# A Preliminary Proposal for the Development of a Distance Education Lubrary Media Endorsement Program at Central Washington University

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## Abstract

In Washington State, there are currently six higher education institutions which offer state-approved library media endorsement programs for certified K-12 teachers. Due to population and geo graphical factors, our institution, Central Washington University, finds it difficult to attract K-12 teachers during non-summer months. Currently, our library media program is only offered during the summer months. Consequently, we lose a lot of the potential market of those unavailable during the summers. With the growing demand for library media specialists throughout Washington K-12 school districts, the timing may not be better in developing and implementing a fully distance education (DE) model for our library media program available year-round. Through our State's K-20 high-speed, highbandwidth Education Network, we can connect remotely to 475 public education sites throughout Washington. This paper represents a preliminary proposal examining and discussing the feasibility of creating a DE library media program for Central Washington University.

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## ABSTRACT

*In Washington State, there are currently six higher education institutions which offer state-approved library media endorsement programs for certified K-12 teachers. Due to population and geographical factors, our institution, Central Washington University, finds it difficult to attract K-12 teachers during non-summer months. Currently, our library media program is only offered during the summer months. Consequently, we lose a lot of the potential market of those unavailable during the summers. With the growing demand for library media specialists throughout Washington K-12 school districts, the timing may not be better in developing and implementing a fully distance education (DE) model for our library media program available year-round. Through our State's K-20 high-speed, high-bandwidth Education Network, we can connect remotely to 475 public education sites throughout Washington. This paper represents a preliminary proposal examining and discussing the feasibility of creating a DE library media program for Central Washington University.*

## Introduction

In the last 75 years, more than 60 published studies have examined the impact of K-12 school libraries (now known as library media centers) on student achievement (Laitsch, 2003). In the last decade a growing body of research including 16 state-wide studies has contributed mounting evidence of a positive correlation between U.S. school library media centers and student achievement whether achievement is measured generally in terms of learning, or more specifically in terms of reading scores or literacy (Scholastic, 2006). In particular,

the presence and active participation of a qualified library media specialist in curriculum development, student instruction and teacher education have been shown to be a critical factor in attaining a positive impact on student achievement (Starr, 2000; NCLIS, 2005).

On January 08, 2002, President George W. Bush passed into law the bipartisan education reform effort labeled "The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001" which has become known by its acronym "NCLB" (NCLB, 2002). The NCLB was built on four principles: accountability for results, more choices for parents, greater

local control and flexibility, and a greater emphasis on using scientifically-based research. Under the NCLB, by the academic year 2013-2014 all students including students with limited English proficiency are required to meet each U.S. state's proficiency level of academic achievement. In a direct response to the expectations of this Act, the American Library Association launched a campaign in November of 2005 mailing more than 78,000 brochures to administrators of private and public elementary, middle school and high schools in the United States to raise awareness of the significant role of the library media specialist in the context of the NCLB (ALA, 2005). The six page brochure offered research and support resources emphasizing the necessity of the centers and library media specialists in helping meet the requirements of NCLB.

This heightened awareness and resulting renewed interest in the importance of library media specialists in the wake of the NCLB's ambitious goals along with other contributing factors has prompted a number of states to pass legislation mandating state-certified library media specialists in their K-12 school library media centers. In most states, the library media specialists are considered teacher-librarians. That is, individuals first need to have a teaching certificate, and then only through successful completion of a recognized state library media endorsement program can they become state-certified library media specialists.

Consequently, this growing demand in many states combined with a wave of retirements, the movement of librarians into lucrative business opportunities (Donovan, 2002), and increased funding for public school libraries have led to a massive job surplus for library media specialists in the United States. In 2002, it was projected that by 2005 there would be more than 25,000 vacant library media specialist positions across the United States (Donovan), and a quick look at K-12 job ads in any state confirms this demand. This trend is expected to continue; by 2010, more than 83,000 librarians in the U.S. are expected to have reached the age of 65 (Matarazzo, 2000).

In the state of Washington, K-12 schools are not required (yet) to have state-certified library media specialists. However, strong wording in a March 28, 2005 revision to the Washington Administrative Code legislation governing Washington State library media centers and library media specialists highly recommended a greater emphasis and focus on these centers and library media specialists to promote student achievement (Washington et al., 2005). Some believe this action was a precursor to future legislation mandating library media specialists in all Washington K-12 school districts and schools. Regardless of the reasons, increasing numbers of K-12 school districts are moving to hire state-certified library media specialists and/or send their current librarians for training to become certified. Consequently, some of the six institutions offering library media programs are experiencing record enrollments.

## Library Media Endorsement Programs in Washington State

As of December 01, 2006, there were 22 (Washington) State Board approved education preparation programs at universities and colleges in Washington State. Of these 22 programs, five universities in three different cities (circled in red in Figure 1) offer a library media endorsement program for certified teachers. Three of these five universities, namely, University of Washington at Seattle, Seattle Pacific

University and Antioch University, offer programs which can be partially completed at a distance. In all three of these cases, program requirements include a mix of onsite classes and some classes taught entirely through online/web-based technologies, none of which include any synchronous components.
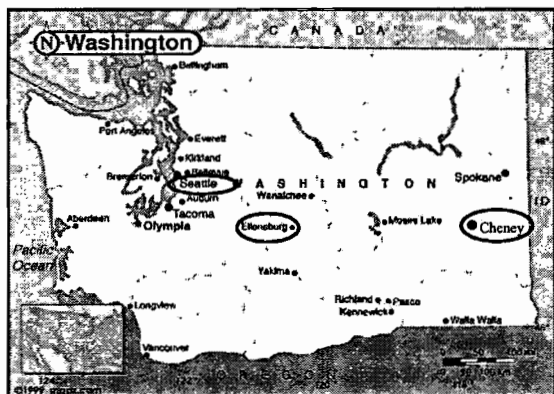


Figure 1. Locations of State Approved Library Media Endorsement Programs (OSPI, n.d.).

Table 1 below lists the five universities and their respective locations in Washington which offer State Board approved library media endorsement programs.

at CWU, and as such is administrated and taught by faculty in the department. Our 27 credit course program is unique in that the entire program can be completed over two summers and one academic year. Teachers take eight of their nine 3 credit courses on campus at CWU during one month each summer over two consecutive summers. Their ninth course, their practicum course, is completed during the academic year between the two summers at a K-12 library media center of their choosing anywhere in the state. The convenience of the summer-only program is attractive to many K-12 teachers, but there is still a significant number of teachers who would prefer to take courses over the academic year instead without having to give up their summers for coursework. Unfortunately, due to population and geographical factors, we are unable to successfully attract certain K-12 teachers on-campus during the academic year. As a result, we are now considering the possibility of a DE library media program offered during the academic year to target this growing market segment. This paper takes a first look at the feasibility of developing a Distance Education (DE) library media en-

Table 1.
*City Location and Names of the Six WA Universities Offering Library Media Programs*

| Name of Institution | City Location |
|---|---|
| Antioch University | Seattle, WA |
| Central Washington University | Ellensburg, WA |
| Eastern Washington University | Cheney, WA |
| Seattle Pacific University | Seattle, WA |
| University of Washington Seattle | Seattle, WA |

## The Library Media Endorsement Program at Central Washington University

Central Washington University (CWU) has been offering the library media program as an endorsement for certified teachers since the early 1990s. The program is housed in the Department of Education

dorsement program at CWU.

## Consideration of Washington State Population Distribution and Geographical Factors
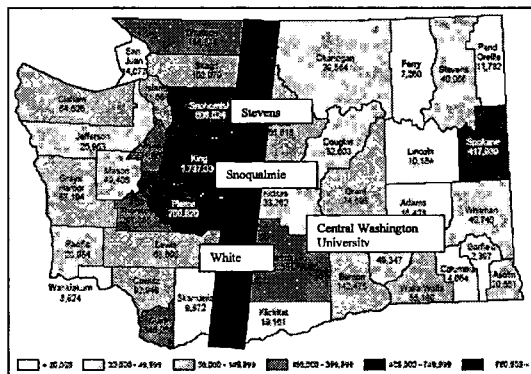
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Figure 2. Population Distribution in 2000 in Washington State (WSDOT, 2003).

Figure 2 presents the population distribution in the year 2000 in the state of Washington organized by counties. The yellow band superimposed on the map represents the approximate location of the Cascade mountain range. As figure 2 displays, as much as 75% of the state's population is located west of the Cascades. The three largest counties in the state, Snohomish, Pierce and King, are home to more than 50% of the state's population. Certified K-12 teachers planning to add a library media endorsement to their teaching certificate and electing to attend CWU would have a minimum of a 90 minute drive one way. This in itself is a deterrent for many potential program students since these individuals are typically K-12 teachers with only evenings and weekends available for coursework.

Furthermore, the Cascades Mountains positioned between the densely populated counties on the west side and the city of Ellensburg (the location of CWU) poses a huge obstacle and travel risk during the fall, winter and spring months. The three Mountain Passes providing interstate access to CWU include Snoqualmie Pass, Stevens Pass and White Pass which range in elevation from 3022 feet (Snoqualmie

Pass) to 4500 feet (White Pass) (DOT, 2006). Figure 3 identifies the general location of these three Passes. This past winter 2005-2006 saw a record snowfall in the Cascade Mountains with avalanches and rock slides causing delays and shutting down several of the Passes for hours, days and in some cases, even weeks. Consequently, due to these geographic and inclement weather challenges which can be present for as many as seven months of the year, offering traditional library media courses (e.g. in a face-to-face mode) during the academic year is a losing proposition. As a result, a distance education (DE) option could be a viable alternative for CWU to gain a portion of the growing numbers of teachers requesting library media endorsements who may be located anywhere in the state. A DE approach to address physical distance and in particular when students are unable to attend a campus and are working adults with family responsibilities, and to deal with issues of low and/or dispersed enrolments is considered an effective strategy to overcome these barriers (Crawford & Crawford, 2005; Roberts & Keough, 1995).

## Washington State's K-20 Network

In 1996, the Washington Governor and the Washington Legislature enacted legislation and released funding to develop a high-speed, high-capacity telecommunications network to connect all of Washington's public colleges, universities and K-12 school districts with a major goal of eliminating the traditional constraints associated with distance and cost (DIS, 2006). The network was to include state-wide access points to the Internet, videoconferencing, and satellite-delivered-video services. With appropriated funding totaling $61.4 million, by 1999 the K-20 Network was implemented and fully operational linking

400+ public education sites across the state. Figure 3 represents the pervasiveness of the Network in every "corner" of the state. The success of this program has led to the funding of an additional 66 public library and 15 private baccalaureate sites which are now close to completion. The nine K-12 Educational Service

Districts (ESD) each provides a number of access points allowing K-12 teachers from anywhere in the state to access the Network either at their school or within a short distance of their school.
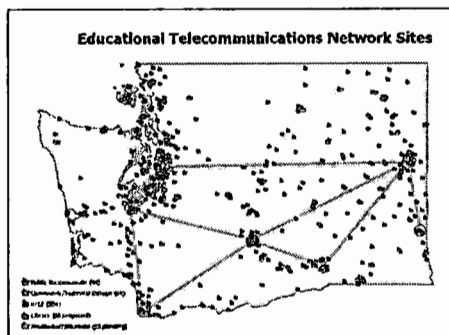


Figure 3. Washington State Population Distribution in 2000 (DIS, 2006).

The administration, support and technical operations of the K-20 Network are provided by the State Department called the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction along with partnerships with regional and school level institutional technical units. Any K-12 teacher using the K-20 network receives free training and support. In addition, all K-20 sessions requiring a Distance Education operator is facilitated at no additional cost to the teacher, school or district.

## A Framework to Examine the Feasibility of Distance Education Library Media Program

In determining the feasibility of a

DE library media program, it's useful to examine this program within the context of the 10 key functions of a distance education institution or agency (Crawford & Crawford, 2005). These functions include:
1.  Recruiting and Marketing;
2.  Enrolling and Registering;
3.  Examining, Crediting and issuing Credentials;
4.  Obtaining and Managing Money and other Resources;
5.  Acquiring or Developing Courses and Programs;
6.  Producing, Reproducing, Storing and disseminating Materials;
7.  Delivering Courses and Programs;
8.  Teaching Students;
9.  Supporting Students; and
10. Evaluating and Revising Courses, Programs, Processes and Procedures.

Due to space limitations, only seven of the key functions will be discussed, and then only briefly. The third, sixth and tenth key functions will not be addressed in this paper.

### 1. Recruiting and Marketing

Currently, CWU markets and recruits students into the library media endorsement program in a variety of ways:
• Postings on the WLA (Washington Library Association) and WLMA (Washington Library Association) listservs,
• Program brochures distributed at the annual WLMA and WLA conferences,
• Listings on the State department of Education, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and WLMA websites,
• Description of our program on the CWU website,
• Mailing of 2,000 brochures to schools and school districts throughout the state, and

• Mailing of brochures to the nine state Educational Service Districts.

In addition, "word-of-mouth" with our current students is a powerful marketing tool for future students. For the DE version of our library media program, we'll create a new brochure but will plan on using the same channels of marketing as in our summer library media program.

## 2. Enrolling and Registering

All registration for courses at CWU for on-campus courses or DE courses is conducted online. The enrollment and registration process would not change for these library media endorsement program courses offered through DE. At CWU, there are six delivery modes listed as DE courses:

1. **C – Correspondence:** Print
2. **I - ITV/Satellite/Teleclass** (Synchronous): Broadcast or cablecasts live instruction. Noted in schedule book as "Interactive video course".
3. **T - Pre-recorded tape broadcast:** Video or audiocassettes, video taped courses delivered by or broadcast or cable TV & computer based instructional packages.
4. **U - Web Centric Course:** The majority of instruction and required course activity, though not all, is delivered via the web. The majority of contact hours (seat credits) are generated by on-line work. Noted in schedule book as "Web centric course".
5. **W - Online** (Asynchronous-Web, Internet, and email): Professor and distance learners are communicating asynchronously. All course activity is conducted via the web, including assessments. There is no requirement for attendance at a specific location. Noted in schedule book as "Web based course".
6. **Other E-learning:** Mode of instruction is not identifiable by any other category. Noted in schedule book as "Distance edu-

cation course".

Unfortunately, due to a limitation in the registration system, only one method of delivery can be selected per course. For the library media endorsement program courses which will involve both I and U modes of delivery, the I mode will be selected to represent all courses so students are aware there is a component which involves their synchronous participation at a K-20 Network location. The course description will indicate that students are required to find a K-20 Network DE location in their area and provide this information in the registration process.

Our program is currently organized in a cohort structure where students entering the first year of the program complete all the courses together through to the end of the program in the second summer. We have a limit of 25 students per cohort for our summer program. In terms of the DE offering of this program, most university online programs in North America typically have 20-25 students (as cited in Lobel et al., 2003). The nature of this library media program necessitates a high level of synchronous interaction warranting regular videoconferencing sessions. The videoconferencing sessions through the K-20 network limit the number of students with whom an instructor can effectively conduct interactive videoconferencing sessions. It's difficult to reach a consensus on the ideal number for a videoconferencing environment as much can be contingent of subject matter and teaching styles, but an instructor's comments who used the videoconferencing in Washington State recently suggested that eight students work well (Cascade Consortium, n.d.). Our own experiences with videoconferencing DE sessions in other education courses concur with this number. Consequently, the first cohort in the DE program will permit a maximum

of eight students.

## 4. Obtaining and Managing Money and other Resources

Because of the lower maximum number of students which can be enrolled in the DE program (eight compared to 25 in the on-campus summer program), the DE model is not expected to be a huge "money-maker" but it is anticipated to be "self-sufficient" from a financial perspective. Although the target for the DE cohort is eight students, the program should still break even with as few as four students. If the demand for this program is great enough, it should be fairly easy to replicate this model and introduce multiple cohort groups. Table 3 below attempts to identify the costs associated with each of the ten functions. It should be noted that all stages would incur costs, but since most of these costs are automatically absorbed in overhead and fixed costs, Table 2 only identifies additional perceived costs.

Table 2.
*Costs Associated with DE Library Media Endorsement Program*

## 5. Acquiring or Developing Courses and Programs

Currently, CWU offers the library media program in a two summer program where students are required to attend on-campus classes. These same courses would be modified and delivered in a DE environment. Course teams comprised of instructors, program administrators and DE individuals (which include instructional designers and technical experts) who would be involved in supporting the online and videoconferencing component for the program would be involved in re-designing the courses and developing training resources to help instructors and students succeed in this environment. The course team model approach to course design has been noted as en effective way of creating quality content in courses (Moore & Kearsley, 2005).

## 7. Delivering Courses and Programs

The summer program involves ten class sessions per course with each session consisting of three hours over 10 consecutive

| DE Function | Additional Cost? | Cost and Description |
|---|---|---|
| Recruiting and Marketing | YES | $650 – Printing and distribution of 2,000 new brochures about DE program disseminated across the state. |
| Enrolling and Registering | NO | N/A |
| Examining, Crediting and issuing Credentials | NO | N/A |
| Obtaining and Managing Money and other Resources | NO | N/A |
| Acquiring or Developing Courses and Programs | NO | N/A |
| Producing, Reproducing, Storing and disseminating Materials | NO | N/A |
| Delivering Courses and Programs | NO | N/A |
| Teaching Students | NO | N/A |
| Supporting Students | NO | N/A |
| Evaluating and Revising Courses, Programs, Processes and Procedures | NO | N/A |

business days. The DE program will also involve ten class sessions via videoconferencing with each session offered one evening per week (for ten weeks) and consisting of three hours per session. Once a week, students would be required to travel to their local K-20 network, and virtually meet with other students and the instructor through videoconferencing.

Technology plays a major factor in the success of our summer library media program. Each classroom is fitted with one instructor computer station (but no student computers except for the two computer-based classes taught in a computer lab). Instructors have access and use a variety of available technologies including a PC, document camera, overhead projector, data projector, VCR, CD-ROM, DVD player, audio cassette deck, laser disk player, and slide projector. The Education Network sites have identical technologies with the exception of the laser disk player which most sites no longer possess. Through DE videoconferencing, the instructors can use the exact same technologies they would use in an on-campus class. An added advantage with the DE model is that students in the program would also have access to the same technologies in all their courses. The DE operators at the Network sites would assist them in learning how to use them. As a result, future library media specialists in the DE program would have many opportunities to learn and master a variety of technologies, which is a

critical competency for library media specialists. Although the technologies would be similar, there would certainly be pedagogical differences which would need to be incorporated in the course design. Videoconferencing, as with any technologies, has its limitations and these would need to be appropriately addressed.

Each course would also incorporate an online component via our Blackboard course management system. Blackboard would provide access course materials, communications tools and opportunities for student to engage in collaborative work and asynchronous discussions. Currently, none of the summer program courses include an online environment.

## 8. Teaching Students

Similar to the summer program, students in the DE version of this program will be organized in a cohort. Students will be required to register in one course per quarter beginning in the fall. Consequently, they would complete 4 courses per year, completing their last course at the end of the summer of their second year in the program. Their practicum course would be spread out over the second year as it is currently done in the summer program. Table 3 represents a tentative schedule for the first cohort for the DE Library Media Endorsement Program.

Table 3.
*Tentative Schedule for Cohort One of DE Library Media Endorsement Program*

| Course No. and Name | Credits | Term |
|---|---|---|
| EDCS 514: Media Development | 3.0 | Fall Quarter 2008 |
| EDCS 526: Instructional Methods for Library Media | 3.0 | Winter Quarter 2009 |
| EDCS 536: Selecting Literature for Children/Young Adults | 3.0 | Spring Quarter 2009 |
| EDCS 548: Collection Development/Library Media · | 3.0 | Summer Quarter 2009 |
| EDCS 516: Advanced Media Utilization | 3.0 | Fall Quarter 2009 |
| EDCS 558: Cataloguing/Classification for Library Media | 3.0 | Winter Quarter 2010 |
| EDCS 568: Information Storage and Retrieval | 3.0 | Spring Quarter 2010 |
| EDCS 578: Administration of Media/Technology Programs | 3.0 | Summer Quarter 2010 |
| EDCS 596: Library Media Experience | 3.0 | Academic Year 2010 |
| TOTAL CREDITS | 27.0 | End of Summer 2010 |

All courses and programs in the Department of Education at CWU are required to adhere to constructivist principles as this is the underlying conceptual framework for all our teacher education programs. Accordingly, courses in our library media program have integrated tenets of constructivism and actively engage and involve students and instructors in constructing meaning and knowledge. Fortunately, the current distance education literature focuses on DE approaches to support constructivist "models" and therefore this approach appears to be ideally suited to our library media endorsement program. In addition, the assessment model for program courses is project-based and portfolio-driven so issues often associated with remote testing would not be a factor. Therefore, the course outcomes for student in the summer program versus the DE program would be identical which is an important consideration for accreditation purposes.

## 9. Supporting Students

Students involved with the DE library media program would have access to all support resources as students involved in the on-campus summer program. Advisors and instructors for the program would be available via phone, e-mail, postal service and in-person. In addition, instructors would have "virtual" office hours where they would be accessible via videoconferencing and/or phone.

The Multimedia Technology and Instructional Support (MTIS) group at Central Washington University is tasked with supporting instructors and students involved in DE programs including Blackboard courses involved online components and courses using K-20 videoconferencing options. Furthermore, the information technology support (ITS) group at CWU offers additional support to deal with other technologically related issues. The support from both groups is provided through online help and instructional guides, phone, e-mail and in-person support. Technical staff who support the K-20 Network are available during evenings and weekends to support classes conducting during off-times. In addition, each K-20 Network location has technical staff available to support and troubleshoot issues involving videoconferencing problems at no cost. There are no additional costs associated with supporting instructors and students in DE programs at CWU. The university also offers a toll-free number for those students needing to contact the university for advisors, instructors or technical support.

## The Challenges and Opportunities of a DE Library Media Endorsement Program

As mentioned earlier, three of the five library media endorsement programs in Washington State provide a blend of onsite and online courses. The other two programs, Central Washington University included, only offer classes onsite. Consequently, our potential of offering a library media endorsement program completed only through distance education would be unique and the first of its kind in Washington State. This presents both challenges and opportunities.

Convenience is the most frequently cited opportunity of distance education and would certainly be an important factor in our program considering the meteorological and geographical impediments within Washington State. However, a more important advantage is the considerable exposure and familiarity our future library media specialists would gain in distance education technologies such as videoconferencing and online environments. In a bold and impressive move, in 2006 Michigan became the first state in the nation to legislate that all

high school students in that state would be required to have at least one online learning experience before graduation. As the world becomes increasingly technology-centric, other states are expected to quickly follow suit. As a result, library media specialists as future instructional partners need to be adequately prepared in these environments; our program offered via distance education would be an important step in that direction.

However, this is not to say that our proposed program would be without challenges. There is evidence to suggest that an online-only library media program (with little or no synchronous communication and interaction) may be an inadequate approach to developing the unique blend of competencies and skills needed for teachers being prepared for roles as future library media specialists (Shannon, 2002). Consequently, the integration of synchronous communication through regular videoconferencing would be a vital component of our program. In addition, tenets of constructivism, the philosophy of our College of Education, would need to be appropriately infused within the curricula in this virtual environment. Fortunately, this in itself would not be an insurmountable obstacle as our faculty have experienced success in effectively incorporating constructivism in online environments. (Evidence of this can be found online at: http://www.cwu. edu/~media/cwuonline/constructivism. html). Nevertheless, careful and deliberate curricula planning would be necessary to include all of these critical elements.

## Conclusion

This preliminary and incomplete proposal has taken a cursory and optimistic look at the possibility of implementing a DE route for the library media endorsement program at CWU. At this stage, the findings of this brief proposal appear promising warranting collection of further data and a more thorough examination and deeper analysis of these data. In addition, the next steps will necessitate the involvement of DE individuals, library media instructors, and program, departmental and college administrators to actively participate in the decision-making process of determining the real feasibility of success of developing and subsequently implementing a DE program. Because much of the technical and support infrastructure is already in place and integrated in sunk costs, and since many of the existing processes such as registration, enrolment and assessment could be adopted for the DE model with little or no changes, the initial outlay of funds appear to be minimal. Of course, a more extensive investigation into the feasibility of a DE program and a thorough cost/benefits analysis may prove otherwise.

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