

# Transforming library services to support distance learning

## Strategies used by the DePaul University Libraries

by Frank Cervone and Doris Brown

As is the case in many libraries, the DePaul University Libraries have been developing programs and services to facilitate the university's overall strategic planning effort for quite some time.

As the largest Catholic university in the United States, growth in total number of students, course hours offered, and number of programs has increased at phenomenal rates in the last several years. As an example, the School of Computer Science, Telecommunications, and Information Systems, which is the largest program of its kind in the United States, experienced 31% growth in enrollment the previous year.

### Vision 2006

Much of this growth is attributable to past strategic planning at the university level. Recently, however, the strategic planning process has become an even more ambitious activity as the university has moved toward a more holistic approach to strategizing and planning for the future. The Vision 2006 plan is a comprehensive, university-wide level document to plan and manage the university in the next several years and beyond.

A critical and integral part of the plan is how the university libraries can support both the Vision 2006 plan in total and one of its

major components, the Technology Initiative. In addition to general issues of technology, a large piece of the Technology Initiative is devoted to discussing the issues related to providing Web-enabled interfaces to traditional classes in addition to distance learning.

A major component of the plan is the recognition that the university libraries must continue to perform traditional services, but at the same time adapt and develop new services to meet the changing needs of students and faculty as the university expands and changes.

### Serving students at a distance

Because of their history in supporting five suburban campuses, international programs, and cohort groups of students at remote locations, the university libraries already had an infrastructure in place for dealing with students at a distance. This infrastructure enables great flexibility that can be adapted and further developed to provide quality services for distance education students.

A critical factor in providing distance education services is the "reinventing" of services that cannot be delivered physically in a "reasonable" amount of time. Exactly what constitutes a reasonable amount of time depends

### About the authors

Frank Cervone is associate director for Library Information Technology Services, e-mail: [fcervone@wppost.depaul.edu](mailto:fcervone@wppost.depaul.edu), and Doris Brown is associate vice president for Teaching and Learning Resources at DePaul University, e-mail: [dbrown@wppost.depaul.edu](mailto:dbrown@wppost.depaul.edu)

---

**. . . it is critical that the libraries provide methods to ease access to the paper collections for distance learners.**

---

upon the service and the institution. The basic metric against which we judge is that services provided to distance learning students must be equivalent to those that are provided to students on campus. This does not mean that these services must be the same or provided in the same manner as is done on-campus, just that they be equivalent.

This reasoning is based upon the criteria described in the Guidelines for Distance Education of our regional accreditation association, the North Central Association. Guideline 11 is related to library services and it states that the institution must "ensure that students have access to and can effectively use appropriate library resources."

### **Expanding digital collections**

To do this, we recommend several steps and actions to ensure that the needs of distance learning students are met. Regarding collections, we recommended the following:

- Continue the movement to replace or supplement paper collections with electronic collections—this includes both books and journals. Electronic collections are more readily available to distance learning students and are the preferred means of delivery in several colleges and schools; therefore, they are the preferred mode of delivery.

- Continue to build a database of digital images based on the existing slide library and purchase digital images. This serves a number of purposes, but it serves distance learning students especially because the nature of these collections makes it impossible for them to be used, in their present form, outside of the library.

- Continue to build and maintain the database of selected Internet resources that are especially appropriate for our curriculum.

- Investigate replacement of microform with digital media, as it becomes available. Again, because of its nature, it is difficult, if not impossible, to use microform outside of the confines of the libraries.

- Monitor new video formats, as they become available, particularly video streaming, as a means of replacing physical media such as VHS.

### **Physical access and delivery**

Physical access and delivery is a critical component of library service. Although electronic collections can be accessed anywhere, paper continues to be a medium of storage and many resources are not (and may never be) converted to a digital format. Because of this, it is critical that the libraries provide methods to ease access to the paper collections for distance learners. In this area, we recommended the following:

- Books should be sent directly to the distance learner by a carrier that provides rapid service to the specified location.

- All journal articles, whether requested via ILL or requested from a DePaul library, should be sent directly to the distance learner. The most desirable solution would be to e-mail these items to the requestor, but this may not be feasible due to copyright restrictions.

- Provide centralized telephone service for all learner inquiries. This would include all functional areas of the libraries: reference, circulation questions, general access questions. Ideally, this centralized telephone service would be a toll-free number for learners within the United States.

- Enhance the current e-mail reference service by implementing an online reference chat service that can provide quick, immediate answers to learner's questions. Given that many learners will be studying at nontraditional hours, consideration must be given to how this service will address student's needs on a 24/7 basis.

- Increase the instruction role of the librarian to include training in the use of course management software, both through seminars for faculty and for one-on-one help.

- Continue digitization of selected university archives paper collections. Many of the collections housed in the university archives are unique, and providing greater access to them would be a great service to distance learning students.

- Work with faculty to increase adoption of electronic reserves. Increasing the use of electronic reserves removes another barrier

to access and has the potential for alleviating some of the issues related to journal article delivery.

### **Designing the Web site for patrons**

For all libraries, the Web site is the gateway to the electronic resources provided by the library and is a major (if not the major) interface to the services of the library. Therefore, it is of great strategic importance that the Web site reflects current trends in information delivery and human-computer interaction. To do this, a library's Web site must be easily navigable, visually appealing, usable, instructive for a wide range of users, and respond to user requests quickly. It cannot be designed for librarians; it must be designed for patrons.

To accomplish this, we made several recommendations:

- Seek to more fully integrate electronic resources with each other and with the libraries' existing collections to provide users with an increasingly seamless information environment that reduces, and ultimately eliminates, the obstacles between information tools and content. This integration should occur through whatever means is appropriate; that is, it may be through the library catalog or through another mechanism more adept at integrating diverse forms of materials.

- Work with faculty to fully integrate scholarly electronic resources into courses and course content. This includes both providing technical assistance in the mechanics of integrating the resources and collaboration with faculty to select and integrate the best resources based on particular courses and fields of study.

- Further develop and implement online tutorials and online quick guides to electronic resources, research strategies, and information literacy.

- Work with departments to integrate these online tutorials into programs for distance learners.

- Expand the range of resources that link users directly from a citation or reference to the full-text of the document.

- Continue the ongoing analysis of all service functions (e.g., reference, instruction, interlibrary loan) to determine how computer-based processes can be better applied.

---

**Although there are several significant, and potentially controversial, moves in our recommendations, perhaps the concept of expanding the role of instruction librarians into areas outside of "information literacy" is the most far-reaching.**

---

Although there are several significant, and potentially controversial, moves in our recommendations, perhaps the concept of expanding the role of instruction librarians into areas outside of "information literacy" is the most far-reaching.

Libraries have been buying electronic resources for several years now, but the integration of these resources into the teaching curriculum of universities is not as straightforward as it is for text. Unless librarians are advocating and showing faculty how to perform the integration of these resources into their course Web sites, there is no reason to expect wide-scale adoption or integration. If that is the case, then a question will eventually arise: Why are we even buying these things? With tangible materials, such as books, it is easier to justify purchasing materials that are rarely used, primarily because of the smaller unit cost of each item. With electronic resources, the amount of money spent is far greater and more exposed to inquiry. As courseware management companies make deals with preferred vendors and make it simple to integrate these preferred resources into faculty Web sites, there is a great danger that only those information resources available from the preferred vendor will be made available to students.

It is clear that several transformations will take place in libraries as a result of the increasing adoption of distance learning. Many of these transformations are causing a greater integration of services in areas we thought of as separate individual units. In other areas, the modes and methods of delivery are changing. But in all cases, the fundamental mission of the library remains the same: to promote, assist, and provide access to information services for the entire campus community. ■

Are  
licensing  
negotiations  
taking control of  
your life?



### *Faxon and RoweCom can help.*

At Faxon, we understand the growing responsibilities facing library professionals today.

That's why we recently introduced our unique Licensing Service, allowing us to negotiate with publishers on your behalf, while ensuring that you have access to your e-journals when you need it.

So while managing print and electronic collections is becoming more complex every day, we are working hard to provide you with innovative, professional services and web-based solutions to *make your job easier*.

- **Comprehensive Subscription Services**

Providing complete, start-to-finish solutions for identifying, selecting, acquiring, registering and maintaining your print and electronic collections.

- **Cutting-edge E-journal Services**

From desktop access and license negotiation to expert electronic resources and support from the industry's only full-time e-journal team, Faxon is the authority in e-journal solutions!

Join the growing number of  
libraries who are partnering with  
Faxon to regain control!

[www.faxon.com](http://www.faxon.com)

- **Premier Web-based Services**

Discover a host of unique online services designed for the information professional, including:

- **Subscription Depot** (also offered globally as kLibrary) the industry-leading web interface for online ordering and management

- **License Depot<sup>SM</sup>**, containing extensive e-journal information and publisher links

- **Information Quest** for online delivery of electronic journals

- **kStore**, the desktop solution for acquiring knowledge resources

Be sure to stop by **FAXON/ROWECom BOOTHS 223 & 322**  
at ACRL's 10th National Conference!

**rowecom**  
**faxon**  
Academic & Medical Services



**SPI**

An ISO 9002 certified company

## General Conversion Services

*Experts in SGML, HTML, XML,  
Electronic and Imaging Conversions*



**PacificData**  
CONVERSION CORP.  
*A Subsidiary of SPI Technologies, Inc.*

207 E. Forest Drive, Box 396 • Pocono Pines, PA 18350  
Phone: (570) 646-5302 • FAX: (570) 646-5317  
email: [ihanney@epix.net](mailto:ihanney@epix.net) • [www.spitech.com/pdcc](http://www.spitech.com/pdcc)

# The INSPEC Database

For Physics, Electrical & Electronics Engineering,  
and Computing & Control



## The Power of Information

At 6.5 million records and growing weekly, the INSPEC Database is still the most comprehensive English-language database in its fields of coverage, delivering results that are current, precise and relevant. With respected subject experts on its indexing staff, strict quality control practices and meticulous error correction procedures in place, INSPEC ensures that you'll always get the targeted results you expect.

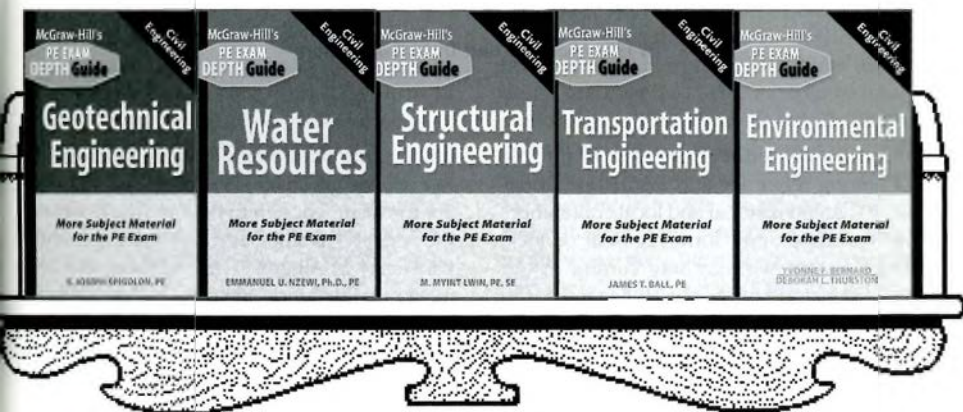
INSPEC offers a wide range of products in both electronic and print formats, with a variety of pricing options to suit both the frequent and casual user - from the individual pay-as-you-go searcher, to multi-campus universities and international corporations. For more information visit us on the web at [www.iee.org.uk/publish/](http://www.iee.org.uk/publish/), or contact INSPEC at 732-321-5575.



**INSPEC**  
THE INSTITUTION OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS

# The **Best Study Tools** for April's **Professional Engineer Exam** Are Ready for Your Shelves **NOW!**

The **McGraw-Hill PE Exam Depth Guides**



The **McGraw-Hill PE Exam Depth Guides** provide comprehensive coverage of the subject matter applicants will face in the afternoon portion of the PE Exam. Each book features example problems from previous exams along with power study techniques for peak performance.

**GEOTECHNICAL  
ENGINEERING**

*S. Joseph Spigolon*  
ISBN: 0-07-136184-7

**WATER RESOURCES**  
*Emmanuel U. Nzewi*  
ISBN: 0-07-136183-9

**STRUCTURAL  
ENGINEERING**

*M. Myint Lwin*  
ISBN: 0-07-136181-2

**TRANSPORTATION  
ENGINEERING**  
*James T. Ball*  
ISBN: 0-07-136180-4

**ENVIRONMENTAL  
ENGINEERING**

*Yvonne F. Bernard and  
Deborah L. Thurston*  
ISBN: 0-07-136182-0

*All Titles: \$39.95 • Paperback • 350 pages • 100 illustrations*



For more information: visit us at **ACRL Booth #326**  
or contact **Karolyn Anderson**, Manager, Library Sales and Marketing at  
617-472-3555 or [karolyn\\_anderson@mcgraw-hill.com](mailto:karolyn_anderson@mcgraw-hill.com)

A Division of The McGraw-Hill Companies