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On The Street-Distance Education

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On The Street — Distance Learning

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We surveyed several institutions on the topic of **Distance Learning**. What we found, among other things, is that most academic institutions have initiated programs generally within the past few years, with some exceptions. Some were well ahead of the curve and at least in one instance, began distance learning as early as the 1920's.

Ohio University's **Kent Mulliner** reported an active extension program of independent study in 1924! **John Hempstead** of Viterbo College said his school began offering graduate courses in 1988. Each of the other schools surveyed has offered distance learning for only the past two or three years.

What is interesting, especially for the recently-established offerings, is that the number of courses increases each year. **Dean Peter Balsamo** at Coastal Carolina University, Conway, South Carolina, reported three distance learning courses were available in the Fall of 1997. This coming Fall, eleven courses will be offered.

The number of students taking advantage of distance learning courses varies. In the more recent programs, the students number anywhere from 200 to 400. Older programs, such as Ohio University's, account for more than 5,000 "course enrollments each year," according to **Nancy Rue**, Coordinator for User Services.

We thought librarians would be aware of their institutions' progress in distance learning. However, in the larger schools where professional responsibilities are well-defined, such as at the University of North Carolina, **Janet Flowers** reports statistics on the number of students participating and/or matriculating in distance learning projects are not always available. Librarians not connected with universities, such as **Doug Conrads** of the Indiana State Library, report distance learning is not one of the library's responsibilities.

When we inquired about the use of the Internet at Coastal Carolina we found 75% of distance learning students were undergoing asynchronous instruction and these students used the Internet, print materials and

video tapes. The remaining 25% of distance learning students participated in synchronous instruction with about twelve hours of face-to-face instruction. **Dean Balsamo** contended students in both synchronous and asynchronous instruction want and need more face-to-face contact with the teachers. (How this can be accomplished in Distance Learning is a question the academic community should be considering.)

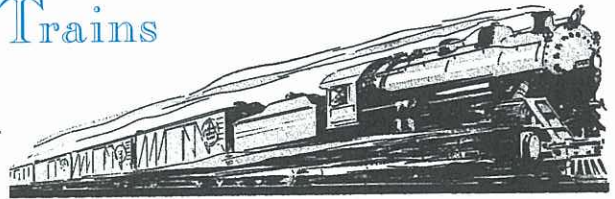
We were particularly taken with the various definitions of "Distance Learning." **Rebecca Bostian** of Washburn University said her school classified distance learning courses as those where 75% of the instruction is not face-to-face with the instructor. The term Rebecca used was, "any course that is taught at 75% mediated."

From the publishers' side of the issue, **John Wiley & Sons** defines distance learning as "any instruction where the teacher and

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Papa Lyman Remembers — Trains and University Presses

by Lyman Newlin (Book Trade Counsellor)
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Los Angeles, April 29, 1999

Before I direct your attention to some of the interesting projects of recent occurrence at university presses, I'd like to spend a little of your time suffering my perennial "preachment" about the joys of long-distance train travel.

This column originates in Los Angeles to which I've come to attend the annual meeting of the **American Booksellers Association** and to visit and trade gossip about the business of publishing information and knowledge by means of the printed word on sheets of paper (60 pound stock will generally be fine). Said sheets to be gathered and sewn, glued, or stapled into a more or less homogeneous group, then protected by a cover of heavier paper or cloth on cardboard. The finished product is called a "book."

I go into this wordy description because I am frequently overcome by the content of newsletters, newspapers, and journals directed at readers engaged in the profession of librarianship or bookselling. As this goes on, more reading material avoids the kind of thought transference I mention above. Contrarily, the articles are full of fancy-sounding words (Note I avoided "networking" in referring about to my desire to communicate with my peers in book publishing and bookselling.). I won't bore you with a lexicon of this phony language—you can sit up

late one night and come up with your own "Devil's Dictionary."

Now to the pleasure of riding the rails. After a half hour's drive, courtesy of our older son, Fred, I arrived at Amtrak's Depew Station serving the paltry number of Buffalonians who share my enthusiasm at 1:10 last Tuesday morning. The *Waterlevel Limited* arrived about twenty minutes late from New York City. The thirty or forty other passengers were boarded without shoving and electronic surveillance into coaches and sleepers ("Pullmans" to anyone born before the baby boomers). My small "bedroom," as the one-time termed "roomette" is now called, was equipped with proper hygienic and comfort accoutrements. Admittedly, the sleeping accommodation was considerably less than king-size, but certainly provided my ancient physique with seven hours of pleasant slumber. I skipped the available proper train breakfast but enjoyed the kitchen-prepared luncheon (sans pretzels or Goldfish) at tables decked with crisp white linen, decent flatware, and glasses and no possible intrusion from a forward-seated passenger altering his/her lean-back seat into my dining domain.

A few hours spent in Chicago's Union Station passed soon enough. It's hard to believe that this grand old building with its Great Hall is nearing its centenary. I can claim usage for most of those years. My first visit was as a

two-year-old being transported from our home in Bureau County, Illinois to my mother's family home in Vernon County, Missouri. The trip in 1912 from Chicago to Kansas City was made, I believe, via the CB&Q (Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy). From Kansas City to Fort Scott, KS (eight miles from the Kansas-Missouri state line) I believe it was the "KATY". On my trip this week, it was the *Southwest Chief*, Amtrak's Chicago to Los Angeles heir to the several "Chiefs" of the Santa Fe midcentury glory days. The *Southwest Chief* had used the CB&Q trackage to Western Illinois before it switched to the old Santa Fe route. This ride on the Chief was especially gratifying because it was through the town of my birth on the CB&Q trackage—and thereafter it hit its own rail and traveled through the town where I spent two years at the now defunct College of Emporia—and continued through several towns where college friends now reside or rest in peace (in most cases). I'll leave the train travel talk for now only to remark that the ensuing two days were spent in viewing our native land from ground level—enjoying good train food, reading, and preparing for calling on about 40 publishers' booths at BEA on behalf of **Fred Gullette's** *Book News*. My return trip from the Northwest was on the 1953 recreated *Silver and Blue Canadian* from Vancouver to Toronto. This is probably the greatest train and train ride in North America: from the Pacific through the Canadian Rockies; through the Prairies and the top of the Great Lakes.

Now to the story of what's happening at some university presses. I'll start with Kansas because, as you surmised, the Santa Fe main line runs through Lawrence, site of the University. The Santa Fe, in addition to transporting students to and from KU in the pre-airline days played a role in the story of the University's acquisition of the **Ralph Ellis** great collection of ornithology literature and ephemera. I recounted this story in *ATG* November 1998, p. 78. Before I turn attention to the **University Press of Kansas**, I must reveal that my interest this time was piqued by a story titled "Amazing Grace" by **Laura Secor** in *Lingua Franca*, Spring, 1999. Instinctively, the first thing I look for in *Lingua Franca* is always its "Inside Publishing." What a surprise to see this purveyor of things academic attending to "Peyton Place" by **Grace Metalious**. For this story about "Peyton," you'll have to look it up in the aforementioned

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student are separated." **John Hare** at New Hampshire Technical Institute says his school's definition is: "Educational processes wherein the learner is physically separated from the instructor. Instruction will provide the means to bring the two together: electronically, by email, fax, or US mail. There is limited instructor contact 3-4 times during the semester. Students come to campus to meet as a group a few times a semester for three-hour blocks."

Last December, *The New York Times* quoted Sociology Professor, **Lynn D. Nelson** of Virginia Commonwealth as follows: "I have two classes right now, and they are both using the Web intensively. One class has 300 students, and the other has 40. In the large class, the students each write 12 essays and pose questions to each other on the Web. They interact with each other every week, and they can do it on their own time. The level of their

activity is inconceivable in a normal class. I see a big difference from before the technology was introduced."

A further insight into distance learning is reflected in the efforts of the **Copyright Office's** project, "Promotion of Distance Learning Education Through Digital Technologies." When Congress passed the **Digital Millennium Copyright Act** the legislation called for the Copyright Office to hold hearings in January and February of this year. The hearings were to consider the role to be played by voluntary guidelines such as the **Fair Use Guidelines for Educational Multimedia** (sometimes referred to as the **Consortium of College and University Media Centers (CCUMC)**). We will report on the findings of the hearings at a later date.

We have not heard the last of this issue. 🐱

See related article on *Distance Learning in this issue of Against The Grain* — p.28.