

## Off-campus services: From the margins to the center

By Rick Bean

### *The Seventh Off-Campus Library Services Conference*

**W**arm breezes . . . sandy beaches . . . palm trees. Sounds like the locale for a relaxing vacation . . . or the setting for the Seventh Off-Campus Library Services Conference held in San Diego, October 25–27, 1995. The primary objective of the conference was to provide a forum where practitioners involved with library services for off-campus constituents could gather to exchange relevant ideas, concerns, and perspectives, and to share their research. The conference attracted 167 participants from the U.S., Canada, England, South Africa, India, Ireland, New Zealand, Sweden, and Australia.

The first day provided three drop-in discussion sessions, each consisting of two simultaneous discussion groups. Topics included an orientation to the conference, electronic document delivery, promoting off-campus library services to the library profession, starting a new off-campus program, use of the Internet at an extended campus library, and services for foreign nationals. Day one ended with a reception aboard the William D. Evans, a paddle-wheel steamer cruising beautiful Mission Bay.

#### **Mission critical**

The second day began with opening remarks from Delbert J. Ringquist (Central Michigan University). Ringquist told audience members

that they are "mission critical" to senior leaders in continuing education. He then introduced Melvin E. Hall (University of Maryland at College Park), who gave what Kathy Holmes of Lesley College Library called "an inspiring keynote" titled "Marginalized No More: Continuing Education and the Academic Mainstream." One of the main themes of this presentation was the growing acceptance of continuing education and nontraditional students and faculty in the higher education community. Another issue was the movement of continuing (including off-campus) education from the margins to the center of higher education and how this process will evolve. Hall said, "The rules of *membership* in the academy are much more rigid than the rules of *participation* for continuing education."

The bulk of day two consisted of four concurrent sessions that featured paper presentations and panel discussions covering a variety of issues and concerns, and ended with an open hearing on research priorities pertaining to off-campus library services. This meeting, sponsored by the ACRL Extended Campus Library Services Section's Research Committee, was

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a brainstorming session to discover what topics attendees wanted to choose for research studies, and who would be interested in participating in such projects.

#### **Crossing boundaries**

The final day included four concurrent sessions and ended with featured speaker Don L. Bosseau (San Diego State University) examining "Electronic Library Support Systems for

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Courses On- and Off-Campus: Can the Boundaries Be Crossed?" This presentation focused on SDSU Library's Electronic-Reserve Book Room (E-RBR), which provides networked access to scanned course assignments. Bosseau discussed issues such as copyright and requesting permission and/or charging fees to include certain items in the E-RBR. He also gave real and conceptual examples for using imaging technology as a way to provide course support to remote sites.

### Some major conference themes and issues

Although there were over 40 separate presentations, certain themes and issues permeated the conference. They included the relationship between accreditation agencies and institutions with extended campuses, how off-campus librarians support their institutions' international programs, the need for off-campus librarians to be technologically trained and able to teach students and faculty their libraries' electronic resources, and research and library use skills training for off-campus students.

The conference was a resounding success. Kudos go to the Conference Executive Planning Committee for its time and effort, and to the Conference Program Advisory Board for choosing such an interesting array of programs. (Note: A copy of the conference proceedings containing the complete text of the papers on which the presentations were based can be obtained by contacting Jane Tilmann, Park Library 207, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859; (517) 774-3500. The cost is \$35.00.) Congratulations and a pat on the back go to Anne Marie Casey (Central Michigan University), the conference coordinator, who arranged, organized, and orchestrated all of the activities.

The next Off-Campus Library Services Conference is tentatively scheduled for spring 1998 so that it will alternate with the ACRL National Conference years. This seems like a logical plan, although some wouldn't mind having the Off-Campus Library Service Conference held more frequently. As Harvey Gover (Washington State University at Tri-Cities) commented, "Life should be an Off-Camp(us) Conference!!"

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