Off-Campus but not Alone:
Supporting the Research Needs of Nontraditional Students Using Digital Resources

Electronic Resources & Libraries
February 22-24, 2007

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Central Michigan University - in Atlanta?

- Our programs
- Our resources
- Our services
- Our students
- Our challenge
- Our opportunities
- Our plan
Our programs

• Off-campus programs
  – Enrollment
  – Student population
  – Locations
  – Degrees

• Master of Arts in Education
  – Class format
  – Degree requirements
Our programs

• Enrollment (2005/2006)
  – 20,025 on-campus
  – 7,075 off-campus
  – 491 off-campus/Atlanta area

• Off-campus student population (1999 data)
  – 77.1 % part time
  – 75.4 % graduate
  – 57.8 % female
  – 26.9 % ethnic minorities (probably higher now)
  – Average age is 37 years
Our programs

• Locations
  – > 60 (US, Canada, & Mexico)
  – Atlanta: Cobb, Dekalb, Douglas, Fayette, Gwinnett, Whitfield (Dalton)

• Degrees
  – Atlanta: MSA, MPA, MA in Ed, Ed.S
  – 805 MA in Education degrees since 2001
Master of Arts - Education

• Class format
  – Flexible scheduling
    • Alternating weekends
    • Weekday evenings
    • Weeklong summer
  – Compressed format
    • 6-7 weeks per course
    • 3 terms per year
    • Pre-class assignments
• Degree requirements
  – 6 core courses
    • including capstone seminar
  – 5 additional classes
    • based on concentration
      – Adult education
      – Instructional
  – Capstone project = 90% of grade
Our resources

• CMU Libraries
  – > 1.9 million volumes
  – > 3600 serial titles
  – >120 online databases
  – > 10,000 ebooks

• Systems/tools
  – QuestionPoint – virtual reference
  – ILLiad – document delivery
  – SFX – citation linker
  – Blackboard – course management
Our services

Off-Campus Library Services

• **Reference services**
  – 6 librarians
  – 62 hours/week
  – Telephone, email, web form

• **Assist students with**
  – Defining topics
  – Selecting digital resources
  – Research strategy
  – Searching digital resources
  – Citing references
Our services

Off-Campus Library Services

• **Library instruction**
  – Instructor led – F2F & web
  – > 60 locations + DE
  – Self-paced web tutorials

• **Content includes**
  – Overview of library services
  – Research process
  – Searching online databases
  – Evaluating resources
  – Retrieving/requesting full-text
Off-Campus Library Services

• **Document Delivery**
  – 5 full-time staff + student workers
  – Serve only off-campus students

• **Fulfillment**
  – Books shipped at no charge
  – Mail or electronic delivery of journal articles
  – 24-48 hour turnaround for CMU-owned materials
Our students

Nontraditional students / adult learners

• Characteristics
• Motivation
• Preparation
• Constraints
Characteristics

- Self-directed, goal oriented
- Varied life experiences
- Desire for advancement
- Employed full-time
- Family responsibilities
- Gap since undergraduate degree
Motivation

• 78% employed in job related to MA in Ed program

• 20% obtained current position because of most recent degree

• 16.6% received promotion upon completion of most recent degree

• 68% received a raise in income because completion of most recent degree

(2005 CMU Alumni survey)
## Motivation

### Georgia Annual/Monthly Salary Schedule

For 10 Months (190 Days) Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>2006 - 2007</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Base Equals</td>
<td>$31,659.00</td>
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<table>
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<th>Years of Creditable Service Step</th>
<th>Salary</th>
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<td>0,12 E</td>
<td>$29,918.00</td>
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<tr>
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<td>$33,673.00</td>
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<tr>
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<td>$34,683.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 6</td>
<td>$35,723.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9,10 7</td>
<td>$36,795.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11,12 10 L1</td>
<td>$37,899.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13,14 11 L2</td>
<td>$39,036.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>15,16 12 L3</td>
<td>$40,207.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17,18 13 L4</td>
<td>$41,413.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>19,20 14 L5</td>
<td>$42,655.00</td>
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<td>21+ 15 L6</td>
<td>$43,935.00</td>
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<td>$3,661.25</td>
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Preparation

• Continuing education required for certification renewal
• Employer-sponsored training
• Noncredit personal development
• Transfer credits
• Prior learning credits
Constraints

• Work obligations
• Parenting/elder care
• Financial support
• Geographic location
• Rusty skills
  – Research
  – Technical
  – Writing
Meet Shelia

- Background
- MA in Ed program
- Capstone research
- Using digital resources
- Challenges
- Accomplishments
Think about:

• What works well?
• What are the challenges?
• What could we change?
Our opportunities

• Help build technical skills to minimize frustration

• Help develop online research skills to improve access to digital resources

• Offer flexible services to support a variety of learning styles and lifestyles

• Increase comfort level by putting a “face” to our off-campus services
Our plan

• Understand our students’ needs
  – Comfort level with digital environment
  – Online or face-to-face or both
  – Capstone research issues

• Implement expanded services
  – Capstone research labs

• Evaluate & monitor

• Determine next steps
Understand student needs

• Target group
  – EDU 660, EDU 776
  – Atlanta Metro locations

• Input
  – OCLS student surveys
  – EDU 776 focus group
  – Capstone requirements
  – Capstone completion data
Understand student needs

### Reference requests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>53%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web form</td>
<td>23%</td>
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### Document delivery requests

<table>
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<th>Method</th>
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<td>Email</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Web form</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
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</table>

*OCLS Student Survey Dec. 2006*
Understand student needs

• How can we improve library services?

Scheduled consultation w/librarian 4.2%
More F2F instruction sessions 12.7%
Librarian-led online instruction 28%
More library resources (books, journals, etc.) 44.1%
Expanded library hours 31.4%
Online chat with a librarian 54.2%

OCLS Student Survey
Dec. 2006
Brings together concepts learned through core and concentration courses and allows students to apply learning to profession.

- **EDU 776 format**
  - Independent research
  - Supervised by instructor
  - Graded by instructor and second reader

- **Timeframe**
  - 12 classroom hours
  - 90 day course
  - 90 day extension
Capstone research

• Barriers to completion
  – Technical skills
  – Research skills
  – Academic writing skills
  – Schedule constraints
  – Unexpected life events
  – Procrastination
  – Fear
Capstone research

Capstone completion data (01/06 – 08/06)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Qty</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Qty</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>&lt; 90</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.66%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15.15%</td>
<td>91 - 180</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>77.17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
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<td>1.82%</td>
<td>181 - 270</td>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14.55%</td>
<td>&gt; 271</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.72%</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.48%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Letter grades are rounded; I indicates Incomplete; N indicates no grade posted.
Implement expanded services

• Intend to…
  – Increase support for Atlanta students completing MA in Ed program
  – Minimize technical/social barriers
  – Improve variety & quality of resources used in capstone research
  – Decrease time to project completion

• Wouldn’t mind…
  – Maximizing use of CMU resources
  – Highlighting library’s role in supporting off-campus graduate programs
Capstone research labs

- **Targeted students**
  - EDU 660 & EDU 776

- **Drop-in research lab**
  - Initiated August 2006
  - Atlanta Metro Center location
  - 30 workstations
  - Individual assistance from librarian on duty

- **Twice-monthly**
  - 1 evening & 1 weekend
  - 3 hour sessions
Capstone research labs

• **Tools**
  - Student guide to Capstone Research
  - APA style manual
  - Resource lists
  - Consultation forms

• **Consultation**
  - Familiarity with OCLS
  - Comfort level
  - Technical/research skills
  - Stage of research
Considerations

• **Resources needed**
  – Staffing
  – Lab access
  – Faculty support

• **Limitations**
  – Scheduling issues
  – Commuting in Atlanta

• **Promotion/participation**
  – leading them to water
  – making them drink
Promotion

- Print fliers
- EDU 776 class visits
- Faculty announcement
- Monthly email reminders
- Web announcement
- Lobby directory screen

Ask a Librarian!
Drop-In Research Lab

Wednesday, August 16   6-9 PM
Saturday, August 26    1-4 PM
Atlanta Metro Center / Shadowood Classroom 1

EDU 776 STUDENTS:
CHU’s Off-Campus Library Services now offers twice-monthly research labs that allow you to work directly with a librarian to conduct research for your capstone project. Get assistance with:

- refining topics and problem statements
- selecting appropriate resources
- developing a search strategy
- conducting database searches
- evaluating resources
- citing references

Please bring your project materials and Campus ID with you. Individual session times may be limited due to demand, but follow-up appointments will be available.

To receive email notification of future sessions, please send your name and email address to worle1cl@cnich.edu.
Evaluate & monitor

• Evaluation
  – Ongoing participation
  – Nature of requests
  – Student/faculty feedback

• Performance measures
  – Capstone completion data
  – Quality of resources
  – Assess now and in one year
## Evaluate & monitor

- # of participants
- Nature of requests
- Follow-up needed

**Ask a Librarian Consultation**

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Course:</th>
<th>Center:</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Email:</td>
<td>Phone:</td>
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</table>

What is the topic of your paper (if you are still deciding, what topics are you considering)?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

What specific aspects of this topic do you want to explore?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

If you have already started your research, what resources have you used so far?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Librarian Notes:

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Follow-up consultation requested: □ YES □ NO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appt. Date:</th>
<th>Appt. Time:</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On site location</th>
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**Off Campus Library Services**

1-800-274-3838
http://olea.cmich.edu

**Atlanta Metro Librarians:**

Julie LaDell Thomas
Thad Dickinson

Follow-up consultation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appt. Date:</th>
<th>Appt. Time:</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On site location</th>
<th>Telephone:</th>
</tr>
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</table>
Performance measures

- **Student achievement (grades)**
  - Research quality indicator
  - Other factors likely to influence

- **Capstone time to completion**
  - Improved technical/research skills
  - Benefit from social interaction
  - Regular schedule keeps students on track

- **Quality/quantity of resources used**
  - Citation analysis
Citation analysis plan

• 15 sample papers
• Evaluate reference lists
• # of works cited
• Quality of works cited
  – Tunon/Brydges rubric
## Citation Categories

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<th>Add</th>
<th>≤ 3 yrs</th>
<th>≤ 10 yrs</th>
<th>max pts</th>
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<td>0.2</td>
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Challenges so far

• Scheduling
  – Capstone deadlines
  – Conflict with classes
  – Lab availability
  – Librarian availability

• Participation
  – Building awareness
  – Faculty support
  – Student expectations
  – Stage of research
Expected benefits

- Increased awareness of library resources & services
- Increased comfort with using digital resources
- Decreased time to capstone completion
- Improved quality of research
Next steps

• Expanded implementation?
  – Additional programs (MSA)
  – Additional EDU classes/locations

• Additional services?
  – Individual consultation
  – Drop-in BI sessions
  – Online chat

• Increased collaboration?
  – Off-campus programs
  – Faculty
Additional research

• One year follow-up

• Targeted surveys
  – Recent graduates
  – Lab participants

• Usage data
  – Digital resources
  – Reference statistics
  – Document delivery requests
Your challenge

Share:

• What does your library do well to meet the needs of nontraditional students?

• How could your experience help address challenges that others might face?

Think about:

• What one change could you make to improve support for nontraditional students?

• How could techniques for serving nontraditional students be applied in other areas of library service?
Resources

CMU links:

Central Michigan University
http://www.cmich.edu/

Off-Campus Library Services
http://ocls.cmich.edu

CMU Off-Campus Programs
http://www.cel.cmich.edu/

Contact:
Julie LaDell-Thomas
Off-Campus Library Services
Central Michigan University
770-933-7671
julie.ladell-thomas@cmich.edu


Polson, C. (Summer 2003). Adult graduate students challenge institutions to change. New Directions for Student Services, 102, 59-68.

Smith, A. (2005). A study to determine why Central Michigan University students complete their coursework but fail to finish their MSA 685 project: Recommendations for the Associate Director of Student Services, U.S. Unpublished manuscript.


QUESTIONS?