13.39%
Public services librarian	13	11.61%
Coordinator	10	8.39%
Head	7	6.25%
Assistant dean or director	3	2.68%
Instruction librarian	2	1.79%
Other	2	1.79%

Q03: New or vacant position?

New position	59	52.68%

Vacancy 53 47.32%

Q04: How did you get into distance-education librarianship?

Took open position 25 22.32%

Via experience 12 10.71%

Wanted to move on 12 10.71%

Added to current responsibilities 10 8.93%

First position after MLS 10 8.93%

Nature of position 10 8.93%

By accident 9 8.04%

Interest in distributed learning 7 6.25%

Promoted to position 7 6.25%

Recruited to position 6 5.36%

By necessity 4 3.57%

Q05: Respondents that think the following are important qualifications for this position:

Public service skills 81 72.32%

Commitment to public service 81 72.32%

Bibliography skills 26 23.21%

Organizational skills 65 58.04%

Technology skills 84 75.00%

Outreach skills 84 75.00%

Q06a: Number of FTE librarians in distance education:

     From 0 to just under 2   70 63.06%

     From 2 to just under 4   16 13.42%

     From 4 to just under 6   9 8.11%

     From 6 to just under 10   8 7.20%

     10 or more   8 7.20%

Q06b: Number of FTE support staff in distance education:

     From 0 to just under 2   79 71.17%

     From 2 to just under 4   15 13.51%

     From 4 to just under 6   4 3.60%

     From 6 to just under 10   7 6.30%

     10 or more   6 5.40%

Q06c: Number of FTE student assistants in distance education:

     From 0 to just under 2   92 82.88%

     From 2 to just under 4   10 9.01%

     From 4 to just under 6   4 3.60%

     From 6 to just under 10   1 0.90%

     10 or more   4 3.60%

Q07: Hours per week spent in distance education:

10 or less	31	27.68%
11 to 20	23	20.54%
21 to 30	15	13.39%
31 to 40	43	38.39%

Q08a: Number of hours spent in access services:

None	96	85.71%
10 or less	9	8.04%
11 to 20	7	6.24%
21 to 30	0	
31 to 40	0	

Q08b: Number of hours spent in acquisitions:

None	103	91.96%
10 or less	9	8.04%
11 to 20	0	
21 to 30	0	
31 to 40	0	

Q08c: Number of hours spent in cataloging:

None	110	98.21%
10 or less	2	1.79%
11 to 20	0	

21 to 30	0
31 to 40	0

Q08d: Number of hours spent in reference:

None	40	35.71%
10 or less	46	41.07%
11 to 20	20	17.86%
21 to 30	4	3.58%
31 to 40	2	1.79%

Q08e: Number of hours spent as a subject librarian/bibliographer:

None	72	64.29%
10 or less	35	31.24%
11 to 20	4	3.58%
21 to 30	0	
31 to 40	1	0.89%

Q08f: Number of hours spent in library computer systems:

None	105	93.75%
10 or less	5	4.45%
11 to 20	1	0.89%
21 to 30	1	0.89%
31 to 40	0	

Q08g: Number of hours spent in archives/special collections:

None	108	96.43%
10 or less	4	3.57%
11 to 20	0	
21 to 30	0	
31 to 40	0	

Q08h: Number of hours spent in periodicals/serials:

None	110	98.21%
10 or less	1	0.89%
11 to 20	1	0.89%
21 to 30	0	
31 to 40	0	

Q08i: Number of hours spent in government information:

None	111	99.11%
10 or less	1	0.89%
11 to 20	0	
21 to 30	0	
31 to 40	0	

Q08j: Number of hours spent in human resources:

None	108	96.43%
10 or less	4	3.57%
11 to 20	0	
21 to 30	0	
31 to 40	0	

Q08k: Number of hours spent in "not applicable":

None	79	70.54%
10 or less	29	25.89%
11 to 20	3	2.68%
21 to 30	0	
31 to 40	1	0.89%

Q09: Previous work experience:

Access services	19	17.12%
Acquisitions	12	10.81%
Cataloging	13	11.71%
Reference	76	68.47%
Subject librarian/bibliographer	27	24.32%
Library computer systems	6	5.41%
Archives/special collection	6	5.41%
Periodicals/serials	11	9.91%
Government information	11	9.91%

Human resources   0

Instruction/information literacy 50 45.05%

Not applicable   18 16.22%

Q10: Which of the above experiences were most useful?

Reference   54 49.09%

N/A   22 20.00%

Instruction/information literacy 13 11.82%

Access services   11 10.00%

Library computer systems   5   4.55%

Public services   2   1.82%

Subject librarian/bibliographer 2 1.82%

Outreach   1   0.91%

Q11: Which department or division do you report to?

Public services   48 42.86%

Library administration   40 35.71%

Academic service   9   8.04%

Distributed learning office   3   2.68%

None   3   2.68%

Other   9   8.04%

Q12: Would a distance-education librarian function better in a different department or division?

No	104	92.86%
Yes	8	7.14%

Q13: If yes, where?

Distance education/learning	3	37.50%
Access services & reference	1	12.50%
Depends on institution	1	12.50%
Continuing education	1	12.50%
Public services	1	12.50%
Instruction	1	12.50%

Q14: Are you or have you been a distance-learning student?

No	51	45.54%
Yes	61	54.46%

Q15: Do you have any distance-education-related training or education?

No	82	73.21%
Yes	30	26.79%

Q15other: If yes, what?

Distance-education workshops 8 26.67%

MLS   6   20.00%

Online courses   6   20.00%

Past distance-education student   4 13.33%

Distance education PhD   3   10.00%

Others   3   10.00%

Q16: What are the biggest challenges facing distance-education librarians?

Technology   19   17.43%

Communication   14   12.84%

Lack of institutional awareness 14 12.84%

Fair services   13   11.93%

Frequent changes   12   11.01%

Improving student skills   8   7.34%

Money   7   6.42%

Access to materials   5   4.59%

Definition of distributed learners   5 4.59%

Copyright   4   3.67%

Knowing students   4   3.67%

Time   4   3.67%

Q17: What has been your biggest success in distance education?

Improving relationships   26   25.49%

Resource improvements   25   24.51%

Structure improvements	22	21.57%
Increasing awareness	16	15.69%
Skill improvements	5	4.90%
Others	8	7.84%

Q18: What advice would you give to librarians just getting into distance education?

Technology skills	30	29.70%
Know what is expected	25	24.75%
Good experience/training	24	23.78%
Social skills	10	9.90%
Know resources	8	7.92%
Other	4	3.95%

Q19: What advice would you give to new distance-education librarians?

Network	31	30.69%
Know what is expected	22	21.78%
Good experience/training	19	18.81%
People skills	10	9.90%
Technology skills	9	8.91%
Flexible with time	7	6.93%
Creative	3	2.97%

Q20a: Associate degrees:

AAS	1	25.00%
Computer info services	1	25.00%
General studies	1	25.00%
Nursing	1	25.00%

Q20b: First bachelor's degree:

English	15	17.24%
History	13	14.94%
Music	7	8.05%
Sociology	7	8.05%
Economics	5	5.75%
Education	4	4.60%
German	3	3.45%
Political science	3	3.45%
Psychology	3	3.45%
Others	27	31.03%

Q20c: Second bachelor's degree:

History	2	25.00%
Education	1	12.50%
Greek	1	12.50%
Religion	1	12.50%

Secondary education	1	12.50%
Spanish	1	12.50%
Translation	1	12.50%

Q20d: First master's degree:

MLS	76	83.52%
English	4	4.40%
History	2	2.20%
Occupational/technological information	2	2.20%
Others	7	7.70%

Q20e: Second master's degree:

MLS	13	40.63%
Distance education	2	6.25%
Information technology	2	6.25%
Instructional materials	2	6.25%
Others	13	40.62%

Q20f: PhD:

Education	4	50.00%
Information technology	1	12.50%
All But Dissertation	1	12.50%
Instructional technology	1	12.50%

Aesthetic studies   1 12.50%

Q21: Years as a librarian:

1–5 years	18	16.07%
6–10 years	28	25.00%
11–15 years	23	20.54%
16–20 years	13	11.60%
More than 20 years	30	26.79%

Q22: Years in current position:

1–5 years	75	66.96%
6–10 years	19	16.96%
11–15 years	13	11.61%
16–20 years	2	1.79%
More than 20 years	3	2.68%

Q22: Gender:

Female	91	81.25%
Male	21	18.75%