

The Impact of Distance Education on Libraries

by Jeff Groeling and Kenneth A. Boyd

ABSTRACT: Technological advances and the Internet have radically changed the way people learn, live, and grow. In higher education, libraries have been challenged to look at how to serve people not only locally but at a distance. At Asbury Theological Seminary these changes have revolved around three issues: providing resources online equivalent to those available locally, information literacy, and the importance of collaboration.

Higher education is at a crossroads. This statement should give pause not only for colleges and universities, but across the spectrum of higher education, from community colleges to graduate schools and seminaries. The situation is becoming so serious, according to Gordon Gee, the president of Ohio State University, that institutions of higher education must reinvent themselves or face extinction.¹

What has brought about this state of affairs? Part of the blame can be ascribed to current economic conditions, but at least part is attributable to changes in how people think about higher education—such as expecting more explicit return on investment, more government involvement via student loans, concern over student debt accumulation, and changing notions of tenure, research, and teaching.

Given the situation, institutions of higher education must reflect on whether and how they are meeting the needs of today's student. As often as not, students in higher education are commuting to school or taking courses at a distance, challenging the status quo of the traditional residential student. In the state of Indiana, the Ivy Tech Community College system (primarily a commuter school) has grown in size to become the largest post-secondary system in the state with more than 120,000 students, surpassing Indiana University and its extension campuses.² Seminary education is not exempt from this developing paradigm shift. Although there are other manifestations of this change evident within individual institutions, one of the more significant challenges facing seminaries is how best to serve this growing population of non-residential students. Distance learning, in particular, has driven seminaries and their accrediting bodies to examine how best to “do” seminary education. One of the most notable outcomes of distance learning in the seminary setting is the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) accreditation requirement that completion of a seminary degree at a distance requires at least one year of courses to be completed residentially, emphasizing the importance of community in the spiritual formation of a seminary student.³ Another issue, and one that will be the focus of this paper, is how the seminary library can best serve

¹ Paul Fain, “Gordon Gee Says Colleges Face ‘Reinvention or Extinction,’” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 9 2009, <http://chronicle.com/daily/2009/02/11131n.htm>.

² Ivy Tech Community College, “Ivy Tech Community College Sets Spring Enrollment Record,” http://www.ivytech.edu/about/news-stores/spring_enrollment_011409.html.

³ Association of Theological Schools, “Frequently Asked Questions About Accreditation: Information for the General Public,” <http://www.ats.edu/Accrediting/Pages/FAQ.aspx>.

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students at a distance and how Asbury Seminary has tried to accomplish this goal over the last eleven years that Asbury's Extended Learning (ExL) online program has been in existence.

In the early 1990s, Asbury Theological Seminary was fortunate to receive a sizeable bequest that included money for upgrading infrastructure. Asbury became one of the leaders in the use of technology in theological education. However, it wasn't until the start of Asbury's ExL online program that the use of technology became a part of the institutional "DNA." Suddenly, paper-based systems such as course registration, bill payment, and library databases were to be made available online. This was especially true in the library. As part of the institutional upgrade, the library computing system was replaced and new workstations were put in place throughout the library. At the time of the upgrade, the library was not ready for technology integration. The only computers allowed in the library were for access to the online catalog, with no access for e-mail or the Internet. Consequently, computer labs with Internet access, e-mail, and word processing were set up in the Information Technology area located in another building. The library was not yet ready to acknowledge that there had been a change in how resources were accessed and how research was accomplished. Eventually, the computer lab was shifted to the library, although relegated to one corner.

The launch of the online program in 1997 helped to facilitate change in the library. From a purely numerical perspective, the importance of online resources became evident as the number of online students increased. Each student usually enrolled in more than one course. In 1998-1999 there were 399 ExL course enrollments. By 2003-2004 the numbers had risen to 2,720. In 2007-2008 the total number of ExL enrollments was 3,579 in comparison to 1,391 course enrollments for our Florida campus and 8,023 for the Kentucky campus.

DISTANCE EDUCATION AND SEMINARY LIBRARIES

The growth of distance learning at Asbury has highlighted the need to pay attention to the fundamentals of librarianship. A re-examination of critical functions of a library such as collecting, organizing, preserving and ultimately making knowledge available all come under scrutiny when applied to the distance learning context.⁴ In interviews with seminary faculty, Delamarter found that faculty were concerned that students at a distance were missing a critical component of seminary education by not physically being in the library.⁵ Delamarter also noted a concern of faculty as to whether students at a distance were able to get access to the same resources as residential students. Organizations such as the American Library Association have released best practices⁶ and accreditation bodies have provided requirements⁷ that address how libraries should best serve students at a distance.

How best to provide library services to distance learning students has been a concern in the seminary community as demonstrated not only by the ATS Handbook of Accreditation Guidelines for Evaluating Library and Information

⁴ Susan McKnight, "Distance Education and the Role of Academic Libraries," in *Handbook of Distance Education*, eds. Michael Moore and William Anderson (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003), 377-386.

⁵ Steve Delamarter, "Theological Educators and their Concerns about Technology," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 8 (2005): 131-143.

⁶ Association of College & Research Libraries, "Standards for Distance Learning Library Services," <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/guidelinesdistancelearning.cfm>.

⁷ Association of Theological Schools, "Guidelines for Evaluating Library and Information Resources," <http://www.ats.edu/Accrediting/Documents/Handbook/HandbookSection9.pdf>.

Resources⁸ but also in the literature of the seminary library community. As the Internet became more pervasive in the 1990s, seminaries and their librarians were struggling to understand how this new phenomenon was going to fit into the seminary context. Many of the conversations at the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) annual conference focused on topics such as how librarians could provide services to seminary students at a distance⁹ as well as the changing role of the academic library in distance education.¹⁰ In 2001, Stover compiled several articles dealing directly with the impact of the Internet on seminary librarianship.¹¹ Along with other authors in the book addressing the changes in seminary librarianship brought about by the Internet, Harmeyer addressed the issue of theological distance education and focused heavily on standards and opportunities in theological distance education. He also highlighted resources that not only benefited students at a distance but residential students as well.¹² Harmeyer speculated on the future of library services, and one of the points he emphasized was that seminary librarians should be proactive in their approach to service, and look for opportunities to apply their expertise through the medium of tomorrow's educational technology.¹³ Educational technology in this case was not only limited to the traditional classroom, but would also include the Internet and any resources or pedagogies enhanced by online delivery.

More recently, a roundtable conducted by The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) in 2006 discussed the changing role of the academic library given the revolution in teaching and learning brought about by digitization, the Internet, and other technological advances.¹⁴ The roundtable recommended three essential actions libraries must make to achieve the necessary transformation to remain relevant in the years ahead: 1) librarians must evolve from print media to user-focused media and become information specialists; 2) the culture of libraries and their staffs must change from a mindset of primarily ownership and control to one that seeks to provide service and guidance in helping users find information regardless of the format; and 3) libraries must assert their evolving role not only within their institutions but share their information dissemination and retrieval expertise in other markets.¹⁵ Ammerman related the changing role of the academic library specifically to the seminary library.¹⁶ He identified three factors that seminary libraries should address as they move into the future: 1) collaborative models of scholarship and pedagogy involving both physical and technological infrastructure; 2) globalization, especially made possible by technology including providing library services to those at a distance; and 3) changes in scholarly

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Allen W. Mueller, "Library Services to Real Students from Virtual and Extension Programs," *American Theological Library Association: Summary of Proceedings* 51 (1997): 257-61.

¹⁰ Linda C. Smith, "The Academic Library's Role in Distance Education," *American Theological Library Association: Summary of Proceedings* 53 (1999): 125-32.

¹¹ Mark Stover, ed., *Theological Librarians and the Internet: Implications for Practice* (New York: Haworth Press, 2001).

¹² Dave Harmeyer, "Theological Distance Education: A Librarian's Perspective," in *Theological Librarians and the Internet: Implications for Practice*, ed. Mark Stover (New York: Haworth Press, 2001), 69-86.

¹³ Ibid., 85.

¹⁴ Association of College & Research Libraries, "Changing Roles of Academic and Research Libraries," <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/issues/future/changingroles.cfm>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Jack W. Ammerman, "Jam To-morrow and Jam Yesterday, but Never Jam To-day: The Dilemma of Theology Libraries Planning for the Twenty-first Century," *Theological Education* 40, no. 1 (2004): 11-30.

publication and the digitization of information including cooperative arrangements for distributed collections.¹⁷ Each of these factors are relevant to academic libraries in general, but especially important to the future success of seminary libraries. How seminary libraries address these factors will contribute to the success or failure of the institution.

As mentioned earlier, Asbury Theological Seminary has been grappling with many of these issues for the better part of the last fifteen years. Many of these issues became even more pronounced with the advent of Asbury's distance learning program, ExL, in 1997. The following sections focus on issues related to seminary libraries as experienced at Asbury Seminary. They include the mandate of providing the equivalent resources online, information literacy, and the importance of collaboration.

PROVIDING EQUIVALENT RESOURCES ONLINE

The first issue is both the idealistic goal and an accreditation/best practices expectation of the library to provide information resources to all constituents, whether residentially or at a distance. The expectations are clearly set forth in the ACRL Guidelines: "The library has primary responsibility for making its resources and services available to its users regardless of physical location."¹⁸ This notion is further reinforced in the ATS Handbook of Accreditation—"How does the library integrate print collections, access to electronic information, and other resources to foster information literacy"¹⁹—and with the ALA definition of the outcome of information literacy—"a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information."²⁰ These mutually reinforcing best practices regarding the provision of information resources with the goal of improved information literacy provide the foundation of many of the ATS library accreditation requirements.

In many institutions including seminaries, the library is viewed as a cost center. Since so much money is expended in procuring, storing, and delivering information resources, it is important to ask how effectively the library supports the institution. In most institutions, library spending has been flat for recent years so libraries have to be creative in acquiring and delivering new resources, especially when the cost of resources continues to increase.²¹

At Asbury, as the impact of technology and online learning grew, the librarians realized the need for a better way to integrate both technology and support for online learning into their services. As a result, the decision was made to merge the Library with Information Technology to form a department of Information Services managed by a Dean who reported to the Provost. Up to that point, the online learning program had been managed as part of Information Technology. With the merger, an Information Commons model was adopted in the Library where both resident and online users could get support for library services, computer assistance, or the online learning program.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Association of College & Research Libraries, "Standards for Distance Learning."

¹⁹ Association of Theological Schools, "Guidelines for Evaluating Library and Information Resources."

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Timothy D. Lincoln, "What's a Seminary Library for?" *Theological Education* 40, no.1 (2004): 1-11.

As the departments merged to form Information Services, the decision was made to locate in the Library all staff working directly with users; other staff providing “back-end” services were located in the offices formerly designated for Information Technology. This reorganization of staff helped put a greater emphasis on customer support. By mixing the Library and Information Technology staff, some of the “we/they” dynamics that plague some library/information technology mergers were avoided. Information Technology staff that worked directly with users to provide computer support were moved to the Library, while programmers stayed in Information Technology. On the Library side, acquisitions/technical services were moved from the Library to Information Technology.

The shifting of staff and reporting structures was not the only change brought about by technology and the expectation of serving students at a distance. Another challenge was the impetus of providing information resources in a variety of formats besides books. Online access to information resources has minimized the differences between residential users and users at a distance. Once the resource becomes available electronically, it can be accessed by a user anytime, anywhere.

Along with the change in institutional structure and alignment to make better use of resources at Asbury, there has been a corresponding shift in the type of resources provided. As an embodiment of this mentality of anytime, anywhere access to resources, the seminary administration requested the digitization of core materials with the ultimate goal of making all materials available to all students, whether on the Kentucky, Florida, or Virtual campuses. Having all materials available to all students is still a dream; however, while there has been an increase in book and periodical spending, there has also been a corresponding increase in spending on online databases, which has increased from \$19,488 in 2003-2004 to \$51,400 in 2007-2008. During the same time the book acquisition budget rose from \$162,755 to \$227,043 while periodical spending rose from \$82,263 to \$122,432. Although all three categories showed an increase, spending on online databases more than doubled.

The changes in copyright law and the need for making materials available to online students has required us to seek copyright permission and to purchase materials for both online and on-campus classes. Florida and ExL campuses are sent digital copies of periodical articles or materials from our reference works/general collection needed for research. Turnaround time is generally 24 hours. Digital copies of articles/materials can be requested through interlibrary loan from other libraries as well as between campuses.

Asbury has begun developing a digital repository to house materials, particularly those that relate to Asbury’s traditions. Collections include Archive Digital Collections (collections, finding aids, archive photos), Books and Periodicals (those that relate specifically to the Asbury tradition), Dissertations/Thesis/Conference Papers (D.Min., D.Miss., Ph.D., and MA), Institutional Repository (academic catalogs, Seminary Herald, Pentecostal Herald, chapel services, syllabi), and Instructional Resources (faculty lectures, instructional photos).

In addition to the digital repository, an initiative utilizing iTunes U is being developed. Initially, there will be audio and video messages from the seminary president, student stories, and chapel services from the Kentucky and Florida campuses, as well as interviews and lectures. Thus, students will be able to download podcasts of these offerings, which could include the delivery of classroom-related media resources.

Not only has the type of available resources been changing in academic libraries, the role of the librarian has been changing as well. Twenty years ago the work of a librarian was generally centered on a specific task (cataloging,

reference, circulation). The librarian of today does not have the luxury of focusing on a single, specific task. The convergence that has come as part of the digitization movement has in turn empowered the librarian to break the shackles of task-orientation and has shifted the emphasis to the user. The librarian today can offer direct assistance to the user in locating needed information, whether online, media-, or paper-based. Stewart writes that a librarian needs to function as a catalyst rather than a clerk.²² The focus is on customer service versus an emphasis on back-office functions. At Asbury this change has been manifested in a number of ways, including the creation of the Information Commons desk and a significant change in the function of Interlibrary Loan.

The Information Commons brought together library reference services, library circulation, computer labs, computer support, instructional support, media production, and ExL/online support. Questions could come from someone walking in the front door, calling on the phone, or e-mailing. To support our online students, the Information Commons staff can access the students' computers remotely to assist with technical problems, and can also assist students in locating resources or to provide library instruction.

Information Services staff were also impacted by the Information Commons approach. By using a team approach, economies of staffing were accomplished while extending support hours for many of the services. Cross training between areas and using a database to monitor and track questions, requests, or projects helped achieve the goal of creating a one-stop shop. In order to stay in touch with user needs, all members of the team spent time at the Information Commons desk assisting users. To foster collaboration between professional and clerical staff, cubicles replaced individual offices.

Along with the changes at the Information Commons desk, there has also been a large increase in interlibrary loan requests as a result of the addition of the Florida and Virtual campuses. In 1997–1998 there were 93 interlibrary loan requests; requests increased to 392 in 2003–2004 and to 1,867 in 2007–2008. The growth in interlibrary loan is at least partially due to enrollment in the ExL program.

INFORMATION LITERACY

Providing the right information effectively and efficiently is just one aspect of information literacy emphasized by ATS in the *Handbook of Accreditation*.²³ Gragg provides two additional reasons to be concerned with information literacy in seminary education.²⁴ First, a significant percentage of students entering seminaries are returning to school after spending years in other careers. This influx of new students unfamiliar with the nuances of navigating alternative resources (other than books) effectively will require intentional instruction in order to overcome these deficiencies. Second, even after getting students to an acceptable level of information literacy, further training is required for specialization in the seminary context.

Unfortunately and ironically, one of the greatest obstacles to overcome in fostering information literacy is also one of the best sources for finding information, the Google search engine. It is not an overgeneralization to say that many students today search Google and proceed no further. Many librarians and professors decry the growth

²² David R. Stewart, "Issue Editor's Introduction," *Theological Education* 40, no. 1 (2004): iii-ix.

²³ Association of Theological Schools. "Guidelines for Evaluating Library and Information Resources."

²⁴ Douglas L. Gragg, "Information Literacy in Theological Education," *Theological Education* 40, no. 1 (2004): 99-112.

of Wikipedia because students take what is found there at face value, not realizing that anyone can contribute information to the site and what this implies for the accuracy of any information obtained. Falciani-White considers this tendency to focus on Google, Wikipedia, and similar resources to be characteristic of seminary students belonging to the millennial generation.²⁵ The millennial generation, those individuals born between 1982 and 2002, have different expectations of education and the library than previous generations. Falciani-White examines the impact these differences are having and will continue to have upon seminary libraries as these students enter seminaries in increasing numbers. According to Falciani-White, students today are confronted by a tremendous amount of information in which they can easily become lost, and they rely heavily upon search engines for their information needs in order to navigate and manage the information glut they face.²⁶ Students are comfortable using Google because they regularly use it for mundane tasks such as obtaining driving directions and movie times, so they regard it as sufficient for academic research purposes. This reliance upon Google does not mean that millennials are incapable of doing good research or being good students—rather it could be an indication of unfamiliarity with other research options available.

Seminary librarians are not unaware that there is a glut of information available due to the changes wrought by the digitization of resources. Crawford et. al. acknowledge that Google searches could be inadequate for sifting through the wealth of seminary resources that are available on the web and proposed a cooperative project relying upon the expertise of seminary librarians to help manage these resources collaboratively.²⁷ The Google search engine algorithm has no way of determining whether one web site is more scholarly than another. The collaborative effort proposed by Crawford et. al. would be a means for seminary librarians to provide a value-added service in support of the research of their respective constituents.

There are other issues related to the ocean of information available to library users on the web. Search engines do not index many web resources (sometimes called the hidden, deep, or dark web) whose sum is several orders of magnitude larger than the surface web.²⁸ Library users doing a Google search will not find these hidden resources because the search engine has not indexed or is not capable of indexing a particular website. Password-protected databases either do not show up in Google results because a password is required for the site to be indexed or they show up far down the search results because Google search results are at least partially based on the number of sites that are linked to a particular website. Also, dynamically generated webpages, such as those used in content management systems (CMS), cause problems for search engine indexing which would in turn be responsible for sites appearing lower in the Google search results. Ganski regards the issue of finding resources in the hidden web

²⁵ Nancy K. Falciani-White, "Running with Perseverance: The Theological Library's Challenge of Keeping Pace with Changing Students," *Theological Librarianship* 1, no.2 (December, 2008): 16-27, <http://journal.atla.com/ojs/index.php/theolib/article/view/61/115>.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁷ Eileen Crawford, Amy Limpitlaw, and Bill Hook, "Is There Anything Worthwhile on the Web? A Cooperative Project to Identify Scholarly Resources in Theology and Religion," *Theological Education* 40, no. 1 (2004): 49-58.

²⁸ Michael K. Bergman, "White Paper: The Deep Web: Surfacing Hidden Value," *The Journal of Electronic Publishing* 7, no.1 (August, 2001): <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/3336451.0007.104>.

as an organizational issue at least partially related to navigation for the users of seminary libraries.²⁹ Librarians should take a proactive approach in managing their digital resources so that their users can find the information they need in a timely and effective manner. Again, the issue for seminary librarians is not so much the incapability of library users in finding these resources but more an issue of training and bringing these resources that are outside of the “normal” Google sphere to the attention of their users.

Asbury has dealt with information literacy issues in a number of ways over the years. The seminary recognized the need for information literacy when the merger of Information Technology and the Library to form Information Services took place in 2003. One of the vision statements for the creation of the Information Commons called for increased computer, information, and instructional literacy. In other words, the statement addressed not only concerns about both information and computer literacy for faculty, staff, and students but also concerns about instructional design issues such as learning styles, assessment, and classroom instruction (instructional literacy). The Information Commons model adopted has helped to address computer, instructional, and information literacy.

With the start of the ExL in 1997, there was an emphasis on just-in-time learning. The benefactor for our online program was a strong proponent of just-in-time learning, as well as making knowledge available and accessible. With online databases, the seminary library was now available 24/7. As a result, library instruction as part of new student orientation was discontinued. Instead, a series of online tutorials was created that would be available whenever required by students, staff, or faculty. Tutorials were added for the Asbury Information System (course registration), Asbury e-mail, Asbury Scholar (interlibrary loan and integrated database searching), Bible Works, Prolepsis (Sage Digital Library and Logos Library System), EBSCOhost, Productivity Software (Word, PowerPoint, iMovie, and Final Cut Pro), Proquest Dissertations and Theses, and WorldCat.

In addition to the tutorials, to address just-in-time learning, the Information Commons staff have worked proactively to schedule library instruction as part of specific classes. When students are ready to start their research, the Information Commons staff provide training designed for the specific class/subject. Although this has been slow in getting started, there were eleven sessions in 2007–2008, and fourteen were conducted through the first half of 2008–2009.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION

The ever-increasing digitization of resources and the corresponding increase in global connectivity created by the Internet have provided a wealth of opportunities for collaboration and cooperation heretofore unavailable. Accreditors demand and organizational best practices recommend cooperation and collaboration between institutions in higher education. With the interconnectivity between individuals and institutions facilitated by the Internet, collaboration with a colleague is only an email, Twitter, or Facebook wall post away. In the seminary context, there are many opportunities for collaboration. Crawford et al. called for seminary libraries to collaborate

²⁹ Kate L. Ganski, “Accessibility of E-resources from Theological Library Websites,” *Theological Librarianship* 1, no.1 (June, 2008): 38-45, <http://journal.atla.com/ojs/index.php/theolib/article/view/14/30>.

on managing their web resources.³⁰ Hotta discussed opportunities for seminary libraries to collaborate nationally (i.e. ATLA, Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning Theology and Religion), and regionally (i.e., Chicago Area Theological Association, Graduate Theological Union).³¹ The opportunities for collaboration better leverage institutional financial resources and librarian expertise, and serve end users better by providing access to broader information resources than would be possible if a library was operating independently. Asbury is a member of the Theological Education Association of Mid-America (TEAM-A) consortium, thus users at other seminaries in the Midwest use and access to resources at Asbury. Asbury is also a member of the Kentucky Virtual Library initiative, in which colleges and universities in the state of Kentucky collaborate to subscribe to online resources and databases as a consortial group, achieving better access to online resources and improved stewardship of limited finances. The seminary also shares its library software and database with Asbury College, physically located across the street from the seminary.

Along with opportunities for institutional collaboration are opportunities for professional collaboration between seminary librarians. These connections already existed through professional associations and related conferences (i.e., ALA, ATLA), but the convenience brought about by the growth and use of the Internet for peer-to-peer communication has made these connections easier to foster and maintain. For example, *Theological Librarianship* probably would not exist if not for the Internet. In the 1990s, Asbury hosted a series of conferences for faculty, librarians, and information technology staff titled ATS 2000, where schools were able to share and collaborate on information resource development and changes going on at their respective schools. Over the five-year course of the ATS 2000 conference, more than 200 seminaries and colleges participated.

Within the institution there are further occasions for collaboration brought about by the technological changes. McMahon provided examples of how librarians can partner with teaching faculty not only in providing guidance to information resources but as a collaborator in assessment, pedagogy, and professional development.³² Librarians should be proactive and invest themselves in the life and community of the institution. As the Internet continues to change how and where seminary education is delivered, the librarian is transitioning to an active part of the teaching and learning process, and the reach of the librarian is extended beyond the four walls of the library.

At Asbury, the original focus of the Information Commons was to create a one-stop service shop for students no matter their location (Kentucky, Florida, or Virtual), but once the Information Commons was established and performing well, faculty began to ask for a similar service. The result was the creation of a Faculty Information Commons located in the lower level of the Library. The Faculty Information Commons provided the same services for faculty, but added course conversion (on-campus to hybrid or online), copyright compliance, support for the course management system (Moodle), and technical support for laptops as well as support for classroom

³⁰ Crawford, Limpitlaw & Hook, "Is There Anything Worthwhile," 56.

³¹ Ann Hotta, "Is There a Strategic Alliance in Your Future? Lessons Learned from Library Consortia," *Theological Education* 40, no. 1 (2004): 89-98.

³² Melody McMahon, "Librarians and Teaching Faculty in Collaboration: New Incentives, New Opportunities," *Theological Education* 40, no. 1 (2004): 73-88.

technology and collection development. Faculty began to see the Library as a place where they could get the support they needed, and the Information Commons staff became more involved with the teaching and learning responsibilities of the faculty. One of the by-products of the creation of the Faculty Information Commons was the presence of more faculty in the Library. Through the Faculty Information Commons at Asbury, the development and refinement of courses for distance learning delivery created partnerships between faculty and librarians that were much more intentional in nature and not only related to resources but also pedagogy.³³

One librarian unexpectedly experienced a benefit of the Faculty Information Commons. Although initially very resistant to losing a personal office and sharing space with other Faculty Information Commons staff, this librarian grudgingly acquiesced to the Dean's request. The librarian quickly realized that faculty were regularly coming into the Faculty Information Commons for help with their laptops. While the faculty were waiting for their laptops to be serviced, the librarian was given the chance to "ambush" the faculty with ideas to integrate library and information resources, such as recommending a database or book in support of the faculty member's research, offering help in finding an online resource for a class, or providing a recommendation for an acceptable substitute resource so students might avoid purchasing additional textbooks.

Clearly, the scope of changes in the Library at Asbury Seminary—providing equivalent resources online; expecting information literacy, and emphasizing the importance of collaboration—are not limited strictly to distance education, but the changes have been implemented in such a way so as to service the greatest number of constituents, no matter their role or location. The drive to provide services for distance learners has resulted in benefits for all library users.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SEMINARY LIBRARIES

How has distance education influenced the seminary librarian? It has changed the definition of the library. The library is no longer simply a physical building with four walls. The library, like a church, has the heart of the people that form it. Librarianship is changing from managing books to connecting people and quality resources while at the same time delivering resources efficiently and providing the best customer service possible.

The emphasis is shifting from what librarians do to how they do it. In a digital world, resources are becoming more of a commodity. Learning how to navigate the increasingly complex morass of information is and will continue to be the domain of the librarian. The academic librarian provides added value to the teaching and learning process. As long as there is a need for learning resources, there will be a need for a guide to navigate those resources regardless of the modality used in delivering those resources.



³³ Jeff Groeling and Lester Ruth, "The Times, They Are A-Changin': How a Training Seminar for Online Education Changed a Seminary One Faculty Member at a Time," *Theological Education* 42, no. 2 (2007): 57-66.