

*Guidelines for  
Distance Learning  
Library Services*

<http://www.ala.org/acrl/guides/distlrng.html/>

*ACRL Guidelines  
for Distance Learning  
Library Services*

The *ACRL Guidelines* are recognized worldwide as the authoritative document on distance learning library services for post secondary institutions.

These *Guidelines* are used by colleges and universities to:

- Ensure the provision of equitable library services to both new and existing distance learning programs;
- Ensure that services of high academic quality are provided to both new and existing distance learning programs; and
- Assure accrediting agencies that standards of high academic quality are being maintained in library services to distance learning programs.

### *Guidelines*

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## **Definitions**

The **Definitions** section provides meanings of terms as they are specifically used in the context of the *Guidelines*.

## **Philosophy**

The **Philosophy** section consists of ten precepts, which provide the conceptual principles that form the bedrock for the document. These ten precepts stand as a **Bill of Rights** for distance learning students, faculty, and other personnel. The core ideas of the precepts are given as follows:

### **Precept One**

Enable attainment of superior academic skills.

### **Precept Two**

Instill lifelong learning skills.

### **Precept Three**

Demonstrate equivalent teaching and learning results through direct and equivalent library services.

### **Precept Four**

Ensure responsible institutional support through additional separate funding.

### **Precept Five**

Provide service, management, and technical linkages between library and other such complementary resource units as computing, instructional media and telecommunications.

**Precept Six**

Meet or exceed national, regional, and professional accreditation standards and guidelines.

**Precept Seven**

Involve library personnel in institutional distance learning program development.

**Precept Eight**

Demonstrate library program accountability for distance learning services through needs and outcomes survey measurements.

**Precept Nine**

Provide equivalent services through meeting the requirements and desired outcomes of academic programs, especially through innovative approaches.

**Precept Ten**

Develop and regularly review formal, documented, written agreements with unaffiliated local libraries for provision of resources and services consistent with the broader institutional mission and not simply as substitutes for supplying adequate materials and services by the originating institution.

## **Management**

The **Management** section identifies the chief administrative officers and governance organizations of the institution, as well as the general library administration and the distance learning librarian-administrator, as bearing the fiscal and administrative responsibilities for library services and materials in support of distance learning programs.

## **Finances**

The **Finances** section calls for institutional funding levels sufficient to meet the specifications given in other sections of the *Guidelines*, other appropriate *ACRL Standards* (<http://www.ala.org/acrl/guides/>), and from professional, state, or regional accrediting agency specifications.

## **Personnel**

The **Personnel** section identifies the chief administrative officers and governance organizations of the institution as being among those personnel involved in the management and coordination of distance learning library services and bearing responsibility for the provision professional and support personnel in number and quality necessary to attain program goals and objectives.

## **Facilities**

The **Facilities** section calls for facilities, equipment, and communication links sufficient in size, number, scope, accessibility, and timeliness to reach all students and attain program objectives.

## **Resources**

The **Resources** section calls for providing or securing convenient, direct physical or electronic access to library materials equivalent to those provided in traditional settings.

## **Services**

The **Services** section lists those services essential to meeting effectively a wide range of informational, bibliographic, and user needs.

## **Documentation**

The **Documentation** section lists those records which should be kept to document meeting the **Guidelines** in providing library services to distance learning programs.

## **Library Education**

The **Library Education** section calls upon schools of library and information science to include courses and units on provision of distance learning library services.

## **Revising the *Guidelines***

### **...A History of Continuous Adaptation and Development**

The **Guidelines** are a living, dynamic document that has been under ongoing revision since first conceptualized in 1963 and first published in 1967. The most recent edition appeared in 2000. The **Guidelines** are prepared by the Guidelines Committee of the Distance Learning Section of ACRL.

