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Using distance patron data to improve library services and cross-campus collaboration

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Introduction

With the proliferation of online education courses, libraries are finding a need to increasingly focus on the services they provide for students who are not on campus. Kansas State University Libraries are no exception to this trend. Each year the University sees increases in the number of distance courses and programs it offers and in the number of students enrolled in those courses and programs. In addition, we are a founding member of the Great Plains Interactive Distance Education Alliance (gpidea.org), an award-winning leader in the distance education arena, and are also a land-grant institution, which in the digital age, requires the use of technology to serve remote students and researchers. In order to fulfill the University's land-grant mission and support its robust distance course and program offerings, Kansas State University librarians surveyed their distance education community to determine what services, resources, and promotional efforts were needed in order to be of greatest service.

The actions resulting from an analysis of the survey were centered on the concept of Universal Design, "The design of products and environments to be useable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design" (The Center for Universal Design, 1997). In essence, what we develop and market to distance patrons will be beneficial to all library patrons as access and services increasingly move to digital formats. We were inspired in our activities by the Association of College and Research Library (ACRL) Standards for Distance Learning Library Services (2008) which state:

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“Every student, faculty member, administrator, staff member, or any other member of an institution of higher education, is entitled to the library services and resources of that institution, including direct communication with the appropriate library personnel, regardless of where enrolled or where located in affiliation with the institution. Academic libraries must, therefore, meet the information and research needs of all these constituents, wherever they may be...The access entitlement principle applies equally to individuals on a main campus, off campus, in distance learning or regional campus programs, or in the absence of any physical campus.” (Executive Summary, para. 1)

Background

Kansas State University has an enrollment of over 24,000 students. The centralized Division of Continuing Education (DCE) served more than 11,000 students in the 2010-2011 school year, with 2,300 of those students taking classes only through distance education (Kansas State University. Division of Continuing Education, 2011). The Libraries’ attempts to serve distance education students began in earnest in 2001, and are detailed in a paper by Stockham and Turtle (2004). At that time, Kansas State University Libraries (K-State Libraries) implemented services including virtual reference, remote database access, and improved interlibrary loan access and also heavily promoted our services to our distance patrons.

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Following these initial efforts, reorganization of the Libraries' staff led to a shifting of priorities and a lack of focus on efforts to serve distance students and faculty. The librarians who had previously focused on distance education moved to other responsibilities, and, assuming that the knowledge of our distance education services was established, our promotion efforts were not pursued as aggressively. However, Kansas State University Libraries soon realized that we needed to continue to develop and promote services for our distance population. In May of 2011, a new Distance Education Team was created, headed by our Instructional Design Librarian and consisting of members from two of our Public Services departments. In order to ascertain the needs of our distance population, we decided that our first priority should be to survey the distance students and faculty to determine their level of knowledge about and use of our services. In this paper we will discuss our process for creating and disseminating the survey, the ways in which the results informed our practices with our distance population, and our plans for the future.

Literature Review

Recently, the Institute of Education Science's National Center for Educational Statistics reported that from the year 2000 to the year 2008, "the percentage of undergraduates enrolled in at least one distance education class expanded from 8 percent to 20 percent, and the percentage enrolled in a distance education degree program increased from 2 percent to 4 percent" (Radford, 2011, p.3). Not surprisingly, several academic libraries have recently conducted surveys designed to inform them about the information needs and preferences of distance

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learners and faculty. Nearly all of them reveal that this population is relatively unaware of many of the library services available to them.

Hensley and Miller (2010) presented the results of a web-based survey of distance students served by the University of Illinois Library. Large portions of the respondents stated that they use electronic journals and course reserves. On the other end of the spectrum, 63% stated that they had not contacted a subject specialist and only “20% had used virtual reference in the last year; 18% had consulted with a subject specialist; 17% had used web-based tutorials; and 18% had used document delivery services” (p. 677). Hensley and Miller noted that their survey performed an educational function and that some respondents commented that the library should enhance promotion of its services. They also reported that respondents were generally receptive to the idea of incorporating library instruction into classes. Their recommendations for better serving the needs of distance learners emphasized reaching out to instructors and becoming more involved in supporting distance classes.

Kvenild and Bowles-Terry (2011) described a study conducted by the University of Wyoming Libraries. The investigators’ experiences had taught them that distance educators mediate students’ knowledge of library services. Therefore, they chose to survey distance educators to learn what barriers prevent them from using library resources and services and what services they would like the library to offer. A key finding was that 41% of the respondents stated that they think their students already have the library skills they need for their course. In addition,

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28% reported that they were not aware of library services to support distance education. Like Hensley and Miller, they found that several respondents noted the educational value of the survey instrument itself. Among their recommendations for improving awareness of services and resources was reaching out to coordinators of distance learning programs and asking them to help spread the message to distance instructors.

Shell et al. (2010) described the results of a survey sent to all Arizona State University Instructors who taught online classes in 2009. They found that the respondents were not using or promoting many of their signature services for distance learners. Specifically, “75% had not used subject librarian research assistance, 73% had not used ask-a librarian chat, 70% had not used streaming video, 67% had not used online library tutorials, 59% had not used e-books, and 48% had not linked to e-journal articles” (p. 956).

Earlier studies also revealed lack of awareness of library resources. Cooper, Dempsey, Menon, & Millson-Martula (1998) described the results of a survey of remote graduate nursing students taking classes through DePaul University. The majority of the students indicated that they were not aware of or had not used most of the services. Tipton (2001) presented the results of a survey sent to Texas A&M’s distance graduate students. Of the respondents, 66% reported that they did not request materials through interlibrary loan, 44% reported that they had used an online catalog and 45% reported that they had used online journals. Shaffer, Finkelstein, Woefl, and Lyden (2005) described the results of a survey of distance faculty conducted by the

University of Nebraska Medical Center's Library. Of six methods for providing information literacy instruction to their students, the one selected by more of the respondents than any other was "I assume that students at this level already have the skills needed" (p. 420). Jerabek, McMain, Hardenbrook, and Kordinak (2006) reported the results of a survey of students at Sam Houston State University. Only 25% of the off-campus students reported that they had visited the libraries' home page. Only 2.5% of this group reported that they had used the libraries' email reference service.

Survey Background

Our literature review indicated the importance of starting with an understanding of the specific needs of our user population and an awareness of their levels of knowledge about library services. In early 2011, the Distance Education Team worked with our assessment librarian to develop a survey to assess the awareness and use of library services by distance education students and faculty. In the summer of 2011, we worked with the Division of Continuing Education to send the survey via email to all students who had taken, and all faculty who had taught, a distance education course in the past year. The survey assessed whether they knew about a variety of library services, and whether they had used them (for students) or encouraged their students to use them (for faculty). We also asked which services had been the most useful. We discovered that students had low levels of knowledge about many library services, and more distressingly, that faculty did as well. A more complete discussion of the survey methods and results can be found in an earlier work (Pitts, Bonella, & Coleman, 2012),

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including the following chart (Table 1) which indicates the percentage of respondents within each population who did NOT know about each service. Based on the results of the survey, we realized that the lack of awareness meant that it was very important to continually promote our services to our distance education community.

[Table 1]

TABLE 1 Survey results indicating the percentage of each population who were not aware of the offered service.

Awareness		
Q#	Question	% NOT aware
Q1	K-State Libraries has web-based help pages, including a page specifically for distance learners	Faculty: 67% (66 of 98) Undergraduates, off campus: 55% (59 of 108) Graduate students, off campus: 44% (102 of 232)
Q2	There is a course in your K-State Online organizer called "Research Help at K-State Libraries"	Faculty: 43% Undergraduates, off campus: 20% Graduate students, off campus: 24%
Q3	The K-State Online course "Research Help @ K-State Libraries" has a page specifically for distance students	Faculty: 69% Undergraduates, off campus: 60% Graduate students, off campus: 44%
Q4	K-State Libraries can deliver its print materials (books, maps, journals) and physical media items (videos, music cds) to distance learners	Faculty: 41% Undergraduates, off campus: 68% Graduate students, off campus: 54%
Q5	If a distance learner needs a resource (book, article, video, cd, map, etc.) that K-State Libraries do not own, K-State Libraries will attempt to find it and deliver it	Faculty: 24% Undergraduates, off campus: 61% Graduate students, off campus: 45%
Q6	Distance learners can access K-State Libraries' databases from off campus using any computer connected to the Internet	Faculty: 3% Undergraduates, off campus: 26% Graduate students, off campus: 16%
Q7	Distance learners have access to full-text online journals (e-journals) through K-State Libraries	Faculty: 8% Undergraduates, off campus: 35% Graduate students, off campus: 19%
Q8	Distance learners can access K-State Libraries' e-books	Faculty: 28% Undergraduates, off campus: 56% Graduate students, off campus: 42%
Q9	Distance learners can access K-State Libraries' web-based subject and course guides	Faculty: 38% Undergraduates, off campus: 54% Graduate students, off campus: 49%
Q10	Distance learners can obtain immediate help from a librarian through online chat, telephone or email during K-State Libraries' service hours	Faculty: 21% Undergraduates, off campus: 42% Graduate students, off campus: 31%
Q11	Distance learners can arrange consultations with librarians for in-depth research assistance	Faculty: 39% Undergraduates, off campus: 58% Graduate students, off campus: 56%
Q12	Distance learners can use the online tool RefWorks to keep track of resources and automatically generate references cited lists	Faculty: 38% Undergraduates, off campus: 57% Graduate students, off campus: 52%
Q13	K-State Libraries has links to web-based citation guides	Faculty: 41% Undergraduates, off campus: 52% Graduate students, off campus: 50%

Steps Taken to Date

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Treating the survey results as a clear call to action, we promptly developed a detailed plan to make our distance students and faculty more aware of the services and resources available to them through K-State Libraries. The plan called for enhancements that would make it easier for distance patrons to come across useful services and resources when they are needed and initiatives that would provide potential users with knowledge of our services and resources before they are needed. In conceiving solutions, we considered the entire scope of K-State Libraries' services and resources.

Reference Enhancements

During the 2011-2012 academic year we made three changes to our reference services in order to help distance patrons (and consequently, the rest of our patrons) find point-of-need answers to their questions.

First, we worked with our Ask a Librarian (AAL) team to improve our capacity to respond to chat reference questions. In the academic year prior to our survey (2010-2011), the chat service was staffed by librarians working away from the main library's in-person service station during 51 of our 83 service hours. The 32 service hours during which we staffed the chat service from our in-person service station included Sunday afternoons, all of our Saturday hours, Thursday night, and several weekday hours in the morning and late afternoons. During staff meetings held that year many members of our AAL team reported that when they attempted to respond to both in-person and chat requests, they frequently were unable to answer chats before the patron

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would give up and disconnect. Some also noted that even when they were able to field the chat questions, they were often drawn away mid chat by in-person patrons.

The results of our survey bolstered our resolve to elevate our chat service to a higher priority so that any patrons who wanted help would be able to attain it from someone who could provide focused attention to their needs. Since the beginning of the 2011-2012 academic year we have staffed our AAL chat service away from the in-person service station during all of our service hours except our Saturday hours. It is our hope that by bolstering our coverage, those distance students who use our chat reference service will share positive experiences with their peers and, thereby, spread knowledge of this key service.

Next, in September 2011 we created a post in our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) database to help distance patrons discover the breadth of services K-State Libraries provides to them (Figure 1). According to data provided by Google Analytics, the page had been viewed 85 times as of February 25, 2013, with 72 of those views being unique. The average time on the page for those views was 4 minutes and 56 seconds, a figure which suggests that the content is being read carefully.

[Figure 1]

Distance students: What library services are available to them?

[All Posts](#), [Help](#), [Research](#)

[Print this page](#)

Virtually all library services are available to distance students. You can:

- Get immediate [help from a librarian](#) via IM chat, phone, or email during [Librarian service hours](#), or make an [appointment with a librarian](#).
- Access our [catalog](#), [databases](#), [electronic journals](#), and [eBooks](#). Enter your eID and password when prompted for some resources.
- Use our [class and research guides](#) to help you with assignments.
- Get [Interlibrary services for distance users](#) including [document delivery](#).
- Use [citation tools](#) to help cite your sources for a paper.
- Use [RefWorks](#) to build your own citations database and create bibliographies.

At the same time, we created a distance education tag in K-State Libraries' FAQ and assigned that tag to several posts. Later, when we developed a distance learning page for the Libraries' website (in July 2012), we placed a link on the page that visitors can click to browse distance education frequently asked questions. When clicked, that link displays all of the FAQ posts tagged with the distance education tag. According to data provided by Google Analytics, the list of FAQ posts tagged with the distance education tag had been viewed 71 times as of February 25, 2012, with 55 of those views being unique. Analysis of traffic sources leading to those views shows that 55 of the pageviews originated from the link on the distance learning page.

Finally, in January 2012 we added a toll-free number to our website's list of Ask a Librarian contacts (Figure 2). As of January 31, 2013, 41 calls had been made to that number. We

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anticipate that the volume of use will rise after we begin advertising the number to our distance population.

[Figure 2]



Developments in Online Instruction

Prior to the 2011-2012 academic year, online library instruction occurred intermittently in a very small number of Kansas State University courses. These interactions typically involved a single librarian negotiating access to the online course through the secondary instructor role in Kansas State University's learning management system, and delivering a lecture via the built-in videoconferencing system. The lectures mirrored those which might have been delivered in a face-to-face environment. Because most staff tasked to provide library instruction did not have much experience with the learning management system, and because that system requires a fairly steep learning curve, these sessions typically required a much larger time investment than a normal one-shot instruction session. Additionally, many teaching faculty and students were uncomfortable with additional staff having access to all areas of the course, including the

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student gradebook.

Over the last two years we made several improvements to the way library instruction is delivered in online environments. The first and perhaps most impactful, is the implementation of LibGuides (Figure 3). At first, we began pairing a LibGuide with every face-to-face course we taught. Instruction staff would prepare and deliver a lecture in the traditional manner, and then follow up with a LibGuide at the end of the session, instructing the students that they could return to the guide at their leisure to review the material covered during the session. Later, instruction staff began to experiment with alternative delivery methods and many instruction staff began using the guides as their content delivery platform during live classroom sessions. In some cases, we now use LibGuides in lieu of face-to-face instruction sessions. LibGuides act as an asynchronous study guide for both on-campus and distance students. Library instruction staff are encouraged to create content with distance patrons in mind, and those who work with distance faculty regularly encourage the distribution of links to course-relevant guides and content. What is helpful to distance students is almost always also helpful to on-campus students who wish to access and use library resources remotely.

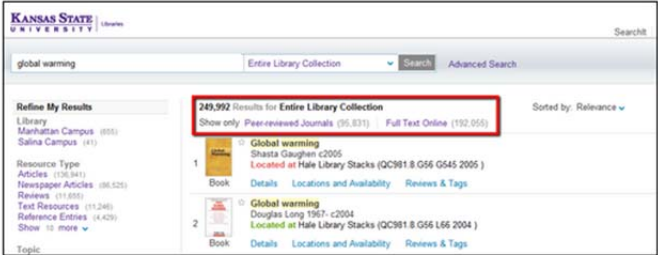
[Figure 3]

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Narrow Results [Comments\(0\)](#) [Print Page](#) **Search:** [This Guide](#) [Search](#)

Limit to...

- Peer reviewed journal articles
- Full text materials available online



Items with Full Text Online can be viewed from within your browser by clicking on the Get It! option

[Comments \(0\)](#)

Refine by...

- Resource Type (books, articles, etc.)
- Topic
- Creator (author)
- Collection (where the materials are coming from)
- Creation Date
- Language
- Journal Title
- Subject (suggested searches using related terms)

eBooks in Search It

Finding eBooks

Use **Search It** to find electronic books. Many can be downloaded to your computer or your mobile device. Format and viewing options vary depending on the publisher.

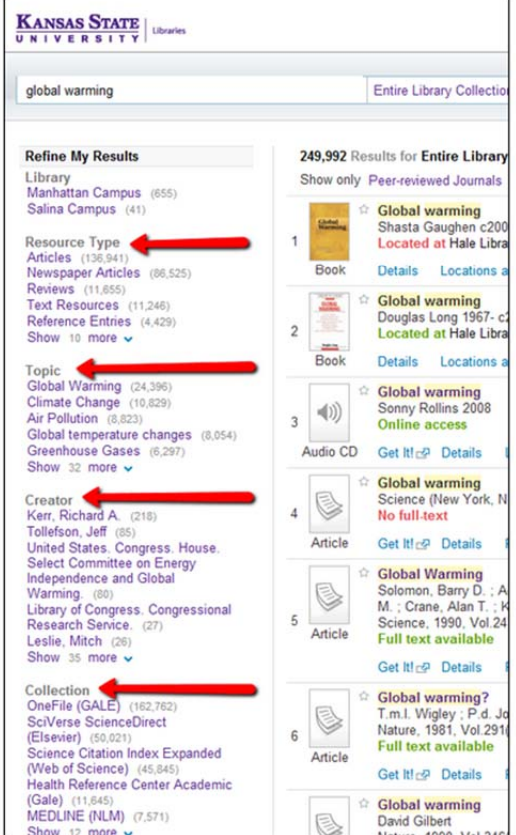
- Enter keywords and click "Search"
- Limit your results: select "Full Text Online" at the top, then on the left, under Resource type, select "Books"
- To view an eBook, select "View Online." If you don't see this link, but it shows "Full Text Available," look for the **Get It!** link.

[Comments \(0\)](#)

Video

Watch this video (0:28) for a brief overview of refining Search It results.

[Video Transcript](#)



The other major development in our online instruction activities is the implementation of a “Librarian Role” in our learning management system. Library instructors were previously required to negotiate their access into the courses of the teaching faculty they worked with, creating anxiety for both faculty and library staff who did not wish to be granted access to private information like student grades. We felt that the level of access to specific course elements and a unique instructional role within courses warranted the creation of a separate

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role to more adequately meet the needs of the faculty and students we work with online. We took our inspiration from Elizabeth Black (2008), who mentioned online librarian roles in her article on integrating library resources into learning management systems. Rather than repurposing an existing role, we wrote a proposal to our learning management system development team, which included the following rationale:

1) As currently defined, the “secondary instructor” role allows the assigned instructor to create and edit content, participate in group activities and view the student gradebook. While the ability to create content and participate in group activities is essential to our work, as library professionals, we deeply value the privacy of our patrons and the ability to view the gradebook is an unnecessary privacy liability. An instructor role without the ability to view student grades is desirable.

2) Librarians provide a unique facet of instruction for the classes we work with. We feel that a defined Librarian role would help students, instructors and TA’s better understand the role of the librarian in the course, and serve as a bridge for student and faculty research during and after the completion of the course. A defined Librarian role would also promote awareness that librarians are educators. Students who find value in the Librarian's contributions may learn to seek assistance from the Libraries for their other classes. They may even ask their other instructors to incorporate a Librarian into their online class.

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3) The creation of a Librarian role would create a less threatening opportunity for increased collaboration between academic units/departments and the Libraries. Ideally primary instructors would have the ability to grant a Librarian access to their course to create and edit library-specific content, but limit editing rights to other course content. This ability, combined with gradebook restrictions would be attractive to instructors reluctant to grant access and editing rights to other educators.

The proposal was well received, and we worked with developers to create and test the role. Some commercial learning management systems allow for the creation of new roles or have pre-developed librarian roles, such as in Blackboard. Blackboard campuses can work with their system administrators to enable the role. The table below (Table 2) represents the permission differences between the Secondary Instructor role and the Librarian role.

[Table 2]

TABLE 2 Comparison of Librarian Role and Secondary Instructor Role in the K-State Online Learning Management System

K-State Online Role Comparison	
Librarian Role	Secondary Instructor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View Roster • Participate In Calendar • Participate In Groups • Participate In Board • Observe Board • Participate In Chatroom • Present in Wimba • Administer Course • Manage Content • Configure Course • Email Students • View Groups • Participate In Whiteboard • Post Notes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gradebook Edit Scores • View Gradebook • Control Grading • View Roster • Moderate Calendar • Participate In Calendar • Participate In Groups • Admin Groups • Moderate Board • Participate In Board • Observe Board • Participate In Chatroom • Present in Wimba • Administer Course • Manage Content • Configure Course • Email Students • Gradebook Reorder • Gradebook Export • View Groups • Assignment Delete • Add Sections • Admin Message of the Day • Create Assignments • Add Students • Participate In Whiteboard • Post Notes • Admin Attendance

The Librarian role was well-received by library staff and teaching faculty, and continues to be utilized to embed library materials and staff into both distance and on campus courses. In an internal survey, one respondent stated, “I think it [Librarian role] works out really well for

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assisting instructors in getting library resources into their classes. Plus, with message boards, we can answer questions that many students have at one time.” In the future, the Distance Education Team will highlight this role during internal staff and team meetings, and host distance education workshops to train more librarians on the process of using our online system to offer library instruction and reference to both distance and face-to-face instructors using the learning management system.

Outreach and Collaboration

As we began to improve and enliven our reference, instruction, and research interfaces, we simultaneously reached out to distance education stakeholders across campus to let them know what we were doing, invite them to take part, or ask to be included in existing activities. It was and is important to us to build strong relationships across campus not only to smooth the communication process, but to truly collaborate with stakeholders to find innovative ways to reach distance students and brainstorm improvements for services and processes.

Division of Continuing Education

Kansas State University employs a centralized Division of Continuing Education (DCE) to administer many of the distance courses and programs offered by the university. We scheduled several meetings with the newly established Director of Faculty and Student Services, as well as with the DCE E-Learning Team consisting of the many coordinators, staff, and administrators responsible for the academic programs offered. During the initial meetings, we shared the

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survey results, but we spent most of our time brainstorming ways to improve our communication to distance students and teaching faculty. The following are just a few of the activities that came out of those initial meetings:

- Scheduling library-infused Facebook posts to be posted on the DCE Facebook page with links highlighting library services of particular use to distance students at certain points in the semester. For example, in November, we scheduled a post about and link to the Libraries' instance of RefWorks, so that students might have time to learn about the tool and implement it for their end-of-semester research projects. DCE has a large and active Facebook following, allowing our posts to be seen by many users.
- Writing a library and research resources syllabus blurb explaining library services for distance users which we encouraged DCE coordinators to send to the faculty they worked with for inclusion on their syllabi.
- Working directly with coordinators to distribute the most current student and faculty handouts at upcoming events.
- Scheduling email distribution through the DCE listservs in early October and early February to reach students at their point of need.
- Volunteering to be a part of the DCE "Take 5" video series which allows faculty from across campus to speak for five minutes about a topic or technology that impacts online teaching and learning. One team member worked with the campus film studio crew to shoot and edit the video which discussed the merits of the recently implemented web scale discovery system. The video is now housed on an e-learning wiki for faculty.

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- Working with a DCE Assistant Dean and her staff to add a stand-alone library module to the e-learning wiki. The module targets a faculty audience, but centers on the library services and resources available to students studying remotely. The module includes images, downloadable handouts, and will eventually include three videos to augment the text.

Graduate School

Soon after the results of the survey were analyzed, the DE Team met with representatives from the Graduate School to discuss the survey, the current library-related web content, and to discuss avenues for increased collaboration. The initial meeting included the Graduate School staff who organize new student orientation activities, and the Dean of the Graduate School. We discussed logistics for updating web content and possible avenues for increased library promotion to remote graduate students. The single largest conclusion was the need to work directly with program coordinators at the college and department level, as well as with the DCE program coordinators to distribute materials to students and faculty through existing channels. As was the case for the collaboration with the Division of Continuing Education, it was extremely important to cultivate collegial and mutually beneficial relationships with the staff and administrators in the Graduate School in order to maintain the Libraries' presence in ongoing activities and events hosted by this office.

Web Presence

K-State Libraries' web page for distance learners predated the formation of the current DE Team by several years. While the page consisted of several links to current resources and

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services available to distance patrons, web analytics showed the page rarely received much traffic. This was likely due to its lack of proximity to the homepage (it was buried deep under several pages and clicks), its flat and unattractive design, and the fact that it was not promoted or linked from many other sources. The DE Team utilized the survey results to revamp the “Information for Distance Learners” page to highlight the most highly valued services and resources. It is now linked directly from the home page. Since its re-release in July of 2012 until the time of this writing (about 8 months) the page has been viewed over 730 times.

Central Instructional Design






The number of faculty teaching at a distance at Kansas State University has risen dramatically in the last five years. In an effort to help faculty new to online instruction and course building, the Kansas State University Instructional Design Unit, housed in the Information Technology Assistance Center (iTAC), created a course in the learning management system called “E-Learning Best Practices”. The course contains several components which aid in the adaptation of face-to-face instructional content to an online environment. A member of the DE Team was asked to create a section of content on library services and resources to be housed under the “Learner Support” module. We included several videos, flyers, and links which could easily be emailed or embedded into other courses (Figure 4). We also included and provided in-depth answers for several frequently asked questions. Faculty can also see examples of LibGuides and other online instructional content and tools in the library section, along with instructions on how to contact us and embed us into courses using the Librarian role. The E-Learning Best Practices course is promoted to all faculty who work with iTAC instructional designers, so many

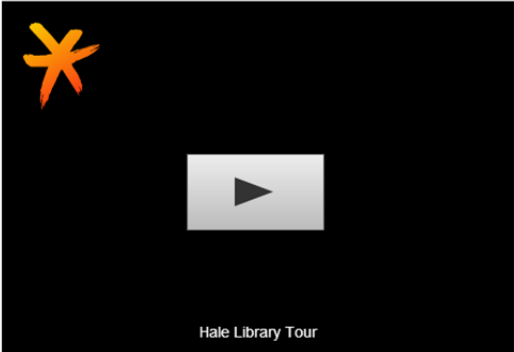
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of our newest faculty, or those are simply new to online education, are able to access the content. While the content in this course is targeted at faculty who teach at a distance, a large percentage of on-campus faculty utilize the learning management system to deliver content to their students, so again our efforts to design content for the distance community resulted in resources usable by a broader audience.

[Figure 4]

[Content](#) | [5. Learner Support](#) | [K-State Libraries Online Services and Resources](#)

K-State Libraries Services and Resources	
Item	Description
Overviews and Frequently Asked Questions	
 Student Flyer.pdf	An easy to read flyer you can email to your students or embed in your KSOL course.
 DE Faculty Top 10	The top 10 things distance instructors and faculty should know about and use in their online courses.
 Library FAQs for DE Faculty	A breakdown of frequently asked questions pertaining the services and resources available to DE students and faculty.
Library Instruction Materials	
 Customized Library Course guide Example	The Libraries can create customized course and subject guides to address your classes, assignments and other research activities.
 Hale Library Tour	Virtual tour of Hale Library

A video player interface for the 'Hale Library Tour'. It features a black background with an orange starburst logo in the top left corner. In the center, there is a white play button icon. Below the play button, the text 'Hale Library Tour' is displayed in white.

Research Collections and Discovery Tools

In the years prior to our survey, K-State Libraries had responded to a steady rise in distance enrollment and ever-increasing expectations for immediate remote access to research materials by investing heavily in subscriptions to electronic journals, databases with full-text

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primary sources, and electronic books. This proliferation of digital resources coincided with an anecdotal increase in the number of staff and patrons expressing frustration over the difficulty of knowing which portal or tool to use to find pertinent materials. Therefore, we were not surprised when our survey revealed that few distance patrons made use of K-State Libraries' resources for class-related or personal research. We were similarly not shocked by the finding that only 50% of the faculty who reported giving research assignments also reported that they recommended K-State Libraries' databases as a source for conducting that research.

In the nearly two years following administration of our survey, K-State Libraries have launched several initiatives designed to simplify access to our trove of digital materials. While we cannot claim that our efforts directly led to any of these initiatives, we feel confident that by sharing our survey results widely among our colleagues, we helped to generate a greater sense of urgency for pursuing them.

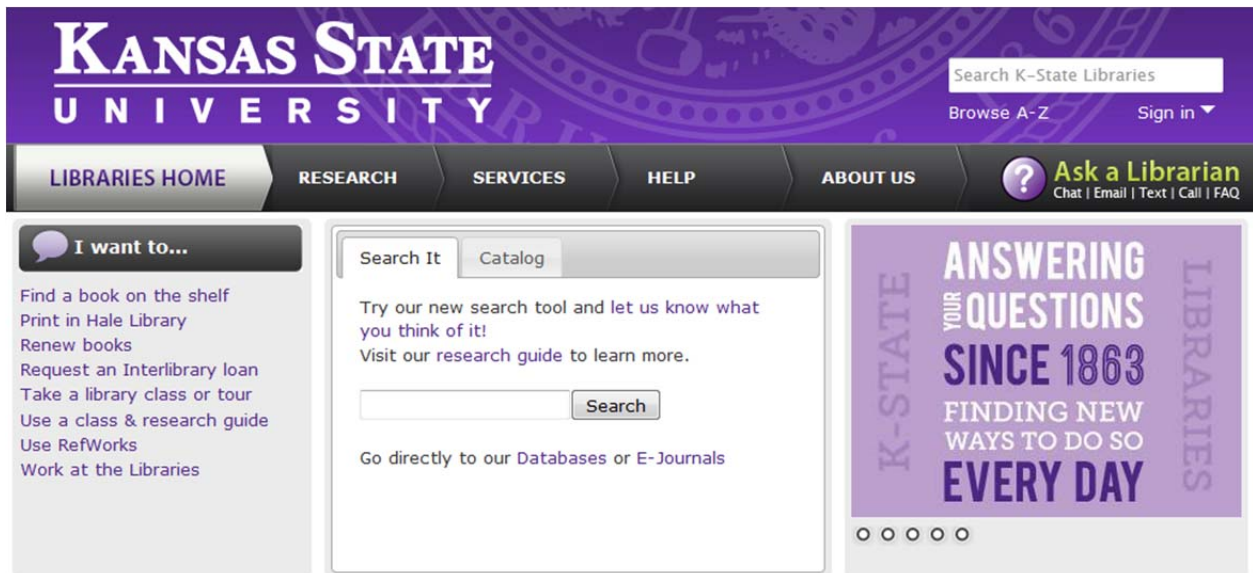
Web-scale Discovery

K-State Libraries implemented Ex Libris' web scale discovery solution in October 2012 and placed a simple search box that queries it directly on the Libraries' home page (Figure 5). Ex Libris' product consists of two components: (1) an index of local holdings harvested from K-State Libraries' catalog and digital collections; and (2) Primo Central's massive index of articles, books, and other information sources. The size and scope of the combined index and the availability of a topic facet for limiting searches makes it a good tool for novice researchers who need only a few articles on a fairly well-defined topic or for any researcher armed with specific

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terminology representing something concrete. Two especially valuable attributes of this webscale discovery tool are its ability to limit to peer-reviewed journals and to those articles identified by our link resolver's (SFX) database as having full-text availability in an open url compliant target. While Primo Central is not a panacea for all searching challenges, it does provide a gateway to our valuable collections that should not intimidate users and leave them seeing the Libraries as inscrutable and irrelevant.

[Figure 5]



Databases Directory

A databases directory team was formed and tasked with reviewing and restructuring our old databases list. Whereas previously it had been structured based on broad subject categories, we made the decision to restructure it based on our curricular format. Now, with only a few exceptions, categories conform to the curricular structure of our colleges and subcategories

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conform to our departments within those colleges. We also designated several “most important” databases within each category, helping researchers to find useful resources without wading through the entire list. Designing the database list in this way makes it easier for researchers to find an appropriate database to use for their research without librarian intervention.

Interlibrary Services

Our Interlibrary Services department will mail books to distance patrons at no charge, whether owned by K-State Libraries or borrowed from another library. The patron pays only return postage. They also provide a document delivery service to scan and electronically deliver journal articles and book chapters from books and journals that we own (including those housed in our Special Collections department), as well as the traditional borrowing services for items we don't own.

Digitization of Local Collections

K-State Libraries' Department of Special Collections is home to several unique archival collections of interest to both scholars and the general Kansas State University community. In an effort to improve access to these collections, K-State Libraries have digitized several smaller collections in-house and have partnered with LYRASIS, a non-profit membership organization, for a mass digitization project to digitize a few large collections out-of-house. While these initiatives were launched several years before we conducted our survey, the vast majority of the digitization has taken place since that time. Among the archival digital collections currently

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available online are Kansas State University's yearbooks from 1891 to 2009, course catalogs from our founding year to 2008, and two galleries of photographs: Kansas State University Historical Photographs and Notable Women of K-State.

In addition to digitizing its archival holdings, K-State Libraries also launched the K-State Research Exchange, a digital repository of Kansas State University's scholarly and creative output. The repository includes all Kansas State University dissertations published since the Fall 2006 semester and all Master's theses and reports published since the Fall 2007 semester. In addition, it includes articles, reports, presentations, photographs, and manuscripts from faculty, staff, and students. The repository is of particular value to distance and on campus graduate students because it provides them with convenient access to the scholarship of many of their professors and to dissertations or theses published by previous students in their department.

Next Steps

Although the activities of the DE Team have already enlivened our relationships with stakeholders across campus, and anecdotally increased student and faculty awareness of library services and resources, there is still much work to accomplish. Our organization is extraordinarily team-based and many of our ideas will require in-depth collaboration with other library and outside department staff. The following list contains examples of collaborative projects and outreach efforts on deck for the near future.

Collaboration with Analytics and Assessment Experts

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K-State Libraries uses web analytics to gather information about the IP addresses of patrons who visit its website. While these addresses provide information about the locations of the internet service providers our patrons are using to access our site, they do not support clear conclusions about where the patrons themselves are located. Furthermore, they provide no information about whether the patrons are distance students or whether they are local students who happen to be temporarily at a remote location. We will collaborate with K-State Libraries' Web Services Librarian and IT staff to explore methods for augmenting our knowledge of who is using our site. We will also work with K-State Libraries' Office of Planning and Assessment to craft the follow-up survey and analyze the results, as well as to conduct additional assessment activities.

Collaboration with Reference and Instruction Staff

We plan to analyze LibraryH3lp chat service reference transactions to determine how many distance patrons we might be helping, and the nature of the assistance we provide. Although not all distance patrons self-identify during a chat transaction, many do, and we can use those transaction records to better understand the needs of remote patrons, and improve our online materials and staff training processes accordingly.

We will create a LibGuide specifically for distance patrons, and create DE content in our LibGuides repository that can easily be copied or linked into other guides. Although many of our reference and instruction staff are aware of remote patron needs and differences, it is easy to forget to include this potential audience when creating materials for a specific class or project.

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One of the huge advantages of creating materials in a content management system like LibGuides is the transferability of material from one guide to another.

The DE Team is also interested in fostering increased communication and training to our own library staff. A handful of library staff are currently and routinely embedded into distance courses. We would like to provide in-depth training about embedded librarianship to include best practices for those who already embed, and an introduction for those who aren't quite there yet. Of course, embedded librarianship remains a hot topic among members of the profession, and we hope to join that conversation and utilize the work of others to help our internal efforts make a deeper impact.

Collaboration with Instructional Design Unit

We will work in partnership with the Instructional Design Unit to conduct usability studies and analyze usage statistics on embedded chat widgets in LibGuides and other library web pages to determine best placement practices. We want to know when our patrons like to contact us, and which pages they use to do it.

We will create a series of stand-alone tutorials for distance students and faculty. Topics will include a general overview of remote patron access to the Libraries, along with more specific tutorials on requesting interlibrary loans, embedding librarians into online courses, and making virtual appointments with library staff. Once created, these tutorials will be hosted on the Libraries' YouTube channel to make them easily embeddable not only in online library systems

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and environments, but in our stakeholders' online environments, effectively taking the materials to the students, be they truly distance students or on campus students accessing our resources remotely.

Provide input to Content Management Division

Although not directly under the purview of the DE Team, we will support the increased digitization of local or historical collections. Currently, only on-campus patrons have access to much of the material in our archives and special collections. Though some materials can be scanned and emailed to distance patrons, a significant portion of these collections is not even cataloged, effectively preventing remote users from ever discovering or using them. We would also like to see increased capacity for online resources like primary sources, or other materials that are difficult to interlibrary loan.

Efforts are currently underway to make the process of requesting interlibrary loans easier for the patron. Indeed, the recent implementation of a web scale discovery service has made the process of discovering and requesting materials easier. However, the DE Team will advocate for a more seamless user interface – our users should not have to know whether or not we own or subscribe to something they want to access.

Further Collaboration with DCE

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We will continue to pursue increased collaboration with the DCE and department project coordinators who work directly with distance faculty and students. Our project coordinators not only have direct access to our target population, they have built relationships with students and staff which can serve as a bridge between the Libraries and the distance population. Emails, flyers, and other types of promotional materials are more likely to be read and digested when they come from a trusted source. There are many coordinators across campus and in DCE, and the logistics of building communication paths with each coordinator are intimidating, especially given our recent organizational restructure away from the subject librarian model. But we can start small, and coordinator by coordinator, build the bridges necessary to provide our distance patrons the library access to which they are entitled.

Marketing and Promotion

Marketing and promotion of library services and resources is a huge, multi-faceted topic. Much of the literature on these topics boils down to the need for efficient, effective marketing tactics in order to generate and retain patronage in an increasingly Google-ized environment. We feel strongly that none of our efforts will make much difference without an in-depth, strategic marketing/promotion plan. The first step we have taken towards this end is the creation of a master matrix of all of the current promotional efforts we have, contacts for those efforts, and a list of the locations and last update for all online university content that mentions library resources. The matrix also includes a calendar indicating the dates of push notifications, reminders to stakeholders, and possible avenues for increased promotional efforts. The DE Team plans to integrate this matrix into our semester and annual workflows in order to create a

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streamlined and continuous promotional dialogue with our stakeholders. In this way, we hope to prevent the gradual decline in enthusiasm, efforts and/or relationships that often occurs over time when the initial phase of a large project is complete.

Finally, and most importantly, we would like to increase our daily advocacy for distance patrons and their unique needs. The DE Team, of course, has attempted to infuse their daily interactions with other colleagues and departments with data, anecdotes and other evidence of the need to more fully integrate the distance population into library workflows. But we are only three voices, and there is great need for our colleagues to take up the charge and continue these efforts. We hope, therefore, to more fully involve others in the library in this project through training, collaboration on projects, and increased membership on the DE Team.

Conclusion

After surveying our distance users, it was clear that our services were not being adequately promoted or used. As we move into the future, we will re-survey our distance patrons to determine how successful our efforts have been. One important lesson we have learned is that we can never take for granted that our patrons know about our services and therefore our promotion of them can never cease.

Our efforts to create additional services for distance patrons have provided benefits for all of our users. Services such as a revamped databases directory, increased purchase of online

materials, enhanced chat services, document delivery, embedding librarians in our learning management system, web-scale discovery tools, and digitization of our local collections benefit local as well as distance patrons. The universal design of these services means that distance education teams can contribute to services that benefit everyone. Rather than compartmentalizing distance patrons, it is important to focus on helping them to have an experience that is as much like that of on-campus patrons as possible.

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