

ED327221 1990-11-00 Distance Education and the Changing Role of the Library Media Specialist. ERIC Digest.

ERIC Development Team

www.eric.ed.gov

Table of Contents

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

Distance Education and the Changing Role of the Library Media Specialist. ERIC Digest.....	1
NEED FOR CHANGE.....	2
ROLE OF THE LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST.....	2
INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN.....	3
PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT.....	3
REFERENCES.....	4



ERIC Identifier: ED327221

Publication Date: 1990-11-00

Author: Schamber, Linda

Source: ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources Syracuse NY.

Distance Education and the Changing Role of the Library Media Specialist. ERIC Digest.

THIS DIGEST WAS CREATED BY ERIC, THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ERIC, CONTACT ACCESS ERIC 1-800-LET-ERIC

This digest is based on "Distance Education and the Changing Role of the Library

Media Specialist," by Michael A. Burke.

When classes are conducted via communications media with little face-to-face contact between teachers and students, as is the case in distance education, problems are inevitable. Distance education is so depersonalized and distance education courses so tightly structured that students can feel stifled and lose motivation. Library media specialists can help by taking a proactive role in distance education efforts, from instructional design to media resource development to inservice training for staff.

NEED FOR CHANGE

Demographic and economic trends point to major problems for public education in the coming decade. Foremost among these trends is the inverse relationship between increasing K-12 enrollments and declining workforces. At the same time that many members of the currently aging workforce will be retiring, school systems will be hard pressed to hire replacements due to a decrease in eligible college graduates. These graduates, especially women, will also have a variety of other career options. Thus fewer teachers will be available to teach fewer courses, a situation that is likely to affect special populations of students most. These populations include an increasing proportion of black and Hispanic students, and students in small and rural schools. Finally, and most importantly, public education is experiencing a funding crisis exacerbated by a general lack of electorate and federal support for public education among a graying national population.

These trends have led to a growing interest in distance education, especially at the federal level. Distance education is seen both as a way to offer more equitable distribution of educational resources to special populations of students, and as a way to make instruction more cost-effective by sharing teachers and instructional materials. School library media specialists play an important role in projections for improving the quality of distance education.

ROLE OF THE LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST

The publication "Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs" (1988) states that the mission of the school library media program is to ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information. This mission presents at least four challenges to library media specialists:

1. Provide physical access to information and ideas for a diverse population whose needs are rapidly changing.
2. Provide equity and freedom of access to information and resources for all students regardless of sex, age, race, creed, or socioeconomic background.
3. Provide leadership and expertise in the use of information and instructional technology.

4. Become proactive in participating in distance education activities and networks that enhance access to resources located outside the school, community, or state.

Library media specialists must actually play several roles in order to contribute to instructional design and program development for distance education. These roles include instructional consultant, information specialist, teacher, and technological coordinator.

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

Recent research warns that distance education courses have been structured and packaged so tightly that learners have no choice in what they learn or how they learn it, thus inhibiting creative thinking and critical analysis. This, along with the impersonal nature of distance education, contributes to a lack of motivation among students. In order to support distance learning, library media specialists serve as instructional consultants to course designers and teachers. Their role is to match information resources to course objectives, teaching and learning styles, and subject content. If distance courses are to provide more individualized assignments, students must be able to access a variety of resources themselves. Library media specialists can facilitate access in several ways:

1. Identify resources and their locations: provide bibliographies.
2. Make access easier: provide multiple copies and packages of materials, develop flexible lending policies, acquire additional playback devices for audio and video.
3. Encourage interaction among faculty and students: identify or provide ways for them to interact, such as teleconferencing or group meetings, and places for them to meet, such as study areas and field trips.

Along with all this, the responsibility for developing problem-solving and critical thinking skills is greater than ever. Library media staff must continue to serve as teachers in providing skills instruction in accessing, understanding, and using information in a variety of print and nonprint formats. There must be a commitment to continuing inservice library media staff training in instructional design and information skills teaching.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The primary obstacle to effectiveness in distance education programs is not the structure of courses, but the "no-involvement" attitude of individuals. When library media specialists and teachers decide to become involved, they can work as a team to select, produce, and distribute the necessary instructional materials.

In distance education, this process requires training in the communication technologies

that make it possible for the library media center to serve as the hub of an instructional and informational system. In the role of technical coordinator, the library media specialist must be able to evaluate, select, manage, and use technologies such as interactive and cable television, microwave relay, satellites, fiber optics, and computers. Again in this area, there must be a commitment to training library media staff. The same technologies that are used for student instruction can be and are being used for professional instruction.

Cooperation and networking of all kinds are essential to program development in distance education. In addition to communicating with teachers and students, library media specialists may work closely with government officials, school administrators, technical experts, university media centers, and database vendors.

Large-scale distance education programs, especially at the secondary school level, have been implemented in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Texas, Virginia, and other states. A notable case study is the Instructional Television Fixed Service (ITFS) system in the Green Bay Area (WI) Public School District, where author Burke serves as Director of Instructional Resources. The success of all these programs depends in large part on the close cooperation of education agencies at federal, state, and local levels. For example, several recent ventures have come about as a result of the federally funded Star Schools Initiative begun in 1989. Three organizations receiving Star Schools funding are The Satellite Educational Resources Consortium (SERC) of which Wisconsin is a member; The TI-IN United Star Network, which serves Indian and Chapter I schools in 16 states; and Technical Education Resources, Inc. (TERC), which deals with math and science courses through 11 centers across the United States.

REFERENCES

American Association of School Librarians, & Association for Educational Communications and Technology. (1988). *Information power: Guidelines for school library media programs*. Chicago: American Library Association; Washington, D.C.: Association for Educational Communications and Technology.

Burke, Michael A. (1989). *Distance education and the changing role of the library media specialist*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University, ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources. (IR 85). ED number pending.

ADDITIONAL READING

Barron, Daniel D. (1989, November). "Distance education: Removing barriers to knowledge." *School Library Journal*, 35(15), 28-33. EJ 404 165.

Clark, G. Christopher. (1989, September-October). "Distance learning: A spectrum of opportunities." *Media and Methods*, 26(1), 24-27. EJ 401 041.

Distance Education for Elementary/Secondary Schools in Wisconsin. A Report Issued by the Council on Instructional Telecommunications to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Bulletin No. 9362. (1989, February). Madison, WI: Wisconsin State Department of Public Instruction. ED 318 431.

U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment. (1989, November). Linking for Learning: A New Course for Education. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. ED 310 765.

This digest, based on "Distance Education and the Changing Role of the Library Media Specialist" by Michael A. Burke, was prepared for the ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources by Linda Schamber, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University. November 1990.

ERIC digests are in the public domain and may be freely reproduced and disseminated.

This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. RI88062008. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or ED.

Title: Distance Education and the Changing Role of the Library Media Specialist. ERIC Digest.

Note: This digest is based on a monograph, "Distance Education and the Changing Role of the Library Media Specialist," by Michael A. Burke, which is in the ERIC database as ED 321 775.

Document Type: Information Analyses---ERIC Information Analysis Products (IAPs) (071); Information Analyses---ERIC Digests (Selected) in Full Text (073);

Available From: ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources, 030 Huntington Hall, Syracuse, NY 13244-2340 (free while supply lasts).

Descriptors: Cooperative Planning, Distance Education, Educational Technology, Elementary Secondary Education, Futures (of Society), Learning Resources Centers, Library Role, Media Specialists, School Libraries

Identifiers: ERIC Digests, Librarian Teacher Cooperation

####



[\[Return to ERIC Digest Search Page\]](#)