

NCLR Newsletter for Presidents

For the executive administrators of community colleges...

From the National Council for Learning Resources
an affiliate council of the American Association of Community Colleges

Vol. 5, No. 2
Fall 1999

The Future of Community College Learning Resource Centers: Our Opportunities and Challenges

by Dr. Bill Wenrich & Paul Dumont

The electronic information age is creating more opportunities and challenges for community colleges than we have seen since the inception of our movement. Through the Internet, satellites, and myriad electronic communication modes, we have access to learners around the globe — and more importantly, they have access to us.

Opportunities

With the digitization of video delivery and the conquest of bandwidth restrictions, it is clear that voice, data, and high resolution streaming video soon will be integrated — and increasingly available to learners at home, work, and traditional learning centers like community colleges. In the not too distant future, we expect to use one electronic instrument that integrates the current functions of our telephones, televisions, and computers. It will have the capacity to provide almost unlimited access to information.

These technological advances will provide wonderful opportunities — not only for increased distance learning but for improved learning structures on our campuses.

The electronic revolution and access to the Internet already are transforming the learning environment on our campuses. It took twenty years to move the overhead projector from bowling alleys to college classrooms,

but the Internet, electronic mail, and chat rooms made it in less than five years.

Learning resource centers (LRCs) and libraries are becoming much more focused and dependent upon electronic databases than on hard copy sources. Library card catalogs were converted to online catalogs. Automated library systems transformed library operations such as circulation, collection development, and reserves from paper to electronic processes.

Community college libraries are providing on and off campus students with a wide array of options with online databases. For example, in spring 1999 students and faculty made more than 169,000 online searches using the Dallas County Community College District's (DCCCD) web access management system.

Many instructors are developing websites to help them teach both the traditional on campus students as well as distance learners. Such sites serve as repositories of syllabi, lesson plans, and notes. These can include chat rooms and discussion groups to

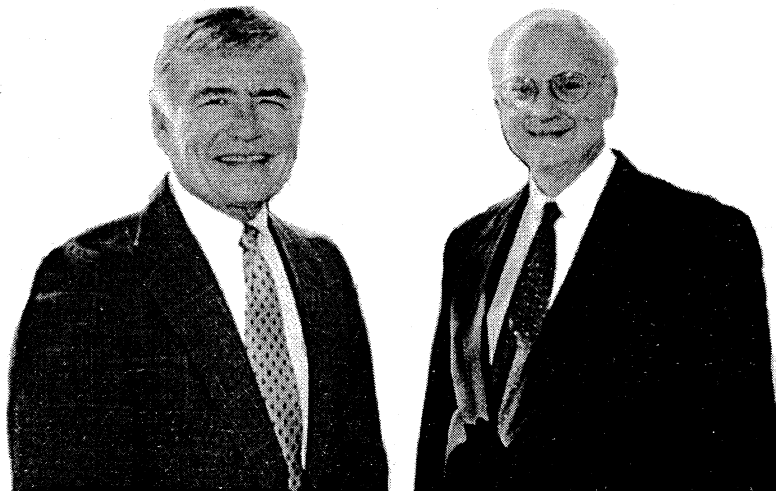
facilitate communication among faculty and students. Many professors assign work that requires students to use electronic learning resources.

One of DCCCD's Richland College instructors, Jackie Reynolds, created such a web site for students <<http://www.rlc.dcccd.edu/MATHSCI/reynolds/profile.htm>>. Her students are required to do a group research project and post it on the website. As a result, in addition to learning about anatomy, physiology, and microbiology, the students gain experience in working as a team and building a web page. One of the group projects posted on the site won a Study Web Academic Excellence Award.

Challenges

One major challenge facing community colleges comes from the fact that the private sector and our university colleagues also recognize the revenue producing possibilities of asynchronous distance learning in the \$100 billion higher education

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From left, Dr. Bill Wenrich, Chancellor of the Dallas County Community College District, and Paul Dumont, Director of Educational Resources Support Services.

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Published by the
National Council for Learning Resources,
an affiliate council of the
American Association of Community Colleges
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This issue of *NCLR Newsletter for Presidents* was made possible with support from **Bell+Howell Information and Learning**. We thank them for their support of community colleges and learning resources programs. Visit their website at:

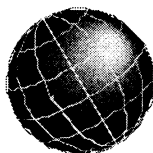
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**Web Sites for Community
College Administrators**



Here are some
web sites related
to the interests of
community
college
administrators:

University Business

<http://www.universitybusiness.com>
"In today's economic climate,
academic administrators must
become worldly in the ways of
business. But they have to know
which practices to adopt and which to
reject...It is the only publication that
shows presidents, provosts, and other
high-level officers how to apply
business strategies while remaining
committed to the mission of higher
education."

The Chair Academy

<http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/chair/>
"The Mission of The Academy is to
*Advance Academic and Administrative
Leadership in an Environment of Change*
for community & technical college
chairs, deans, and other organizational
leaders. The Mission will be met
through the achievement of Academy
Goals and through the offering of a
variety of programs and services."

**League for Innovation in the
Community College**

<http://www.league.org>
"...is a non-profit educational
consortium of leading community
colleges organized to stimulate
innovation and experimentation in all
areas of community college
development. Founded in 1968 the
League serves as a catalyst, project
incubator, and experimental
laboratory for community colleges
throughout the United States and
Canada."

**Association of Community College
Trustees**

<http://www.acct.org>
"ACCT represents the officials who
govern community, technical, and
junior colleges in the United States

and abroad....ACCT offers trustee
education, assists boards in public
policy activities, and offers its
members services such as CEO search
services and retreat facilitation."

**American Association of Community
Colleges**

<http://www.aacc.nche.edu>
AACC "has been a national voice for
two-year associate degree granting
institutions since its inception in
1920....AACC works with other higher
education associations, the federal
government, Congress, and other
national associations that represent the
public and private sectors to promote
the goals of community colleges and
higher education."

**Association of Canadian Community
Colleges**

<http://www.accc.ca>
The ACCC "is the national, voluntary
membership organization created in
1972 to represent colleges and
institutes to government, business and
industry, both in Canada and
internationally."

**Community Colleges for
International Development**

<http://ccid.kirkwood.cc.ia.us>
"The mission of CCID is to provide
opportunities for building global
relationships that strengthen
educational programs, and promote
economic development"

Meetings & Events

**Library & Information
Technology Association (LITA)
National Forum**

November 5 - 7, 1999
Raleigh, NC

ALA Midwinter Conference

January 14 - 19, 2000
San Antonio, TX

AECT

February 16 - 20, 2000
Long Beach, CA

AACC

April 8 - 11, 2000
Washington, DC

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marketplace. Telecommunications companies like Jones Education Network are offering accredited higher education degrees. Textbook company Harcourt General Inc. is creating an Internet university and wants to become the first major publishinghouse to offer accredited college degrees. Organizations ranging from the Disney Corporation to Ivy League universities are also entering the noncredit continuing education marketplace.

Providing student access to learning resources is another major challenge. The burgeoning distance education industry makes geographic location a less critical issue, but some students are still hindered by financial limitations. The so-called "digital divide" between those learners who have access to high technology and those who do not becomes part of the problem for community college LRCs. Issues include whether or not students have the physical access to powerful personal computers at home or at work, and whether they have the knowledge to utilize such resources.

LRCs must become the critical element in conquering the digital divide. They must provide the hardware and software to ensure that technology is accessible to all learners on the campus. Librarians must work collaboratively with faculty to help learners acquire the skills to utilize electronic resources. Issues of intellectual property, copyrights, and royalties also have compounded the complexity of learning resource management in community colleges.

Addressing the Challenges

LRC staff and librarians must work in concert with the college web staff to ensure that links to library resources and electronic reserves are located where students can find them. Libraries must promote and participate in instructional design sessions with faculty using electronic resources to teach both traditional and distance education programs. Teaching information literacy via classroom instruction and online sessions must become paramount as technology continues to reshape the creation and delivery of information resources. Librarians are challenged to

teach the skills required to locate, evaluate, and use electronic information.

Providing electronic reference services, e-mail inquiries, and frequently asked questions (FAQs) online are becoming commonplace. The librarians at DCCCD's Richland College recently won a Learning Resources Achievement for Program Development award for their development of an outstanding bibliographic instruction program. It includes separate classes on: 1) research strategy; 2) using the online catalog; 3) using electronic databases; 4) introduction to the Internet; 5) intermediate Internet searching; and 6) using the MLA format, in addition to supporting print materials and an extensive library home page
<<http://www.rlc.dcccd.edu/lrc/rllib.htm>>.

We predict that partnerships will become increasingly important, because they can help community colleges mitigate the costs of keeping pace with technology. DCCCD's North Lake College, for example, is partnering with the City of Irving to build a jointly owned North Lake Community Library on North Lake's campus that will be open to Irving residents as well as North Lake students. The pooling of resources creates a synergistic project that benefits all the constituencies involved.

Finally, learning resource leaders must communicate effectively with senior managers to ensure that they understand that learning resource centers are the crux of the 21st century community college. Without their support, LRCs will not get the funding or staffing needed to meet the numerous challenges we have outlined.

Our thesis is that electronic learning resources will continue to permeate both distance learning and classroom based instruction. Thus, the LRC is the most important common element in all community college learning opportunities.

Teaching students *how* to learn has always been a primary goal of formal education, but we believe it is the singular most important task of today's library and learning resource centers at community colleges.

Dr. William Wenrich is Chancellor of the Dallas County Community College District and recipient of the 1999 NCLR Administrative Leadership Award. Paul Dumont is the Director of Educational Resources Support Services at DCCCD.

Association of College and Research Libraries

Excellence in Academic Libraries Award Program

Purpose

To recognize libraries that are outstanding in furthering the educational missions of their institutions.

Award

The Program, sponsored by Blackwell's Books and Blackwell's Information Services, will support three annual awards of \$3,000 each by type of academic library (**community college**, college, and university). Awards will be made by an ACRL representative at a presentation at each institution receiving the award. Further recognition of award recipients will be made at the ACRL President's Program at the annual ALA conference.

Criteria

The criteria for recognizing excellence through the Blackwell Award Program will emphasize "outcomes" rather than "inputs" as the best measure of quality. "Outcomes" are defined by the ACRL Task Force on Academic Library Outcomes at:
<http://www.ala.org/acrl/outcome.html>
and are reflected in the philosophy of "Standards for College Libraries" (C&RL News, 60 May 1999:375-38). Potential nominees should refer to these documents. Academic libraries may demonstrate excellence through one or more of the following criteria, or in other ways that reflect the purpose and philosophy of this award:

- Creativity and innovation in meeting the needs of their academic community.
- Leadership in developing and implementing exemplary programs that other libraries can emulate.
- Substantial and productive relationships with classroom faculty and students.

Nominations

A Nominations Committee will actively seek nominations for this award. For more information, visit this website:
<http://www.ala.org/acrl/exdnce.html>

From the Chair...

The Internet vs. Libraries... It's No Contest!

It has become trendy on the part of a few academic futurists to attack libraries and library funding as a poor investment because, after all, "everything's free on the web," or, "it'll all be free on the Internet any day now." Let me suggest that anyone who seriously believes this needs a strong reality check. Consider the following four "iron laws" regarding the availability of information on the Internet.

First, **It's NOT all on the Internet – and it isn't all going to be!** While there are many arguments about the value and accuracy of the information published on the Internet, enormous quantities of critical scholarly information may never be digitized. There's very little financial incentive to put these materials in digital form. Advertisers aren't likely to sponsor a website featuring the collected papers of your state's Republican party from 1870-1890. It's hard and expensive to digitize some scholarly materials such as letters and diaries. It's much easier to microfilm them. There are also serious preservation concerns about digitization. No one really knows quite how long digital formats will last, whereas with properly maintained microfilm or books on acid-free paper, there are very reliable estimates as to how long they will be around.

Even the information that is available in digital form is often problematic. For example, the "full text databases" that are so popular with student library users are just that – TEXT databases. So, while the reproduced text of an article from *American Demographics* may be complete and accurate, the reproduction may omit the critical graph that clearly demonstrates the point of the text. Yes, full image databases are coming, but at extremely high cost for software,

hardware, and licensing – but that's another story.

Second, **even if it IS on the Internet, you can't always find it!** Give it a try. Go to your favorite search engine and see how long it takes you to find some official U.S. government statistics for employment projections by occupation. If you're persistent, you should find them. I'll give you a suggestion at the bottom of the article.


While search engines are powerful and easy to use, they also produce wildly unpredictable and inconsistent results. They are also sometimes not very useful for finding specific items of information. In addition, they don't work at all to find the information held in commercial databases. Students, faculty, and even administrators have to be taught to be effective searchers. Librarians are the people who have the training and experience to perform this role effectively.

Third, **even if it is on the Internet, and you can find it, you can't always use it!** Aside from minor pleasantries like incredible delays in getting sites to load, (the "World Wide Wait"), there are other technical problems to be solved in using information from the internet. Need to download a government form? Then no doubt you have the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your computer, and know how to use it. And of course you have the newest versions of Explorer or Netscape all ready to go? Many sites won't work with browser versions barely a year old. Want to read a book in electronic format? Then naturally you have Winzip loaded, and know how to zip, unzip, and restore files. The new MP3 audio format is certainly exciting. Got that loaded, right? And the latest version of Quicktime and Real Movie? Can't use a lot of multimedia products without those. Streaming video? Don't even think about it with a processor speed slower than 300MHz, an 8 gig hard drive, plus a hot video card. And if you don't know what these terms mean, you're REALLY in trouble! All of these problems can be solved, but it is neither cheap nor simple to solve them.

Fourth, **even if it is on the Internet, and you can find it, and use it, it isn't free!** One word – copyright. Copyright owners do not surrender their rights when they place their intellectual property on a server. In fact, Congress is seeking (wrongly, in my opinion) to extend the rights of copyright owners in electronic formats well beyond the rights which presently adhere to print or audiovisual media. Publishers sell their articles to private, commercial databases in order to make a profit. Certainly there is much valuable copyright-free information available on the web (especially government databases and the like), but use of the great majority of information resources will require payment in the form of a subscription or license. Nobody plays for free.

The resources that students need to successfully complete assignments, to further their careers, and to make them better human beings, will NOT magically appear on their computer screens at no cost. They will NOT have the knowledge to retrieve these resources, evaluate them, and make effective use of them unless they have been trained to do so. That is a function which libraries and librarians have been successfully performing for a long time. That means that libraries and librarians continue to be a remarkably good investment, and a remarkably critical investment, especially in two-year colleges.

If we want to talk about the role of the technology-driven library in two-year colleges as we enter the 21st century, I am all for it. To suggest, however, that a meaningful choice can be made between great libraries on the one hand and high technology on the other is truly devastating for our students; they need and deserve both.

For that searching exercise, try www.fedstats.gov/fast.html Then choose Statistical Abstract of the United States. Table No. 673 should do it. 

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