

Resources for Distance Learners

by James Nichols, Penfield Library, SUNY Oswego

Cover Story

[Library Support for Distance Learners](#)

Features

[Resources for Distance Learners \(Oswego\)](#)

[Distance Learning at Monroe](#)

[Putting Metalib to Work](#)

[Additional SUNYConnect Updates](#)

[How to Contact Us](#)

[Linkable Links](#)

[Photo Gallery](#)

[Link to the SUNYConnect Committees List](#)

This month over 2,000 students will be taking upper division and graduate classes from SUNY Oswego without stepping foot in Oswego. Despite distance, they will be assured of a learning experience with all the components of taking the same course on campus, including opportunities for independent inquiry, and the use of all the library services and resources available to resident students. What makes this possible?



At SUNY Oswego, the production of all SLN courses has been managed through the Division of Continuing Education (CE). An instructional designer in CE manages the training of faculty and provides ongoing support for the courses. CE has been an invaluable means of promoting the availability of library resources among the online faculty, not only in their training but also by sending out a library message to faculty on a regular basis, maintaining a link to the [Penfield Library home page](#) on every course map, and hosting opportunities for librarians to consult and collaborate with the faculty.

We capitalized on our existing resources by pulling together a [Web guide](#) for distance learners, which is linked from the Penfield Library home page. Our online databases and catalog are, of course, major features on both the Web guide and home page. We have also been in a position to offer reference by phone or email; instruction through online tutorials, materials inserted into online courses and direct participation by librarians in online discussions; and document delivery of materials that are not already available directly in electronic full text. We also encourage distance learners to visit and use what we are now calling proximal libraries, the public and academic libraries in their local areas, including our partners in SUNYConnect. Indeed, the power of our services for distance learners is rooted in our cooperation with SUNY and other New York libraries and in the extensive products of that cooperation: access to bibliographic and full text database systems such as Gale, FirstSearch, and Science Direct; Open Access; ILLiad; the model information literacy tutorial from Ulster County Community College; and the SUNYConnect LMS.

Major barriers for our distance learners have been the array of six accounts and userids/ passwords that students need to fully use our services, and the paperwork required to activate accounts and get account information to the students. A major breakthrough was the implementation of online activation for the Oswego Instructional Technologies' (IT) accounts. The IT username and password are used for EZProxy authentication, so this change greatly eased access to our databases. However, issuing college id/library cards still requires a personal appearance on campus, and alternate delivery of the college id number and the library barcode number still involves paper mail. The need for these numbers will only increase as we move toward remote borrowing via the SUNYConnect union catalog.

Oswego has been in a position to enhance services over the last few years. We have found that improvements in electronic access have benefited both resident and distance learners. It has also been easy to build a benefit to distance learners into changes to any non-electronic services, and sometimes vice versa. Indeed, we used our SLN courses to pilot our [Electronic Reserves system](#), and our SLN faculty have found it to be an easy and convenient way to enrich their instruction.

Our implementation of SFX has transformed access to documents for both resident and distance learners. An SFX click will direct students to all available means of accessing an article, including the paper copy, if any, on our shelves and a referral to ILLiad if we do not own the article in any form. If we own an article only in paper, distance learners



may make an Article Delivery request online and receive a copy as an e-mail attachment. Distance learners may also place an online ILL request for an article and download their copy from our ILLiad Web server when the article arrives.

The primary beneficiaries of our [online Information Literacy Tutorial](#) were to be freshman students taking College Writing on campus. But we also saw that our distance learners, who tend to be non-traditional and transfer students, could also benefit from the tutorial. In response to requests from our SLN faculty, we have adapted the tutorial into an online [Periodical Tutorial](#) to meet the distance learners' needs for a review of library skills and instruction in searching and retrieving the journal articles they are expected to use in upper division courses.

For now, we are relying on shipping books that we own directly to distance learners' homes. However, we are taking part in [LAND](#) and the Information Delivery System pilot with an eye to future benefits to our distance as well as our resident learners. These precursors to patron-initiated remote borrowing through a *SUNYConnect* union catalog should lead to speedy and reliable document delivery for all SUNY students.

Services to distance learners epitomize the practice of a librarianship without walls. Cooperation is the core of such a practice, and is the main tool (even more so than computer and network technology) that we have for scaling the heights of librarianship at any distance.



Cover Story

[Library Support for Distance Learners](#)

Feature

[Resources for Distance Learners \(Oswego\)](#)



Feature

[Distance Learning at Monroe](#)

[Putting Metalib to Work](#)

[Additional SUNYConnect Updates](#)

[How to Contact Us](#)

[Linkable Links](#)

[Photo Gallery](#)

[Link to the SUNYConnect Committees List](#)