Hunting and Gathering: Attempting to Assess Services to Distance Learning Students

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This is how I feel after watching most conference presentations.
This is not one of those presentations.
Louisiana State University

- Louisiana’s flagship university
- Founded 1853
- Approximately 31,000 students
- Land, sea, and space grant institution
- 72 bachelor’s programs, 76 master’s fields, and 54 doctoral fields
How did I end up here?

I have a very particular set of skills.
Assessment cycle
My goals

• Identify distance learners
• Identify and evaluate library services and policies for DL students
• Assess student awareness and satisfaction
Challenges: Position Vacancy
Challenges: job description
Challenges: special projects
Identify distance learners

Goal 1
Distance learning at LSU

- LSU Online
- Semester-based online classes (hybrid and 100% online)
- Compressed video?
- Independent & Distance Learning/Online Distance Learning (LSU Continuing Education)

All operating independently without oversight.
Using three different instances of Moodle.
Who is a distance learner?

- Currently enrolled in an LSU Online class or in a 100% web-based LSU class
- Designated a DE student by the Distance Learning librarian
- Not attending any classes held on the LSU campus
Identify and evaluate library services and policies for DL students

Goal 2
Finding information

- Website
- Old communication (forwarded email)
- Reports from other departments
- Belated access to files of previous librarian. And by belated, I mean 7 months after my appointment.
Major horrors

- The website
- The subject guide
- Nonworking toll-free phone number
- “Site libraries”
- Getting access to Moodle shell
- No substantive information about policies, procedures, relationships, or data

What could possibly go wrong?
Andrea,

We disconnected the phone number in October of 2014. I’ve attached the email string about the disconnection.

Thanks,
Inga
Distance Education

The LSU Libraries are committed to providing Distance Education (DE) students and off-site faculty with library services comparable to those at the main campus through:

- access to electronic books and journals,
- a delivery service for books and journals owned by the Libraries,
- reciprocal borrowing agreements with many other academic libraries in the state.

Library Services

Who is Eligible

Accessing Services at LALINC Libraries

Distance Ed Borrowing Policies

In-State Reciprocal Borrowing

Request LSU Materials  Request through Interlibrary Loan

LALINC Application
Which is actually an improvement.
Example 1

Distance Education -- Getting Started

The LSU Libraries are committed to providing Distance Education (DE) students and off-site faculty with library services comparable to those at the main campus through

- access to electronic books and journals,
- a delivery service for books and journals owned by the Libraries (LSU Materials),
- reciprocal borrowing agreements with many other academic libraries in the state,
- a distance education librarian (sp/subjects/staff_details.php?name=notted) for individual assistance and problem-solving.
Example 2

Students eligible to utilize these services must

- be currently enrolled in a DE class at LSU or designated a DE student by the DE Librarian (/sp/subjects/staff_details.php?name=notted). (Students in unique situations may qualify for distance services even though they are not in courses usually considered distance education courses. Examples are students living out of state while enrolled for dissertations hours or an independent study course.)
- not be attending any classes held on the LSU campus,
- follow the policies and procedures of the library for borrowing and returning materials.
Example 3

Accessing Services at Site Library

Services to distance education students vary by library since each site library has policies and procedures unique to their clientele. However, the following information should be helpful:

- Out-of-state students should request services at the nearest public library.
Borrowing physical books (before)

Student requests book from LSU Libraries.

“Site library” returns book to LSU Libraries.

LSU Libraries sends book to “site library.”

Student picks up book from “site library.”

Student returns books to “site library.”
Borrowing physical books (now)

Student requests book from LSU Libraries.

Student mails book back to LSU Libraries.

LSU Libraries mails book to student.
Assess student awareness and satisfaction

Goal 3
Student satisfaction survey

• SACS Reaffirmation of Accreditation 2014
• LSU Student Life & Enrollment Survey for LSU Online Students

They’re coming to get you, Barbara!
Question 15: Please tell us how satisfied you are with the quality of library services

- Very satisfied: 60
- Somewhat satisfied: 24
- Somewhat dissatisfied: 5
- Very dissatisfied: 0
- No opinion/no basis to judge: 50
Question 16: Please tell us how satisfied you are with the quality of library resources

- Very satisfied: 59
- Somewhat satisfied: 28
- Somewhat dissatisfied: 3
- Very dissatisfied: 0
- No opinion/no basis to judge: 49
Question 29: Were you aware of the LSU Libraries web page detailing services for LSU Online students and faculty?

- Yes: 92
- No: 32
Question 30: Did you seek the advice of a library subject specialist assigned to your course?
Question 31: Were you able to access online databases from the LSU Libraries?

- Yes: 90
- No: 34
Question 32: Did you encounter any problems accessing the online databases?

- Yes: 12
- No: 112
Highlights of “please explain”

• “All the time. However the staff do help when I have questions. Also, the webpage sucks. They need to fix that.”
• “Could not access the database. Had to spend an hour on the phone in order to get access.”
• “Finding a link to the library site is not an easy thing to do.”
• “I didn't know there were online databases for me to access much less how to access them.”
Question 33: Did you request materials through the LSU Libraries Interlibrary Loan department?

Yes: 7

No: 117
Progress

• Removed factually incorrect information
• Removed dated information
• Changed model for book delivery
• Building a relationship with new LSU Online director
  • Advisory Council
• Trying to stay in the loop by working with the Distance Learning Policy Working Group

And you may ask yourself,

"My God, what have I done?"
What worked

• Establishing contacts on campus (through sometimes unorthodox avenues).
• Being more proactive than I would normally be comfortable with.
• Being persistent.
Moving forward

- Collect data
- Continue to build relationships
- Place data, policies, and documentation in a single, accessible location
- Review policies and website without being in panic mode
Plans that will take more time

- Focus on using relationships to bring instruction to the students
- Work on establishing an embedded librarian model in LSU Online programs
- Obtain student and faculty feedback on instruction, services, resources, and user experience.
- Adjust (just like a tidy model of assessment)!
Questions?

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