Draft Revision of ACRL Standards for Distance Learning Library Services: Summary of Proposed Changes

What follows is a section by section informal analysis and notation of the proposed changes to the 2008 Distance Learning Library Services Standards. In some instances commentary has been included speculating on the impact these changes may have on libraries and distance learning.

Part I Foundations

• **Access Entitlement Principle** – Cleaned up the language, and added international locations and by courses delivered by whatever modality. Stressed the principle of access entitlement as fundamental and unwavering conviction behind the standards.

• **Introduction: a Living Document** – Cleaned up some of the language from the previous edition. Acknowledged the growth of learning outside the classroom and large scale virtual course offerings not linked to any specific institutions as part of the impetus behind the latest revision of the standards.

• **Audience** – New section that delineates the intended audience of this document. Simply put, administrators, librarians and library personnel involved with distance services and faculty and students at schools of library and information science.

• **Definitions** – Added the following new entries
  - **Computer Literacy**
  - **Digital Literacy**
  - **Distance Learning Librarian**
  - **Embedded Librarian**
  - **Distance Learning Library Services** - Updated to include regional or branch campuses and blended learning

• **Changing Nature of Distance** – Acknowledged the blurring of the lines between on campus online users and truly distant users while acknowledging the special needs and concerns of those truly distant students who may have little or no institutional contact or identity
  - Identified three categories of library users, whose primary difference is in the degree of separation from the originating institution and affirmed the new standards are designed to serve these users.
  - Made an important distinction between distance learning and online learning. The two are often lumped together, but the standards make it clear they are not synonymous and that online learning can be used in situations that do not involve distance learning at all.
Part II Fundamental Requirements: A Bill of Rights for the Distance Learning Community

- Separated this section from the Foundations section. Cleaned up the language, amplified the text on certain points and changed the organization from a list of bulleted points to a set of grouped categories.
- Addresses the expansion of an institution through both physical and virtual means and requires sufficient additional financial support to meet the needs of the additional students.
- **Library Requirements** – While not a new addition, the section addressing Direct Human Contact is especially important and deserves mention as it stresses the need to maintain channels of direct human contact with distance learners.

Part III Specific Requirements

- Mostly small edits, cleaning up of and the addition of augmenting language. Adds two major sections, *Change* and *Globalization*.
- Replaced the term “librarian-administrator” with “distance learning librarian” in multiple locations.
- **Library Education** – Added the provision of ongoing professional development opportunities for practicing librarians.
- **Management** – Acknowledges that the functions of the distance learning librarian may be dispersed across integrated staffing systems, but care should be taken that proper oversight is maintained and at a minimum the distance learning librarian should be in place, managing:
  - Mission, goals and objectives
  - Needs and outcomes assessments
  - Collections and services
  - Cooperation and collaboration
- **Change** – This new section addresses the constant change in distance learning by listing issues that should be addressed when planning the implementation of new forms of distance learning.
- **Globalization** – Similar to the *Change* section, this section lists issues that must be considered when offering distance learning in a global context.
- **Services** –
  - Added “embedded librarian” to essential services.
  - Added “marketing of distance services directly to distance learners” to essential services.
  - Added sections on the importance of copyright compliance, legal counsel, training and institutional support.
  - Added provision of appropriate open access publications.