Lifelong Learning and Library Services

SPIROS PANETSOS
Associate Professor, Department of Electronic Engineering Educators
School of Pedagogical and Technological Education
"IRENE" Train Station, Line 1, 141 21 N.Heraklion, Athens
GREECE

KONSTANTINOS MAKROPOULOS
Professor at the National University of Athens
President of School of Pedagogical and Technological Education
"IRENE" Train Station, Line 1, 141 21 N.Heraklion, Athens
GREECE

JOHN PSYHOGYIOS
Mathematician, National University of Athens
Responsible of the office of European and Research Programs’ support
"IRENE" Train Station, Line 1, 141 21 N.Heraklion, Athens
GREECE

Abstract: -The Academic Library promotes the entitlement of people to learning opportunities and their right to have access to the learning resources necessary to maximize the benefits from their learning experiences. The Library focuses on the needs of the learner, the skills of library staff, and partnership and access issues. It campaigns within its own membership to promote this role as well as within the learning community as a whole. It also seeks to influence those creating new learning networks, both courseware and content, and those who design human spaces for learning. In this paper we examine the strategic framework for an Academic Library activity on lifelong learning by i) Providing a broader definition of lifelong learning in relation to informal and non-formal learning, ii) Identifying the key issues for library and information services arising from the lifelong learning agenda, iii) Defining the role that the library and information sector should play in lifelong learning

Key-Words: - Lifelong Learning, Distance Learning, Academic Library, Library Facilities, Library Services, Library Resources

1 Introduction
Library resources and services in institutions of higher education must meet the needs of all their faculty, students, and academic support personnel, regardless of where they are located. The principle applies to individuals on a main campus, off campus, in Lifelong learning or regional campus programs, or in the absence of a campus at all. The principle likewise applies to courses taken for credit or non-credit, in continuing education programs, in courses attended in person or by means of electronic transmission, or any other means of Lifelong learning.

Concern for ensuring the delivery of equivalent library services to college and university faculty, students, and other personnel in remote settings has stemmed from the following increasingly critical factors: non-traditional study having rapidly become a major element in higher education; an increase in diversity of educational opportunities; an increase in the number of unique environments where educational opportunities are offered; an increased recognition of the need for library resources and services at locations other than main campuses; an increased concern and demand for equitable services for all students in higher education, no matter where the “classroom” may be; a greater demand for library resources and services by faculty and staff at Lifelong learning sites; and an increase in technological innovations in the transmittal of
information and the delivery of courses. To these may be added shifts away from central campus enrollments, the search for more cost-effective sources for post-secondary education, and the appearance and rapid development of the virtual or all-electronic university, having no physical campus of its own [10].

2 Definitions
Lifelong learning must encompass pre-18 (including pre-school) education as well as post-18 education. Pre-18 learning produces the students for post-18 learning and, increasingly there are many examples of inter-generational learning, family literacy projects and reminiscence projects involving both the old and the young. The division between pre and post-18 learning should be seen as one of predominantly administrative convenience rather than signifying any real difference.

Learning to learn, and the development of basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, is the key to achieving the “how to learn” objectives [8]. However, it has been recognized that learning can also be informal or non-formal [1], [2], [7], it can be beneficial to the quality of life and it can encourage the involvement of the individual in society [3], [6]. The concept of citizenship is seen as a means of generating a vibrant democracy and the subject ‘citizenship’ now forms a part of the National Curriculum. It is seen as essential in creating a participative democracy and in encouraging personal development within a social context.

There are a number of explicit concepts that underpin the lifelong learning policy thrust. These are:

- Capacity building through personal growth
- Access to opportunities - information, advice and guidance networks have been formalized
- Support for learning and learners - especially for those with lower levels of social confidence and less educational experience
- The use of ICT and the need to ‘join up’ a range of initiatives

Implicit within the lifelong learning programme is the de-institutionalisation of learning: distributed, off campus, in the community and in the workplace. In National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) publication [4], outlines a national programme of outreach work where training and support would be given to local people to become “champions of learning” in their own communities. Lifelong learning library services refers to those library services in support of college, university, or other post-secondary courses and programs offered away from a main campus, or in the absence of a traditional campus, and regardless of where credit is given. These courses may be taught in traditional or nontraditional formats or media, may or may not require physical facilities, and may or may not involve live interaction of teachers and students. The phrase is inclusive of courses in all post-secondary programs designated as: extension, extended, off-campus, extended campus, Lifelong, distributed, open, flexible, franchising, virtual, synchronous, or asynchronous.

Lifelong learning community covers all those individuals and agencies, or institutions, directly involved with academic programs or extension services offered away from a traditional academic campus, or in the absence of a traditional academic campus, including students, faculty, researchers, administrators, sponsors, and staff, or any of these whose academic work otherwise takes them away from on-campus library services.

Originating institution refers to the entity, singular or collective, its/their chief administrative officers and governance organizations responsible for the offering or marketing and supporting of Lifelong learning courses and programs: the credit-granting body. Each institution in a multi-institutional cluster is responsible for meeting the library needs of its own students, faculty, and staff at the collective site. Library denotes the library operation directly associated with the originating institution. Librarian-administrator designates a librarian, holding a master’s degree from a library school, who specializes in Lifelong learning library services, and who is directly responsible for the administration and supervision of those services.

3 The role of Library

3.1 The Philosophy
An Academic Library assumes the following precepts:

A) Access to adequate library services and resources is essential for the attainment of superior academic skills in post-secondary education, regardless of where students, faculty, and programs are located. Members of the Lifelong learning community are entitled to library services and resources equivalent to those provided for students and faculty in traditional campus settings.
B) The instilling of lifelong learning skills through general bibliographic and information literacy instruction in academic libraries is a primary outcome of higher education. Such preparation and measurement of its outcomes are of equal necessity for the Lifelong learning community as for those on the traditional campus.

C) Traditional on-campus library services themselves cannot be stretched to meet the library needs of Lifelong learning students and faculty who face distinct and different challenges involving library access and information delivery. Special funding arrangements, proactive planning, and promotion are necessary to deliver equivalent library services and to achieve equivalent results in teaching and learning, and generally to maintain quality in Lifelong learning programs. Because students and faculty in Lifelong learning programs frequently do not have direct access to a full range of library services and materials, equitable Lifelong learning library services are more personalized than might be expected on campus.

D) The library has primary responsibility for identifying, developing, coordinating, providing, and assessing the value and effectiveness of resources and services designed to meet both the standard and the unique informational and skills development needs of the Lifelong learning community. The librarian-administrator either centrally located or at an appropriate site, should be responsible for ensuring and demonstrating that all requirements are met through needs and outcomes assessments, and other measures of library performance, as appropriate, and as an ongoing process in conjunction with the originating institution.

Effective and appropriate services for Lifelong learning communities may differ from, but must be equivalent to, those services offered on a traditional campus. The requirements and desired outcomes of academic programs should guide the library’s responses to defined needs. Innovative approaches to the design and evaluation of special procedures or systems to meet these needs is encouraged.

When resources and services of unaffiliated local libraries are to be used to support information needs of the Lifelong learning community, the originating institution is responsible, through the library, for the development and periodic review of formal, documented, written agreements with those local libraries. Such resources and services are not to be used simply as substitutes for supplying adequate materials and services by the originating institution.

The Lifelong learning library program shall have goals and objectives that support the provision of resources and services consistent with the broader institutional mission.

3.2 Facilities
The originating institution should provide facilities, equipment, and communication links sufficient in size, number, scope, accessibility, and timeliness to reach all students and to attain the objectives of the Lifelong learning programs. Arrangements may vary and should be appropriate to programs offered.

3.3 Resources
The originating institution is responsible for providing or securing convenient, direct physical and electronic access to library materials for Lifelong learning programs equivalent to those provided in traditional settings and in sufficient quality, depth, number, scope, currentness, and formats to:

1. meet the students’ needs in fulfilling course assignments (e.g., required and supplemental readings and research papers) and enrich the academic programs;
2. meet teaching and research needs;
3. facilitate the acquisition of lifelong learning skills; and
4. accommodate other informational needs of the Lifelong learning community as appropriate.

When more than one institution is involved in the provision of a Lifelong learning program, each is responsible for the provision of library materials to students in its own courses, unless an equitable agreement for otherwise providing these materials has been made. Costs, services, and methods for the provision of materials for all courses in the program should be uniform.

3.4 Services
The library services offered to the Lifelong learning community should be designed to meet effectively a wide range of informational, bibliographic, and user needs. The exact combination of central and site staffing for Lifelong learning library services will differ from institution to institution. The following, though not necessarily exhaustive, are essential:

1. reference assistance;
2. computer-based bibliographic and informational services;
3. reliable, rapid, secure access to institutional and other networks, including the Internet;
4. consultation services;
5. a program of library user instruction designed to instill independent and effective information literacy skills while specifically meeting the learner-support needs of the Lifelong learning community;
6. assistance with and instruction in the use of nonprint media and equipment;
7. reciprocal or contractual borrowing, or interlibrary loan services using broadest application of fair use of copyrighted materials;
8. prompt document delivery, such as a courier system and/or electronic transmission;
9. access to reserve materials in accordance with copyright fair use policies;
10. adequate service hours for optimum access by users; and
11. promotion of library services to the Lifelong learning community, including documented and updated policies, regulations and procedures for systematic development, and management of information resources.

3.5 Documentation
To provide records indicating the degree to which the originating institution is providing library services to its Lifelong learning programs, the library, and, when appropriate, the Lifelong learning library units, should have available current copies of at least the following:
1. printed user guides;
2. statements of mission and purpose, policies, regulations, and procedures;
3. statistics on library use;
4. statistics on collections;
5. facilities assessment measures;
6. collections assessment measures;
7. needs and outcomes assessment measures;
8. data on staff and work assignments;
9. institutional and internal organization charts;
10. comprehensive budget(s);
11. professional personnel vitae;
12. position descriptions for all personnel;
13. formal, written agreements;
14. automation statistics;
15. guides to computing services;
16. library evaluation studies or documents;
17. library and other instructional materials and schedules; and
18. evidence of involvement in curriculum development and planning.

3.6 Library education
To enable the initiation of an academic professional specialization in Lifelong learning library services, schools of library and information science should include in their curriculum courses and course units in this growing area of specialization within librarianship.

5 Constraints of Library
However, there are constraints that restrict the ability of library in all sectors to effectively contribute to Lifelong learning. These include:

I. A need to define the learning support skills required by library staff. These skills need to be integrated into professional education and development. Many library staff outside the formal education sector may not fully understand what learning support skills are. However, there is evidence that other sectors have recognised the need to identify an appropriate definition [5], [9].

II. Only a few institutions in the education sector formally acknowledge library staff to be part of the teaching and learning process. There remains a major advocacy job to be done to convince key players of the important contribution libraries and library staff have to make.

III. In the school and further education sector the status and resources of libraries are such that many cannot meet the challenge of supplying effective learning environments within their own institution, let alone in the wider Lifelong learning context.

IV. Libraries and librarians being by-passed by staff from other disciplines. In the primary school sector there is no guarantee of access to the Schools Library Service and some secondary schools do not employ professional library staff.

V. Funding is often not available at the point the student creates the demand. This is as much a problem for workplace libraries as for those in other sectors.

4 Conclusion
Academic Libraries operate in a range of settings: schools and post-18 education; public libraries; the media; industry, commerce and government; the health, legal and voluntary sectors. Academic Libraries focus on the needs of the learner, the skills of library staff, and partnership and access issues and they campaign this role as well as within
the learning community as a whole. They also try to influence those creating new learning networks, both courseware and content, and those who design human spaces for learning.

References:


