Reaching Across the Miles:
Forging Conduits to Assist Distance Researchers

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Issue: Increasing numbers of students are taking classes at a distance, whether through online learning systems or at distance campus locations (somewhere away from the main campus). The road to outreach is never straight – speed bumps ahead! ***How can librarians deliver instruction and assistance to these students?***

SAU's Current Solution:

We use a combination of techniques…

Teaching:

- One-shot teaching sessions
- Embedding in courses
- Teaching alongside faculty in select courses

Consulting with patrons:

- Phone
- Email
- Chat
  - ➢ Proactive (SnapEngage)
  - ➢ 24/7 Reference Service (QuestionPoint)
- One-on-one research meetings

Online presence

- Social Media Presence:
  - ➢ Library profiles
  - ➢ Personal profiles
- Online hours
- Individual online appointments

Tools Currently Used:

How do I get started?

There are a number of considerations to keep in mind as you venture toward connecting with distance students…

Existing structure of institution:

What is your institution's structure like?
- Online students?
- Students attending face-to-face classes at remote sites?
- Both?

Potential Players/Partners:

- Liaison departments' faculty and staff
- Campus IT Department
- Course Writers

Teaching Considerations:

- Current campus software subscriptions, including LMS
- Accommodation of a variety of learning styles
- ADA Compliance
- Synchronous vs. asynchronous classes
- Time constraints for librarians and professors
- Librarian availability

Where would I "plug in"?

These are some ideas to consider in terms of getting started…there are many options and your circumstances should factor in.

Online Presence:

Create designated social media accounts for the promotion of research tips and scholarship while being present where the students are:
- Social media sites (Facebook, Pinterest, etc)
- LinkedIn
- ResearchGate

Lines of Communication:

In addition to the traditional phone and email options, consider creating accounts for real time connection. This could be done through:
- Google Hangouts
- Skype
- Chat services specific to reference questions, such as a 24/7 reference service
- Proactive chat to assist at the point-of-need

Guide on the side:

Got a library ally in your liaison area? See if you can get your own discussion board for questions within the campus' learning system!