

ABSTRACT

Charting the Future: Providing Library Services for Distance Students of the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus

This study was undertaken to determine the level of usage of distance library services by Mona Campus distance students, their level of satisfaction with these services and new library service requirements. In addition, the profile of distance students and their use of other libraries were investigated. The results are intended to provide the basis for improvement of existing distance library services and the introduction of new offerings. The group targeted was 150 of the 400 UWIDEC students, who in September 2000 had completed at least one year in a distance programme. The response rate to the survey questionnaire was 52%.

The findings reveal that most of the students are female, that they are predominantly teachers, and that most are employed full-time. Eighty-six percent (86%) are in the 25 and over age range while the disciplines most heavily subscribed to are management studies and educational administration.

The data indicates that only 37% of participants had visited the Mona library while the services most utilized from UWIDEC sites are the on-site textbooks (72%), document delivery - photocopies of journal articles and chapters of books (63%), and book loans from the Mona Campus (53%). The highest levels of satisfaction - satisfied and moderately satisfied - are accorded to document delivery, reference service, and book loans from the Mona Campus. Turnaround time for delivery of material and inadequate numbers and variety of relevant titles at sites are significant areas for improvement.

Access to electronic resources, such as databases, emerges as a potent need, given the fact that the majority of students have access to the Internet. In addition, supplemental reading material and access to research consultation are cited as new service needs. The study concludes with recommendations of two types - those concerned with the upgrading of existing services and those related to the implementation of new services.

Keywords: Evadne Louise McLean; Distance Library Service; Distance Education Students; University of the West Indies (Mona, Jamaica).