Distance learning library services: The Tenth Off-Campus Library Services Conference.
Ed. Patric B Mahoney.
New York: Haworth Information Press, 2003. 587p.
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In the Book Announcement, the Editors insists that the following information should form part of all reviews: *'Distance Learning Library Services: The Tenth Off-Campus Library Services Conference* has been co-published simultaneously as *Journal of Library Administration, Volume 37, Numbers 1 & 2 and 3 & 4 2002".*

Furthermore, it is stated that this book/journal is: *'indispensable for librarians who have responsibility for off-campus programmes … extremely useful for administrators and others who realize that services offered to off-campus students need to come into the mainstream of the academic library's goals'*

What is problematic for the reviewer is the time that lapsed between when the Conference was held: 2002 (April 17-22), the time that the book and journal was published 2003 and when the book sent for review in 2006-four years. Are the contents still relevant? What has changed between 2002 and 2006? In this rapid changing and dynamic information age what was relevant 6 months ago might not be applicable anymore, i.e. Information Technology and its influences on library service provision change rapidly.

Nevertheless, it is a worthwhile publication and the problems researched and presented are still relevant as can be gleaned from the contents of the book.

There are 44 papers contained in this book and mainly contributions from westernised First World countries. No Third World distance education library services participated in the Conference. Maybe it was an oversight by the Organizers, but the University of South Africa, which is the largest Distance Education University in Africa could have made valuable contributions in amongst others: problems facing distance education libraries in Africa to provide library and information services to on-an off campus clients in a developing society. Countries that were represented included amongst others: United States of America (the majority) and Australia.

Topics covered by the various papers are all relevant and includes amongst others broad categories that the Reviewer has categorised as follows:

Using the Web/Internet for Distance Education; How to develop library services for off-campus students; Quality in Distance Education; Collection Development; and Information Literary. This categorisation makes it easier for those readers and researchers to access only the topics that they are interested in. Not categorising the topics might have been an oversight by the Editor. On further scrutiny, it is noted that the Editor preferred to publish the papers alphabetically according to the author's surname.

The 15 listed below form the essence of topics covered by the book and all titles are an indication of the gist of the contents of what is discussed. This does not mean that the remaining 29 titles not listed are irrelevant. For the avid, thorough Librarian, Information Specialist and Researcher it will be worthwhile to read all 44 papers.

Topics:

1. Using the Web/Internet for Distance Education
    -Content and design of Academic Library Web Sites for distance learners (Kate E. Adams and Mary Cassner, p:3-13)
    -The virtual reserve room: extending library services off-campus (Emilie R Algenio, p:15-25)
    -Digital Document delivery to the desktop(Ulrike Dieterle, p. 243-250)
    -Community Connections in outreach services (Ann Duessing, p. 269-278)
    -Building a digital library in support of distance education (Jessame Ferguson *et al*, p. 317-331)

2. How to develop library services for off-campus students
    -Thinking outside the library: how to develop, implement and promote library services to Distance Learners (Meredith Ault, p. 39-48)
    -Taking the distance out of library service offered to International graduate students (Mou Chakroborty and Johanna Tuñòn, p. 163-175)

3. Quality in Distance Education
    -Quality Assurance and models of change (Christine Cother and Stephen Parnell, p.189-206)
    -Surviving a Distance Learning Accreditation visit (Sandra K Stratford, p.489-501)

4. Collection Development
    -Distance education from a collection development perspective (Hildegund M Calvert, p. 117-126)

Conclusion

So after scrutinizing all the papers, the question remains 'of what significance is this book written for Librarians, Readers and Researchers in developing Africa?', taking cognisance of the fact that the papers presented were by First World academics from developed countries. These academics and their libraries/information services have surpassed the various problems that Third World or developing countries still face that are unthinkable in First World developed societies, for example: the economic conditions (such as income and economic growth) and the infrastructure (**bandwidth**, transport, housing and hospitals) are poor; the agricultural population is large; the social conditions (for example, human nutrition) are poor; infant mortality is high; literacy is low; technological skills are low but technological dependence is high. There is a high population growth. Most of the inhabitants are peasants; the ethnic/cultural variety is wide; and the behaviour is traditional.

The answer lies therein that this book can be recommended for distance education libraries, as well as full-time residential tertiary institutions embarking on distance education within Africa, and that there are many experiences shared by the First World librarians that can be of value, for example, expert advice on 'how to build a digital library in support of distance learning'.

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