



WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

BOWLING GREEN, KENTUCKY 42101

Department of
Library Public Services

TO: Faculty Senate

FROM: Department of Library Public Services

SUBJECT: Response to Resolution on Extended Campus
Reference Service

DATE: April 13, 1989

The Department of Library Public Services shares the Faculty Senate's concern over the degree of reference assistance given extended campus students and, to address this concern, has been reviewing the entire service and possible alternatives during the spring semester. A final report and recommendations will be submitted to the Director of Libraries on May 15.

The WKU Libraries extended campus services developed in response to the need generated by Western's rapidly growing off-campus enrollment which has doubled since 1984 and represents nearly one-third of the off-campus enrollments of the Commonwealth's eight public universities. Western's extended campus program currently offers 285 classes taught in 32 locations throughout a predominantly rural 27-county area. The majority of class sites have meager, if any, library resources to support students' curriculum needs.

The library services currently offered are not unique to Western and reflect procedures adopted by off-campus programs across the country in an effort to satisfy the needs of the non-traditional student. While accreditation standards do not require, as your resolution states, that "...librarians... assemble bibliographies for students..." they do mandate the provision of services to off-campus students which are equitable to those available to on-campus students. Automation continues to change the nature of 'hands on research.' On-campus students now have access to computerized periodical literature indexes which can generate a bibliography on a desired subject in a few minutes time at the push of a button. To provide comparable service to those extended campus students unable to come to WKU Libraries, the reference librarians act as intermediaries in this process by utilizing the same computerized indexes to generate the students' requested bibliographies--in essence, pushing the button for them.

The Libraries extended campus services, including reference assistance, has enabled faculty to give their extended campus

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students assignments comparable to those given on-campus students so that they can be assured of a comparable learning experience. The current program is an evolving service responding to the needs of the rural communities it serves. Like other extended campus programs nationwide, a degree of 'spoon-feeding' is necessitated by inadequate funding and meager off-campus library resources. It is feared that curtailment of the service would seriously affect our ability to meet accreditation standards as well as jeopardize the quality of education offered Western's extended campus students.

Your thoughtful consideration of this issue is appreciated.