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Table of Contents

If you're viewing this document online, you can click any of the topics below to link directly to that section.

The Instructional Role of the Two-Year College Learning Resources Center. ERIC Digest.....	1
BIBLIOGRAPHIC INSTRUCTION.....	2
OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL ROLES.....	2
DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION.....	2
COMPUTER LITERACY.....	3
COMPUTER-ASSISTED INSTRUCTION.....	3
TELECOURSES.....	3
INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT.....	3
SUMMARY.....	4



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Author: Raufman, Lisa - Colby, Anita

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The Instructional Role of the Two-Year College Learning Resources Center. ERIC Digest.

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Learning Resources Centers (LRC's) at community colleges have approached their instructional responsibilities in a variety of ways. Most LRC's offer some form of library orientation, and all develop collections that support the college's instructional programs. This digest highlights examples of ways in which LRC's have become even more directly and actively involved in the teaching and learning process through library skills instruction, other educational activities, and Instructional development programs.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INSTRUCTION

Community colleges and their students have different bibliographic instruction needs than four-year colleges. Two-year college students are usually not required to conduct in-depth research on a topic: many are studying subjects at introductory rather than advanced levels; and, as commuter students, most do not spend a great deal of time on campus outside of class (Yee, 1982). As a group, two-year college students exhibit a wide range of language and academic skills. All of these factors are important considerations in the development of bibliographic instruction programs.

The methods employed by two-year colleges to deliver library instruction range from formal credit courses to self-paced individualized instruction to course-integrated library skills modules.

Miami-Dade Community College's South Campus has developed a self-instructional library skills program, consisting of a two-part manual, covering the book classification system, card catalog, and major types of reference books, as well as periodical indexes and vertical files; review exercises; in-library assignments; and computer-scored tests (Wine, 1983). The library skills program has been integrated into half of the college's composition courses, with favorable responses from both instructors and students.

In recognition that the skill deficiencies of remedial students are a major obstacle to their effective use of the library, the LRC at Kingsborough Community College in New York has developed a one-hour, hands-on library skills unit as part of the English Skills Lab program (Schneider and Fuhr, 1982). An in-class lecture/demonstration by a librarian is reinforced with a worksheet on the use of the catalog and periodical indexes.

OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL ROLES

LRC's are currently involved in providing instruction in a variety of subject areas and formats. Though the most common subjects taught within the LRC tend to be basic skills and library use, at certain colleges vocational instruction, college survival skills, or computer literacy fall within the purview of the LRC.

DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

Holleman's survey (1982) found that 12 of 30 LRC's provided remedial instruction through library-based learning laboratories. A statewide survey in Texas revealed that 12.2% of learning centers' developmental education programs were administered by the library (Rippey and Truett, 1983). The experience of West Hills Community College in California (Gerhardt, 1986) indicates that a library-based remedial program can be effective. At West Hills, faculty develop the instructional approaches, an oversight committee determines policy, and the library director administers and evaluates the program. Classes are taught by the best humanities instructors on a rotating basis, and instructional support is provided by a staff of learning resource assistants and paid tutors.

At Miami-Dade Community College's North Campus, every student enrolled in remedial reading or writing is required to take the library-based Information Skills Lab. The Lab offers students instruction in: (1) the use of the library; (2) college survival skills, such as reading the college's computer-generated progress reports and planning a program of study; (3) thinking skills, such as paying attention, remembering, and preparing for tests; and (4) developing the personal skills and attitudes that are necessary for academic success (Suarez, 1985).

COMPUTER LITERACY

The Lima Campus library of the Ohio State University was selected as the location for the campus's computer literacy program because its flexible hours are adaptable to the schedules of students and members of the public. Rather than serving as consultants or support staff, the library staff are actively involved as instructors in public training operations, hardware, and software (Hanson, 1984).

COMPUTER-ASSISTED INSTRUCTION

During the 1970's several LRC's became involved in providing computer-assisted instruction. The National Science Foundation sponsored a number of these early projects, referred to as Time-Shared Computer-Controlled Information Television (TICCIT) programs, at community colleges. TICCIT currently provides complete courses in algebra, English grammar, and remedial English, and supplementary materials in other subject areas. In addition, learner control, student tracking, monitoring, and progress reports are built in (Terwilliger, 1985).

TELECOURSES

The LRC's role in the provision of telecourses changes by campus. In Allen's (1982) discussion of ways in which the LRC can more effectively use the television and videocassettes for independent study, the LRC is considered to be in an excellent position to distribute cassettes and administer tests.

INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Roark's (1983) model of an integrated learning resources program assigns the library an

active role in the improvement of instruction. He argues that the involvement of librarians in curriculum planning and the participation of instructional staff in collection development provide a necessary bridge between the instructional program of a college and the library.

The library at Jackson Community College, in Michigan, houses an instructional development center, that instructors can visit any time to use modules on applied specific instructional methods and strategies. Library-based instructional developers collaborate with instructors to produce these modules and the menu-driven system used to access them (Major, 1987).

Within Richland College's library, the Division of Instructional Development Services provides assistance with the review, revision, and development of lessons, units, courses, and programs. In addition to administering the college's Instructional Development Grant Program, the Division also helps instructors with test construction, evaluation, and research (Schmidt, 1987).

Miami-Dade Community College's North Campus promotes the use of library research assignments in developmental courses. The library conducts sessions to assist faculty members in the creation of library assignments that would teach remedial students research methods and expose them to standard resources. Three teacher workshops are offered, covering "Basic Instruction in Services and Resources Available at the North Campus Library"; "Practical Application"; and "The Mechanics of Library Assignments" (Suarez, 1985).

At the college's South Campus, the library supports instruction in several other ways: (1) librarians offer in-class lectures on library use; (2) they prepare bibliographies and conduct on-line searches related to developmental and gifted instruction; (3) the library maintains a special collection of materials to help students prepare for the College-Level Academic Skills Test; (4) librarians have prepared 52 reading lists in various disciplines to encourage students to read; and (5) librarians serve as mentors for minority and honors students (Watters, 1986).

SUMMARY

The community college library resources center is expected to provide a range and diversity of programs and services beyond that of any other library. The "Guidelines for Two-Year College Learning Resources Programs," published jointly by the American Library Association, Association of College and Research Libraries, and Association of Educational Communications and Technology, establish a role for community college libraries in both instruction and instructional development. These guidelines, which were adopted in 1972 and reaffirmed in 1982, call for the involvement of community college librarians "with teaching, administrative, and other staff members in the design, implementation, and evaluation of instructional and educational systems of the institution" (p. 305).

The LRC's ability to fulfill its current mission and other roles in the future will depend upon numerous factors, some within and some beyond the control of the LRC itself. Terwilliger (1985) identifies some of the external forces as advances in computer and communications technology, changes in the make up and needs of community college students, and the financial base of the college as a whole. Internal factors include the structure and perceived value of the LRC within the college, and the professional competence and continuing education of the LRC staff. In her assessment of the future of the LRC, Terwilliger concludes that "the LRC is the campus unit which can fuse the instruments of technology and the accumulated knowledge of the past, present, and future" (p. 538).

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