Google Scholar™ provides a simple way to broadly search for scholarly literature. From one place you can search across many disciplines and sources. With proper configuration, distance education students can search using Google Scholar™ for materials which may be available in their academic institutions’ libraries or freely available on the Internet. They may also discover whether other libraries close to their geographic locations own items relevant to their search topic. The steps below explain how to reconfigure Google Scholar™ to accomplish such searches. Google Scholar™ should be regarded as a research tool in addition to the library’s subscription databases, not a replacement for them. For more about Google Scholar™, visit http://scholar.google.com/intl/en/scholar/about.html.

To reconfigure Google Scholar™ preferences:
2. Click on the “Scholar Preferences” link to the right of the “Search” button.
3. Search for available libraries by state or country in the “Library Links” section of the Scholar Preferences page. Consider adding the name of the library or institution with which you are affiliated. Also, consider adding Open WorldCat and any other libraries/institutions in your geographic area. Bear in mind, however, that not all libraries participate in the “Library Links” program.
4. When finished adding libraries, click on the “Save Preferences” button.
5. Return to the “Basic” or “Advanced Scholar Search” screens and execute a search. Search results should now provide links to your library’s resources (assuming it participates in the “Library Links” program) and any other library’s in your geographic area that you have specified in the “Library Links” section on the Scholar Preferences page. Although some items in the result list may be freely available to all users, oftentimes the items will only be available to those users who are affiliated with specific institutions. In this case, Google Scholar™ becomes a tool for knowing what may be available in a library in your area. You may have to go to the library physically in order to access the item, but you will know what is available before visiting the library.

6. Follow the “Library Links” link and log in with the proper credentials to access the items that are available to you as an authorized user.

As of spring 2012, the following Indiana libraries/institutions were participating in the “Library Links” program:

- Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart
- Bethel College, Mishawaka
- Butler University, Indianapolis
- Earlham College, Richmond
- Goshen College, Goshen
- Huntington University, Huntington
- Indiana University Bloomington, Bloomington
- Indiana University East, Richmond
- Indiana University Kokomo, Kokomo
- Indiana University Northwest, Gary
- Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne, Fort Wayne
- Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, Indianapolis
- Indiana University South Bend, South Bend
- Indiana University Southeast, New Albany
- Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion
- Ivy Tech Community College Bloomington, Bloomington
- Manchester College, North Manchester
- Oakland City College, Oakland City
- Purdue University North Central, Westville
- Trine University, Angola
- University of Saint Francis, Fort Wayne
- University of Southern Indiana, Evansville
- Wabash College, Crawfordsville

For information on how a library may participate in the “Library Links” program, visit: http://scholar.google.com/intl/en/scholar/libraries.html.
Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, is a state-assisted research institution offering some 180 undergraduate majors and over 100 graduate programs. Of the approximately 22,000 students, nearly 8000 are enrolled in one or more online courses. More than sixty degrees and certificates are available in fields such as business and leadership, communications and technology, education and counseling, and health and nursing. Around 500 undergraduate and graduate courses are offered via web conferencing, as independent learning opportunities, or are supplemented by live classes at Ball State’s centers in Indianapolis and Fishers.

The popularity of Ball State’s online programs has increased substantially over the past several years. Since 2007, we have seen a 90% increase in the number of graduate students in web-based courses and a 38% increase in the total number of online students. There are currently nearly 1000 more graduate students enrolled in distance studies than in on-campus programs. Furthermore, the number of on-campus students taking one or more online courses has grown 64% over the past two years.

In order to serve both our on-campus and distance communities, the Ball State University Libraries collections include over one million books and print serials, about 430,000 audiovisual materials, and over 32,000 e-journals. We also subscribe to some 200 online databases, offering indexing and full-text for newspapers, magazines, journals, and electronic books. Furthermore, we provide access to over 140,000 e-books via EBSCO E-book Collection, Google Books, and HathiTrust. We offer reference assistance in-person and via phone, email, and instant messaging for most of the library’s 120-plus open hours each week.

I joined the University Libraries as an Information Services Librarian and the Libraries’ distance education liaison in September 2011. In that role, I develop and advocate for online resources and services, collaborate with library staff to support the various needs of distance users, and work with Online and Distance Education faculty and administrators to promote library services to off-campus students. I also keep abreast of new technologies and relevant services in order to ensure that we continue to provide the highest quality experience.

My first priority upon arriving at Ball State was to create improved online access points for the resources and services available to distance students on the Libraries’ website. One outcome was a new online research guide using Springshare’s LibGuides software, accessible via the following link: http://bsu.libguides.com/distance. This guide provides answers to common questions, links to databases and other web resources, video tutorials, and information about special services (both through the library and other departments around campus) available to students in web-based courses.

One such service is provided by our Interlibrary Loan department. Books and other circulating materials located in the University Libraries’ collections may be requested and delivered to a distance student’s home address at the Libraries’ expense. Students in online programs may also request PDF scans of articles available in the print periodical collection. In addition, users residing in Indiana are eligible to participate in the Academic Libraries of Indiana Reciprocal Borrowing program, which allows them to check out materials at participating Indiana libraries.

Another goal was to determine how to duplicate services available for on-campus students in an off-campus context. The Information Services Department has long offered reference consultations by appointment to on-campus students desiring individual assistance with their research. This spring, as a web-based complement to this in-person service, we are piloting a program to offer reference appointments via Skype. Skype was selected due to its...
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Stepping Forward, Digging Deeper

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ease of use, zero cost, and the availability of a screen sharing feature. Distance users may request appointments by sending their Skype username, academic status, available dates and times, and information about their topic via email. This service fills the gaps left by phone, chat, and email reference when providing in-depth research assistance.

While the bulk of library research instruction occurs on-campus in a traditional classroom setting, Information Services Librarians strive to provide similar information literacy services in a web-based setting. Our liaison to the Nursing department, Stephen Duecker, collaborates with Nursing faculty to offer instruction via chat to the department’s large online program. Information Services Librarian Brenda Yates Habich and Instructional Services Librarian Lisa Jarrell created a streaming version of their Thesis Research for Distance Students workshop, accessible any time via the web. We continue to explore new means of using emerging technologies to offer better and more numerous learning opportunities for our distance students.

Upcoming Distance Learning Events of Note:

Fifteenth Distance Library Services Conference
April 18-20, 2012
Memphis, TN
http://ocls.cmich.edu/conf2012/

Keynote Speaker Dr. Trey Martindale and dozens of others present information related to the changing field of distance library services. Proceedings to be published in the Journal of Library & Information Science Services in Distance Education.

The conference will feature guest speakers covering topics such as online learning environments, planning community needs assessment, assessment of distance education, and the “flipped classroom.” Door prizes will be given, including an iPad, Kindle Fire, and more.