I recently took a couple of online undergraduate courses from the University of Phoenix (U of P) online. The U of P was started as a for-profit college for working adults back in 1976. There are various campus locations plus a completely online experience offering certifications and degrees from the associate to the doctoral level.

As a distance services librarian, I was curious to discover how the library played into the class experience. The library was introduced in the first required course, GEN 200. In the scavenger hunt assignment which was used to help navigate the U of P student portal, three basic questions were asked about the library site—what were the three major databases, what were three specialized databases, and what was the location of “Ask a Librarian.”

In my first course in information technology we were asked to cite at least one source in a paper. Of course, I tried out the library databases. The default for the single search box is to search the databases labeled as “General Reference.” Doing a search on this material yielded a lot of results from the Credo Reference database.

Using the drop-down menu, one could choose from over two dozen other disciplines including information technology. When one conducts a search using one of these disciplinary categories, there is a brief intermission while an integrated search is conducted. There were at least nine databases searched in the information technology category, and results were presented in a standard EBSCOhost results page.

What I found most convenient as a student is that the initial library page with the one search box shared the page with other useful tools, such as the Center for Writing Excellence, Center for Mathematics Excellence, Element K tutorials, and student labs. This made it easy to go from the research stage to the grammar and plagiarism check tools.

I did not interact with a librarian or try to find an online tutorial. Perhaps someone who has used these features will contribute some comments in the next newsletter.

Harrison College is based out of Indianapolis and has fifteen campuses across Indiana, Ohio, and Online. At approximately 1600 students, the Online campus enrolls about a quarter of all students at Harrison. These students learn at a distance, never visiting a Harrison Campus or attending a class in person. All communication is through emails, phone calls, discussion boards, instant message chats, and recorded tutorials on YouTube, no matter if a student lives just down the street, in Alaska, or is deployed in the Middle East (yes, we have all of these).

After some lobbying from librarians and other like-minded faculty and staff, the college redeveloped the required general education curriculum and added a new first-quarter class: Introduction to Information Literacy.

Preparing resources and giving suggestions for the course, I was thrilled that the librarians would soon have another direct link in preparing students for current and future assignments. The new Info Lit course would cover basic bibliographic instruction, ALA’s Info Lit standards, copyright,
licensing, and proper writing style, among other things.

As an Online Librarian, focusing my attention on only those students learning from a distance, I have attempted to encourage these skills even in my limited communication with students. When engaged in a reference chat session, I would ask a student to “follow along” as we find that article in the databases together, rather than providing them a link to the article in the chat dialog box. Similarly, recorded tutorials would explain broader research concepts and searching scenarios, such as database limiters and Boolean searching, instead of just assignment-specific links to preset search queries. Even so, I was glad that someone would now be teaching these skills to a captive audience, which I hoped would be more effective than my brief encounters with on-demand students who were seeking quick answers. But who would that “someone” be?

Me, that’s who! And several other Harrison College librarians, and some librarians from other institutions working as part-time faculty. For some, teaching an information literacy class was not new; for some it was new, but they could expect a relatively comfortable transition to teaching students they recognized from their local campuses. For me, teaching would be a brand new experience, and I learned it on the fly at the same time as learning a new Learning Management System (LMS). All of this in addition to assisting first-quarter students new to the LMS, maybe even new to higher education, and possibly new to the Internet (save for Facebook) after taking twenty years off since last time they were in any kind of school. In my case, supposed subject expertise was favored over teaching experience.

At the time of this writing, we are nearing the end of the first week of Fall classes. I thought my experience in the subject matter (librarianship) would compensate for my lack of teaching experience, but I am finding that to be laughable. Teaching is challenging, even when I am excited about my captive audience. I am continually impressed with students’ ability and quick adaptation to the LMS.

This article was meant to be more “observations of a distance learning librarian on the other side of the tracks”, but I’m finding it hard to make outside observations while remaining focused in my teaching role. A “can’t see the forest for the trees” sort of thing. Hopefully throughout the quarter I can better embrace my new role as an instructor, and see how my tools as a distance librarian help me along the way.

Distance Learning Division Sponsored Programs and Meetings at ILF
by Anne J. Haynes, Indiana University

The Distance Learning Division is sponsoring two programs and the Division’s Business Meeting at the ILF Annual Conference in Indianapolis on November 16-17, 2010. We invite you to attend all of these meetings and we look forward to seeing you in Indianapolis! For more conference information and registration, please see the conference preliminary brochure at: http://www.ilfonline.org/clientuploads/2010%20Annual%20Conference/Current%202010%20Prelim%20Book.pdf

Tuesday, November 16, 11:00-11:50 am: “Going the Distance”
Are you new to Distance Learning? Or a seasoned veteran using Distance Learning? Come to this session with questions, comments, tales of success and woe and get tips on improving, marketing and using your distance learning resources! Join other K-12 teachers and media specialists to discuss funding, collaborating with other schools, organizing the library’s distance learning program, marketing, meeting standards/curriculum with distance learning and more! All School Librarians with videoconferencing capabilities will walk away with ideas for collaboration and resources! Information will be presented as well as group discussion.

Presenter(s): Vivian Lawhead, Carmel Middle School; Jo Ellen Flynn, Creekside Middle School
Session Sponsor: Distance Learning Division
Audience: School Librarians, Technology, Children’s Librarians

Wednesday, November 17, 3:00-3:50 pm: “LibGuides: Not Just for Subject Guides”
According to recent Springshare statistics, there are over 82,000 active LibGuides, created by more than 19,000 librarians, at more than 1,200 libraries worldwide (libguides.com). Presumably, most of these are subject or research guides, focused as link-organizing help-tools for specific subjects, events or projects. However, the potential of this application goes far beyond these most common uses. Come get some exciting new ideas, and learn how you can turn this simple platform into a multimedia in-service program, workshop, course or even institutional website for your patrons, customers, students, staff and faculty.

Presenter(s): James Bell, Harrison College
Session Sponsor: Distance Learning Division, Library Information and Technology Division
Audience: Technology, Academic Librarians

Wednesday, November 17, 7:30-8:20 am: Distance Learning Division Business Meeting
Anyone interested in library services for distance learning is welcome to attend this meeting to participate in the discussion and express interest in volunteering for future Division activities and initiatives. Door prizes will be awarded.
I have the pleasure of teaching an online course on reference services and sources for school library media specialists this fall. Indiana State University encouraged librarians to teach in part to help make up for shortfalls in funds available for adjuncts and to avoid overburdening professors with too many classes. Not being a K-12 librarian myself, I considered my value-added would be my professional experience with reference service. I tried to add context to the readings to help students' understand why the concepts will be important on the job as well as the classroom.

I learned of my teaching assignment in the spring, which allowed time to prepare. The online class was already developed and I had contact with the previous instructor, a school librarian, who was very obliging. I was allowed access to the previous semester’s online courses to examine the course structure and review class interactions.

However, there were challenges in spite of all of this assistance. It took time to understand the flow of the course and its assignments. Being my first time teaching the course, it was difficult to predict where students would encounter difficulties with the course material. The number of forum interactions from previous online course records were huge in number and could not possibly all be browsed, studied, and analyzed to clearly understand what had come before. The descriptions of the assignments still did not show me the quality of final product to expect from students. The grading rubrics could be difficult to translate to ensure grading consistency from previous semesters.

I had worked with the Blackboard LMS before but teaching required me to learn new features and functions. I learned to set deadlines, access grading, and create assignments. Two of my students are Americans teaching in South American countries, which required the mid-semester development of an alternative assignment. The library relieved me of reference desk duty to compensate for the time but I still had liaison responsibilities to departments and some important committee work and tasks to complete this semester.

However, teaching basic reference allowed me to revisit foundational theories and get in touch with my roots again. The students are interested in learning. Most have some experience in school libraries already, which stimulated them to want to learn more. They will make fine librarians.

IOLUG’s Fall Program is Anything but in the Clouds

by Philip Orr, University of Southern Indiana

Once again the Indiana Online User’s Group (IOLUG) has planned a full day of excellent programming to challenge participants from all types of libraries interested in or involved with library technologies. The theme of this year’s fall program will be “A Clear Look at Cloud Computing for Libraries.” The one-day conference, which is scheduled for Friday, November 5, will take place at the Indiana Wesleyan University’s Indianapolis Education Center North (3777 Priority Way South Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46240). The line-up of presentations and presenters is as follows:

9:30 a.m.   Reading the Silver Lining: What Does Cloud Computing Mean for Libraries (Morning Keynote) – Erik Mitchell, Wake Forrest University

10:45 a.m.  Shapes in the Cloud: Finding the Right Discovery Layer – Noah Brubaker, University of Indianapolis and Sherri Parker, DePauw University

12:30 p.m.  Storage-As-A-Service: Library Digital Collections in the Cloud DuraCloud – Chip Dye, IUPUI

1:00 p.m.   Collaboration in the Workplace—and Beyond—Using Google Apps – Kathryn Mills, DePauw University; Bill Helling, Crawfordsville District Public Library; and Emily Griffin, Crawfordsville Public Library

2:15 p.m.   Impact of the Evergreen Library Automation System on Public Library Users – Barbara Albee, Indiana University and Oliver Chen, Indiana University

3:00 p.m.   Web-Scale Management: The Promise and Peril of Creating a Next-generation of Library Management Systems (Afternoon Keynote) – Andrew Pace, OCLC

For further details and the most recent updates regarding the program, visit www.iolug.org
**Distance Learning around Indiana**

Distance learning varies from institution to institution and library to library with different tools and levels of support available. This new series describes the variety of distance learning efforts that occur within libraries in our state.

**Indiana State University**

by Shelley Arvin, Indiana State University

The Spring 2010 Profile of Distance Learners of Indiana State University in Terre Haute, Indiana, found that, of 9,765 students (8,017 FTE), 2,928 students were taking at least one distance learning class. Of those, 1,761 were enrolled in only distance learning courses. The majority of ISU distance learners were distance-only students (61%), were undergraduates students (62%), were over the age of 25 (65%), were women (62%), and resided outside of Vigo and its six surrounding counties (77%).

The Cunningham Memorial Library endeavours to offer equivalent quality services to students both on and off campus. The ISU Library offers some special services for students taking only distance learning courses. Students taking on-campus courses are assumed to be capable of benefiting from traditional on-campus services.

The ISU library collections include more than two million items. The library catalog facilitates access to over 3,000 electronic books and over 10,000 electronic government documents. Preference is given to collecting journals and periodicals in an online format. The library provides access to over 200 online databases that include journals, magazines, newspapers, electronic books, and other sources.

Shelley Arvin acts as the distance learning librarian. As such, she is responsible for being the source of information on distance learning for the library, identifying potential challenges and suggesting solutions. She attempts to keep abreast of distance learning activities on campus and keep her colleagues informed.

The Reference/Instruction Department follows a liaison model where individual librarians specialize in the resources of assigned disciplines, programs, and departments. The distance learning librarian does not supplant this model but is part of it, referring and introducing students to the liaison librarian, when appropriate. The distance learning librarian herself is liaison to four disciplines, including the nursing program, which includes an all-online Masters program.

Each semester, distance learners are sent an e-mail introducing them to the ISU Library services for distance learners and informing them of necessary first steps to receive library services. Some follow up with questions throughout the semester. This initial e-mail heads off some known pitfalls, obstacles, and mistakes of distance learners. The library is fortunate because we realize that not all academic privacy policies will allow release of student e-mails or a mass e-mailing.

Reference and instructional services are available in a variety of ways: in person at the reference desk, by phone, by e-mail, or by chat during regular library hours. Library3lp, the chat client, works as an instant messenger service but allows multiple librarians to monitor and transfer incoming chats. Library3lp results in fewer missed queries and chats going to the appropriate specialist. In addition, a virtual reference session is held one evening a week using Adobe Connect software, which enables screen sharing. Librarians currently collaborate with faculty to offer classroom support using the Blackboard course management system.

Students may learn about the library research process through on-line interactive library tutorials and research guides. LibGuides are used to create pathfinders and dedicated content. Captivate and Camtasia have been used to produce video tutorials explaining library content.

Indiana State University recently hired a Dean of Extended Learning to lead distance learning initiatives. Ms Arvin represents the library on the University Distance Education Strategic Planning Group.

Document delivery services of ISU library materials are available for students taking only distance learning courses. Students registering for Interlibrary Loan services must identify themselves as a distance learner to qualify. For items unavailable at the ISU library, students may request that the items be borrowed from another library through Interlibrary Loan. The only charge for these services is postage on the items when students mail them back to ISU Library.