



**Chapter Council Presents  
Sharing Roundtables  
MLA Annual Meeting  
San Antonio, TX  
Monday, May 16, 2005**

## **Table 10A: Distance Education**

**Facilitator:** Dolores Judkins

**Recorder:** Marcy Brown

**Participants:** Katherine Alexander; Vanina Chavarri; Sharon Dennis; Marty Magee; Peggy Mullaly-Quijas

### **Discussion:**

The facilitator began by asking everyone to introduce him or herself and briefly describe interests in distance education. Participants had varied reasons for attending this particular table topic, including:

- Current support of distance nursing students
- Desire to offer more flexible library instruction
- Current support of distance CME for rural physicians
- Need to offer CE to dispersed group of hospital librarians
- Current experimentation with synchronous education

The discussion moved forward as Dolores posed a series of open-ended questions. Below are the questions and a summary of the responses for each.

### **Q1. How do you support distance education (DE) students?**

- We develop CDs for those students who may not have good, high-speed Internet access.
- We try to assist frustrated students who have connectivity issues.
- We provide an asynchronous discussion board for DE questions or problems.
- We allow students to print and mail quizzes and tests if there are access or connectivity problems.
- We provide electronic document delivery. This is becoming problematic because the volume is increasing tremendously.
- We offer streaming video and videoconference services.
- We offer virtual reference, but this does not work well if the librarians are not onsite at our campus.

**Q2. What are your feelings about DE services as a *user* of distance technologies?**

- Many participants do not like viewing PowerPoint presentations online.
- Because of access problems, we like to have summaries or transcripts of Webcasts rather than having to watch the entire presentation.

**Q3. Do students miss the face-to-face interaction?**

- This seems dependent upon the course and the instructor.
- Some studies have shown that students who are shy and hesitate to participate in the classroom setting may actively participate in an online course. This opens the discussion up to new perspectives.
- Because extensive decisions have to be made about what to include in an online course, the curriculum is often “tighter” and more meaningful.

**Q4. Is more planning required for a distance education offering versus the same course in face-to-face format?**

- Distance methods often require better instructional design.
- Distance learning also requires more time for course developers and instructors to become familiar with the particular technology selected.
- Planning to find the time to “attend” self-paced online instruction is crucial. Face-to-face instruction simply requires that an attendee get the workshop on his or her calendar. Self-paced instruction of any sort requires better scheduling and time management, or it never gets done.

**Q5. How important is it for librarians to have access to online CE?**

- Opinions varied among participants. Some really want or need online CE; others don't care about receiving formal contact hours and so don't need the online courses.

**Q6. How can we deal with firewall issues for remote users?**

- One librarian buys Web space with an external hosting provider.
- Others use EZProxy or similar solutions.

**Q7. What are some up-and-coming distance learning technologies?**

- A few libraries currently use Captivate, a Macromedia/Adobe product, for library tutorials, demonstrations of new software products, and related needs.
- One library is using another Macromedia product, Breeze, for synchronous instruction. Breeze combines chat, audio/videoconference, and Webcast technologies for live interaction.
- We discussed potential uses of an Access Grid, an extra-large videoconference screen that uses Internet2 to offer collaboration from up to 20 sites at one time.