Information Skills and the Distance Education Student

An explanatory study into the approaches of Southern Cross University distance educators to the information needs of external students

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For partial completion of the degree of Master of Distance Education, Deakin University
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Declaration

I certify that the thesis entitled ‘Information Skills and the Distance Education Student and submitted in partial completion of the degree of Master of Distance Education is the result of my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis (or any part thereof) has not been submitted for a degree or diploma at any other university or institution.

Signed. ...........................................  Date: ...........................................
Acknowledgements

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the assistance, encouragement and critique offered to me by my supervisor Christine Spratt throughout my Masters studies. Christine has been but one of the Distance Education team at Deakin University, Geelong who have been inspirational and exemplary in their promotion of external studies. I thank them for their support and understanding of the trials of the external students juggling work, family and study responsibilities. They have been an embodiment of the flexible, student-centred approach that they advocate.

My thanks to all staff at Southern Cross University who participated in my study, for those who provided time and information in my interviews and those who provided statistics and other background information. Thanks should also be extended to my employing institution for its study support.

I would also like to thank my family for their patience, tolerance and assistance throughout my studies and their proof-reading contributions.
Faculty, librarians, and students have yet to embrace the attitudinal and behavioural changes necessary for making information literacy and resource-based learning a priority and a reality in higher education. The attitudinal change is a vital prerequisite for the graduation of students who are information literate and practitioners of resource-based learning. It calls for nothing less than a rethinking of educational priorities and strategies. It requires redefinition of values and transformation of an existing campus culture to act on a new set of principles (Farmer 1992, p.104).
Abstract

This study unites the concepts of self-directed learning and information literacy in the external higher education environment. It asserts that many attempts by librarians at building better working relationships with distance educators have failed because the approaches of distance educators to the information needs of students are not adequately addressed. This exploratory and qualitatively based study examines the approaches of ten distance educators at Southern Cross University (SCU) to the information needs of their external students. It then makes recommendations based on these interviews which aim to improve relationships and co-operation between libraries and distance educators and to promote self-directed learning approaches by external students.
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Introduction

Conceptual Rationale

It has long been recognised by those involved with tertiary libraries that there is a need to address the growth, within Australia of distance education and open learning (Crocker 1982; Carty 1991; University of Central Queensland 1992; Cavanagh 1994b). The expansion of external studies provision has demanded new services and new approaches from libraries. Whilst the library profession has, and is continuing to build, both a theoretical and practical basis for catering for this clientele, concerns are still expressed regarding information literacy and the external student.

There has been little intersection between the theoretical and practical development of the two disciplines, information science and distance education. What convergence there has been seems to stem almost exclusively from the former. Distance education theory and practice has been concerned with such issues as andragogical approaches, self-directed learning, interaction and independence and course material design. Rarely are information services to external students addressed by distance educators themselves, and little attention has yet been turned toward the role course design plays in promoting information literacy. Librarians have expressed indignant cries about being left out of the educational process and call for improved relationships with academic staff and more involvement in course development. Several studies have actively tried to improve these relationships and links (for instance see Lynch and Seibert 1980; Burge et al. 1988; Burge et al. 1989b; Burge 1991), however in general, these schemes have met with little success, and often report educators as a formidable block. There is also a strong indication that librarians may not be approaching educators with clear understandings of the teaching/learning process and educational theory.

Such studies suggest a need to look at why these attempts have failed. What are the attitudes, values and approaches of distance educators to the role of the libraries and information literacy in distance education provision? What do they see as the information needs of their students and where do they expect their students to find information? It may be that educators have valid approaches to the information needs of their external students that negate the need for librarians to become more involved in course design and delivery. In any case, distance educators’ attitudes, values and perceptions need to be assessed before any valid attempt can be made in addressing the informational needs of students.

If it is accepted that the role of academic libraries is to support the teaching programs of their institution and to develop information literate graduates then librarians must develop closer relationships with faculty members, teaching programs and educational theory. At present, insufficient information exists regarding the approaches faculty members take to meet distance education students’ information needs for more effective support to be developed.

I believe that there is a strong connection between self-directed learning and information literacy and that the library has a major role to play in conjunction with teaching staff in promoting this connection. It is important that productive relationships are established between library and teaching staff to foster self-directed approaches to learning. Many of the issues raised here will be elaborated on and supported further in Chapter 1 of this thesis.
A diagrammatic representation of the conceptual framework of this research is presented in Figure I. The diagram represents a learner-centred distance education system. Two aspects of the external students’ approach, self-direction and information literacy are focused upon. Around the student, then, are bodies of primary influence over the students’ learning approach. Solid arrows indicate known, established paths of interaction, while the dotted arrows indicate relationships and paths of interaction which are being explored in this study.

This thesis does not suggest that libraries are the only source of information important to external students. The Winter and Cameron report found that “in addition to their own library, external students use many other sources of information, at least as much as their own library and probably much more” (Winter and Cameron 1983, p.84). It is, in fact, a primary goal of this thesis to investigate what sources of information are considered important by teaching staff. It is noted also that technological advances are greatly affecting opportunities for promoting information literacy, particularly for external students (Olsen 1992). This being said, it is important that libraries are addressed as one major potential source of information.
Aims of the Research

The research undertaken examined the approaches of Southern Cross University (SCU) distance educators toward the information needs of their external students.

The aim of this thesis is to better understand these approaches with a view to determining:

a) how best to improve relationships between distance educators and libraries;

b) how to improve external students’ learning experiences;

 c) how librarians can co-operate with faculty members to promote self-directed learning and information literacy.

The thesis aims at revealing a breadth of information which could form the basis of further research, including a set of recommendations for future action.

It is also hoped that, by encouraging innovation and improving awareness amongst those involved in distance education provision at SCU, this study can improve the learning experience of SCU students, both present and future.

Scope and Limitations

The study is exploratory in nature. It has no generalisational or comparative intentions and is a “case study” of SCU. By providing richly descriptive data, decisions regarding the transferability of findings to other populations can be left open to the reader. Although the scope of this study has limited the sample size, it is felt the study will provide a valuable basis for further research.

The study is viewed as a preliminary step towards the above aims, and it is recognised that the immeasurable nature of these aims and the exploratory nature of the study mitigate against tangible and demonstrable outcomes, beyond the recommendations which form the conclusion to the thesis.

Details regarding specific limitations of the research will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Definitions

For the purposes of this study the term ‘distance educators’ will be used to refer to all faculty employed staff involved in the development and delivery of external units. This includes:

- faculty staff (full-time or part-time, lecturers or tutors) involved in course development, i.e. including writers and course co-ordinators;
- faculty staff involved in course delivery i.e. tutors, markers;
- instructional designers or instructional advisors.

It will exclude those staff involved in clerical or administrative support aspects of development and delivery except where they directly affect course content.

The term ‘distance educators’ was chosen in preference to ‘academic staff or ‘teaching staff as these seem to imply in the context of this study, the non-academic status of librarians and other support staff, and a failure to recognise the ‘teaching’ role of these other personnel.
The research aims at examining the ‘approaches’ of distance educators, a term which requires some clarification. Definitions presented here are drawn from Reber (1985). ‘Approaches’ is used in the context of this thesis to encompass the theoretical, practical and personal aspects of the individuals’ professional practice and thus encompasses not only actions but attitudes, values and perceptions, terms which themselves require clarification. ‘Attitudes’ is descriptive of an internal affective orientation that explains the actions of a person and entails four components; cognitive (consciously held belief or opinion), affective (emotional tone or feeling), evaluative (positive or negative) and connotative (disposition for action). ‘Values’ are interpreted as feelings of worth and ‘perceptions’ as an implicit, intuitive insight into something.

The terms ‘courses’ and ‘units’ will be used to encompass both undergraduate and postgraduate units and courses offered by the University, including independent study units (ISUs) and modules as defined in the University Calendar.

‘Course materials’ refer to study guides, unit outlines, books of readings and any other such materials supplied to the learner upon enrolment in a course of study. As is explained, this thesis limits itself to textual course materials and is discussing, in particular, the academic environment. Terms such as “instructional materials” have been avoided due to their implied conceptual incompatibility with the philosophy of self-directed learning.

The terms ‘self-directed’ and ‘independent’ learning are defined and discussed extensively in Chapter 1, as is ‘information literacy’.

The phrase ‘information needs’ is used throughout the thesis to maintain a broad perspective on the types and sources of information being addressed, including the mass media and electronic sources such as the Internet as well as more traditionally accepted sources such as course materials and libraries. Information literacy will be further defined in Chapter 1 but is used to refer to the possession of information skills.

The terms ‘library profession’ and ‘librarian’ are used here in the broad sense of people employed in libraries. It is recognised that there is a blurring of terms between ‘library’ and ‘library and information science’ as well as between ‘librarians’ and ‘library technicians’, however the terms should be considered as broadly encompassing. For the above reason it would be preferable to speak in terms of ‘information professionals’ (or a similar term). However, I considered this too ill-defined a term in the context of this thesis.

**Background To Southern Cross University (SCU)**

SCU, the focus of this study, is an institution which has only recently assumed a significant place in distance education. SCU was formed on January 1, 1994 and like many of the new universities in Australia, has grown from a string of prior educational organisations. The Act establishing SCU requires it to have special responsibility to the needs of the North Coast Region of New South Wales (Hansen 1994; Parr and Hansen 1994).

SCU has undergone rapid change and growth in recent years. Table I indicates the growth of SCU in terms of staff numbers and Table II reflects the changing nature of SCU in terms of number and level of courses offered.
Table I. Number of academic and general staff 1991-1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Staff</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Fractional</th>
<th>Subtotal</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Fractional</th>
<th>Subtotal</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Fractional</th>
<th>Subtotal</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Fractional</th>
<th>Subtotal</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Fractional</th>
<th>Subtotal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'91</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>'92</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>'93</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>'94</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>'95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>178</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>275</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II. Number and type of courses offered at SCU.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Course</th>
<th>Number of Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P/G Diploma/Certificate</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Diploma</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate/Advanced Certificate</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Bachelor with Honours are not counted as a separate course to the corresponding Bachelor degree.

scu has tended not to compete with the older, more traditional universities in its course offerings. Courses at SCU have traditionally been highly innovative and relevant in terms of employment opportunities. Course areas which reflect this include Coastal Management, Tourism, Club Management, Human Movement, Naturopathy, Forestry and Educational Multimedia. The University is also involved in a number of Industry Partnerships, based on its community-based philosophy. Many of these programs are offered externally through Centres for Professional Development (CPDs) and include partnerships with Corrective Services, Telecom, the Defence Forces, Ansett and the Club Industry.

Distance education technology was formally embraced by SCU in March 1990 with the establishment of an Instructional Design and Educational Technology Unit, now superseded by the Teaching and Learning Unit. In July 1991 an Open Learning and Distance Education seminar was held and a feasibility study conducted into access and support services for off-campus study on the North Coast of NSW. As a result, several Open Learning Access Centres (OLACs) were established and the first Australian conference on open learning was hosted.
in October 1991, with 70 participants. These conferences, titled ‘Access Through Open Learning’ have since been held annually. They continue to attract national delegates and prompt reflection on distance education and open learning both within SCU and in tertiary education in general.

Figure II reflects the growth in student numbers, both internal and external since 1982. As this table indicates, there has been a significant growth in, not only the number of external students but the proportions of external to internal students. In 1982, 14.4% of the total number of students enrolled were external. By 1995, 35.6% of students were enrolled externally. The lowest proportion of external enrolments occurred in 1989, with 9.8% of students being enrolled externally. The rapid increase in external enrolments after this point signifies the University’s renewed commitment to external delivery methods.

![Figure II. Internal and external student numbers, 1982-1995.]

Five of the six faculties at SCU currently offer external programs; the Faculty of Education, Work and Training (EWT), Faculty of Health Sciences (Hea.), Faculty of Business and Computing (Bus.), Faculty of Resource Sciences - Tourism (Tou.) and as of 1995, Faculty of Law and Criminal Justice (Law). Table III shows student enrolments in all faculties from 1993-1995. Further breakdown of these figures showing student numbers in courses which were sampled is provided in Appendix A.
Table III. Student numbers at SCU by Faculty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>1993</th>
<th>1994</th>
<th>1995</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Int.*</td>
<td>Ext. as %</td>
<td>Int.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education, Work and training</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Science</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and Computing</td>
<td>984</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>1138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Science and Management</td>
<td>758</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law and Criminal Justice</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>3564</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>4333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Internal numbers include full-time and part-time students

The original OLACs still exist and have grown in number. Now known as University Centres they operate at Port Macquarie, Grafton, Murwillumbah and the Gold Coast. These Centres are particularly targeted toward the University’s external students, enabling most students in the region to have access points within an hour’s drive. They provide access to facilities such as e-mail, phone and facsimile, photocopying, videos, computers and modems and are used to conduct study skills assistance and tutorial workshops. These facilities allow access to the library catalog and CD-ROMS, and facilitate ordering and return of library materials. Each centre has a local co-ordinator, who, while not a librarian, is able to assist with many of these services. The University Centres have been developed and are maintained with strong local commitment. It is claimed that SCU espouses an Open Learning approach to improving access and equity for the geographically isolated or those otherwise unable to attend full-time on campus (Hansen 1994; Parr and Hansen 1994).

In 1985-87, together with an extensive review and restructure of courses in the Institute, decisions were made to develop learner-centred studies with an emphasis on independent learning (Kinny and Parr 1990, p.285). The library was seen as an important but under-utilised resource, and it was recognised that students lacked the learning and study skills necessary for effective learning. It was also recognised that barriers such as personal and emotional problems, health and finance greatly inhibited learning. It was within this context that SCU’s Learning and Information Centre was established.

In 1994-5 the University began preparation and planning for yet another restructure which will move the faculty structure toward a school based model. At the time of writing this thesis it was unclear how this restructure would affect external course provision or the University structure itself.
The Learning and Information Centre (LIC)

The LIC was formed in 1987 from the existing Information Resources Centre (IRC). At its inception the LIC was considered to be without precedent. The structure was atypical in that it not only retained the infra-structure of an academic library, but incorporated other student services - for example medical, counselling and chaplaincy under a philosophy of an integrated, student-centred learning support system [Parr, E. pers. comm. 28/2/96].

In 1988 the Learning Assistance Unit was also added to the structure of the LIC. The work of the unit embodies the operational philosophy of the LIC, ‘that learning is a skilled activity, that learning skills may be taught, practised and perfected, and once acquired give students the ability and freedom to manage their own learning’ (Kinny and Parr 1990, p.287). Principles of adult and independent learning are said to underlie Learning Assistance’s operations [Pittman, J. 1996, pers. comm. 2/2/96]. The Unit is staffed by academics who specialise in adult learning, however librarians have also been directly involved with Learning Assistance in developing a series of study modules which can be presented together to comprise an accredited academic unit known as ‘Orientation to Learning’.

In 1993 the LIC furthered its commitment to external students and flexible learning through the appointment of a Network Services Librarian. While the range of responsibilities limited direct involvement with external students, many advances in services were facilitated by this position.

Since 1993, Open Learning staff have been integrated with the LIC. One of the initial rationales for this positioning was the embedding of open learning approaches into existing structures. This positioning has also led to close cooperation with the Learning Assistance Unit, the Network Services Librarian and User Services staff (Parr and Hansen c. 1994, p.2).

Many aspects of the original vision of the LIC have changed both physically and administratively since its inception. Student support services (i.e. dentists, counsellors) are now structured in an Equity Unit as part of the Vice Chancellor’s office. Information Technology (IT) is now structured within the LIC, a move which would seem to reflect a philosophical shift in the university. I feel it is no longer clear whether the original philosophy of the LIC still permeates all aspects of the LIC’s operation in the way it was originally envisaged. It would be a separate study in itself to investigate this.

Due to Southern Cross’s relatively recent entry into distance education provision, the University Library is still establishing and building a service for its external students. Currently, external students are serviced by the Document Supply section, which also has responsibility for Inter-Library Loans. All reference librarians are involved with external students, as part of their ‘contact librarian’ responsibilities to a particular faculty. There is no one reference librarian responsible for external services. The advantages of this situation lie in flexibility in meeting peak demands in workload, and the maintenance of a high awareness of off-campus issues amongst all librarians; disadvantages include confusion regarding procedures. Given current staffing levels it is unlikely that this staffing arrangement will change in the immediate future (Neuhaus, J. pers. comm., 23/1/96).
Use of library services by external students at SCU has been increasing consistently. Personal communications with the Document Supply Section place the figures at a 79% increase for 1993-94 and a 32% further increase 1994-95. Staffing levels within the LIC, detailed in Table IV, however, have not reflected the growing demands placed upon its services.

Table IV. Staffing levels in the LIC

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Librarians EF</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Staff EFT</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Staff EFT</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As with many other Universities, each faculty has a contact librarian who attends Boards of Studies (BOS) meetings, and performs a liaison role with faculty members. Despite and aside from the involvement of librarians in the ‘Orientation to Learning’ program there is currently little evidence that librarians have been embraced by faculties in course development, whether it be for external or internal students.

While there are indications that librarians are having some input into external course delivery (eg. library workshops during residential) it is my belief that, for self-directed learning and information literacy to be fully embraced, librarians need to be more fully involved in the course development process.

**The Context for this Research**

From this brief summation of the SCU distance education and information environment it can be seen that there is a sound local context for learner-centred and self-directed learning. The philosophical basis of SCU’s LIC would appear in theory to support an institutional climate for flexible distance education provision. Although there is a rich environment for distance education to centre around the LIC, it is not clear that this is occurring. Examining the current culture within the university may provide a catalyst for reflection upon the future directions of SCU’s distance education provision.

This thesis attempts to temporarily suspend belief in the central importance of the library in the educational experience. Instead it turns attention back to the educational process and the learner. This is not just a matter of understanding learners themselves but the system in which they interact, their course design and delivery and the information needs that these courses create. The attitudes, values and perceptions of distance educators strongly affect the learning environment through the ‘hidden curriculum’ and are thus a major force in this complex educational process.
Endnotes

1 Sources cited by Winter and Cameron include personal collections (own or acquaintances), libraries at work, public libraries and other academic libraries. Brookfield (1986, p.43) also supports the claim that successful independent learners report fellow enthusiasts as their most important resource in developing expertise.

2 It is worth, at this point briefly discussing the link between attitude and behaviour. Hardesty (1991, p. 12) states that sociologists and psychologists often define attitude through the likelihood of a specific behaviour occurring. In this context, the ultimate reference of attitude is behaviour. Thus we cannot see attitudes directly but must infer them from behaviour. To show attitude research as useful to decision makers he states, we must identify the extent to which attitudes affect behaviour. Gross and Niman (1985, in Hardesty 1991, p.13) point out that the distinction between attitude and behaviour can be misleading and that individuals exhibit behaviour through both written and verbal attitude responses. It is beyond the scope of this study to relate expressed attitudes to behaviour, however this could be the focus of future research.

3 The University’s 1996 handbook (Southern Cross University 1996, p.23) provides the following definitions. Course is defined as “a programme of study the successful completion of which shall satisfy requirements for admission to a degree or award of a Diploma, an Associate Degree or a Certificate.” Units are referred to as “a component of a course which involves the study of a subject including lecturers, seminars, practical classes, excursions and/or other activities prescribed by a Faculty, Centre of other teaching unit”. Independent Study Unit means “a unit undertaken by study without specific classes and/or on a topic not specific to any existing unit provided that such units may only be taken with the approval of the Dean of the relevant Faculty”. Module “generally, equates to one third of a unit and therefore completing three modules is equivalent to one unit.”

4 The original institution, Lismore Teachers College was established in 1970 and was converted to the Northern Rivers College of Advanced Education (NRCAE) in 1973. On 17th July 1989, with the implementation of the Unified National System by the Federal Labour Government, NRCAE amalgamated with the University of New England in Armidale, thus becoming the University of New England, Northern Rivers (Bass 1992; Harman and Robertson-Cuninghame 1995). The de-amalgamation of the University of New England network on January 1, 1994 led to Southern Cross becoming a university in its own right. The largest campus of Southern Cross University is situated in Lismore, in Northern NSW, 800 km north of Sydney and 130 km south of the Queensland border. In 1995 the student population at Lismore was around 6,000 students. While the Lismore campus remains the administrative centre, the University also has a campus in Coffs Harbour, which in 1995 catered for more than 700 students (Southern Cross University 1995).

5 This unit was headed by a senior lecturer and had the purpose of assisting academics in the design and packaging of teaching and learning materials and delivery systems.

6 Representatives from local government, business and professional and community members participated in the committees. Operating expenses were shared equally between the University and the local communities.

7 The independent learning modules offered through the CPDs, the OLACs, electronic network services, the use of appropriate technologies such as Electronic ClassroomTM and alliances with Open Learning Agency of Australia (OLAA) are cited as means by which this is achieved. The expansion of flexibility in design and delivery systems since 1991 aims to increase choices for students about where, when and how they learn (Hansen 1994).

8 Teaching study skills was seen as a natural extension of librarians’ user education work, as they were already assisting students with reading assignments, in finding resources and research techniques.
The responsibilities of this position included the design, development and delivery of network related training, liaison between the library and the University Centres and developing improved services for external students. Many improvements in remote access to information for external students have stemmed through this appointment. The access to CD-ROM databases, described by Neuhaus (1993) has since been successfully implemented and more recent innovations include a University Library World Wide Web page, web versions of training guides, and access to ABI and PAR Full-text databases. Furthermore, a new toll free number has just been provided for external students. Training sessions are also offered by the library at each of the University Centres. At most Centres, two sessions were offered each semester in 1995 (Neuhaus, pers. comm., 23/1/96).
Chapter 1

Literature Review

Introduction

The intention of this review is to justify the study being undertaken in the context of the existing literature and to examine what investigations have already been conducted in this area, for the purposes of research design and comparison, analysis of data and the development of the arguments of this thesis. It will illustrate how this study relates and contributes to the existing body of literature in both the library science and distance education disciplines but also how it moves beyond that already reported in the literature.

Libraries and Distance Education Practice

An examination of the library science literature reveals a growing wealth of research, theory and policy regarding services for distance education students. Amongst those involved in the library area there is little dispute regarding the value and centrality of libraries to the distance education experience. Arguments justifying this importance include the external student’s right to equivalent access to information, the importance of competency in information retrieval, students’ perceptions that wider reading will lead to improved results and students’ desire to enquire further into their topics (Cavanagh 1994a, p.93).

There is now no question that the library profession is building a solid theoretical basis for practice. However, in many respects the library’s response has focused inwardly, assuming its own importance and necessity. External students’ use of libraries is frequently addressed through quantitative analysis of their interaction with, or disassociation from libraries. The focus in existing literature is predominantly on extending and marketing current “internal” services to the off-campus student or increasing external students’ awareness of library services. While there is no doubt that these aspects are important I argue that the use of libraries by external students is more directly affected by the approach that distance educators take to their course structures.

Perhaps the crucial difference in the approach here is the focus on “libraries” rather than on “information”. While it is not the intention of this thesis to imply that the library is unimportant or unnecessary to the educational process, many of the past trends in library research and practice could be considered to be “library-centred”, assuming the library’s central role in information provision. It is considered that librarians need to approach their role in educational and andragogical terms. They need to examine the educational processes operating within their institutions and formulate their responses accordingly. The overall goal of the academic library should not be simply to promote the use of its services but to support the teaching programs of the institution and the development of information literate graduates. To achieve this, librarians and library managers need a deeper understanding of andragogy and educational theory and practice.

I propose that the approach to improving student use of libraries may not (as is often conveyed in such studies as those referred to above) be through direct promotion of the library, an idea which has been supported by several other
promotion of the library, an idea which has been supported by several other authors (Cameron 1986; Hardesty 1991; Behrens 1993). Course delivery and course materials, and hence those involved in developing them, can play negative, positive or neutral roles in promoting library use. If this is the case, it is important to establish an understanding of the attitudes of teaching staff towards the value of libraries and the adequacies of the services offered.

Despite the very vocal justification regarding the importance of library skills on the part of librarians, the scarcity of reference to them on the part of educators, specifically distance educators, would appear to bring into question the similarity of their values. The seemingly complete absence of discussion by distance educators on the role of libraries as support systems is a point made very strongly by Cavanagh (1994a, p.91), Mathews (1991), Carty (1991) and Brockman and Kiobas (1983, p.7). This would seem to imply teaching staff’s indifference, or at least their lack of recognition of the value of libraries and would suggest, as Mathews (1991, p.211) states that librarians are not considered to be “major players”.

Despite the recognition by librarians that distance educators approaches are important influences on students’ information seeking behaviour, very few studies have attempted to examine them. Thus, in order to justify the role of libraries in distance education an exploration of the attitudes, values and approaches to the information needs of their distance education students is warranted. A similar view was held by Roe who stated that “perhaps the most formidable and obvious force maintaining the gap between teaching and learning and resources is the attitudes of academic staff” (1981, p.69). Haworth was also acutely aware of the importance of academic’s attitudes and approaches, stating that:

for any external student, awareness on the part of academics, engaged in providing learning experiences, of the student’s information needs and of the library services likely to be available is a most important factor. Forethought in the provision of source material and recommended reading may make all the difference between a student’s success or failure in a course (Haworth 1982b, p.159).

Hardesty (1991), whose study will be discussed later in this chapter, is one of the key authors to address the importance of faculty’s attitudes to libraries. While speaking of undergraduates in general, Hardesty discusses the discrepancy between the often voiced importance of the library and its frequently illustrated low use.

The “Developing Partnership” Model

Many writers have focused upon developing co-operative relationships between academics and library staff, and sometimes institutions themselves (Crocker 1984, p.32) under a notion of “shared responsibility”8. This is not a recent trend as Dale (1978) was discussing involvement in course teams in 1978. However these calls are still being made and only limited ground has been covered since then. As Burge (1989b, p.6) states “generally there is little evidence to suggest either strengthened ties between distance educators and library staff or the development of an adult learner-centred model of library behaviour”9.

Burge’s studies have demonstrated that academic librarians can describe little success in their relationships with faculty and distance education administrators, almost all using such terms as “poor”, “embryonic”, “distant” and “minimal” to characterise present conditions (Burge 1991). It is proposed that if more attention was paid to the attitude, values and perceptions of faculty staff before such experiments were attempted, then these projects may yield different results.
Blame tends to be apportioned between the two parties and certainly neither group’s claims are any the more valid. Librarians’ concerns frequently mention the “exclusion process”, where libraries have been built out of courses (because of pre-packaging or because course designers see no need to encourage students to use information gathering skills), the “last minute” nature of some course planning and “transmission” models of teaching. However, several writers have pointed to the traditional passivity of librarians as a factor in perpetuating this exclusion, suggesting that librarians must motivate themselves out of their libraries into course development programs, educational forums and academic offices of their institutions (Sargeant 1979; Crocker 1984). Roe (1981, p. 18) also discusses the need to integrate andragogical principles into bibliographical instruction and user education. Relf states that library staff need to be involved in the teaching/learning dialogue of the subject (Relf 1993, p.23), a point supported by the University of Central Queensland (UCQ) study (1992) 10.

Libraries, Distance Education and Andragogical Theory

Andragogy, a term first coined by the German educator Knapp, refers to the process by which adults are introduced to learning. Andragogy is distinguished from pedagogy (the approaches to educating children) by four underlying assumptions; growth implies movement from dependency to autonomy, knowledge accrued becomes its own resource, a person’s social role becomes the prime motivation for further education and learning becomes problem-centred rather than subject-centred (Sheridan 1986, p.159).

Andragogy is a concept firmly embraced by distance education practitioners in the tertiary environment, and in many respects distance education and instructional design have grown from contemporary andragogical theory (Burge 1988; Bagnall 1989; Burge, Snow et al. 1989a; Juler 1990; Paul 1990; Burge 1991; O’Reilly 1991).

A further aspect of andragogy is the notion of “learner-centredness”, an approach to the educational process which places concerns for the well-being of the learner as primary and foremost. It entails a recognition of the individuality of every learner and a desire to shape the educational experience to best advantage every student 11. This philosophical position allows learners to diagnose their own learning needs and plan a personal program of learning. In order to create a learner-centred educational program the course design must be flexible enough to respond to the needs of individuals and the role of the educator is to be an effective facilitator (Burge 1989, p.48).

For librarians to succeed in establishing an equal role in the educational process, to establish a partnership with academic staff, they need to meet educators on an equivalent theoretical and professional basis. Ever changing approaches to andragogy need to be as much the concern of librarians as teaching staff. Such issues are reflected in the writing of Graham (1986), Crocker (1986), Elton (1983) and MacTaggart (1991). Both Roe (1981) and Burge (1991) call for librarians to consider future education and training in adult education so that they can select the most appropriate models of teaching, involve themselves in educational discourses and respond confidently and competently with differences in cognition and learning. As Burge continues “…librarians have to think about how they can earn inclusion” (1991, p.16).

There is evidence to suggest that many of the aforementioned attempts at developing partnerships between librarians and educators failed because librarians are inadequately versed in the principles of andragogy and that this is a major inhibiting and exclusionary factor which would otherwise allow them to build
partnerships with course designers and tutors, based on the use of common language about how adults learn (Elton 1983; Burge 1991, p.7). This is not, however, to imply that all librarians lack these skills, but rather to question the lack of initial and continuing professional development devoted to andragogy. Notable writers who have embraced the notion of andragogy and learner-centredness in library theory include Burge (1983; 1988; 1989) and Sheridan (1986).

One of the key concepts behind current approaches to andragogy and learner-centredness is the idea of self-directed learning. As Garrison states, “self directed learning has become a central concept in adult education theory and is often seen as its ultimate aim” (Garrison 1987, p.309). This concept, which will be defined and explored extensively in the following section can be seen as the key connection between the library and the educational programs of the institution.

Self-Directed Learning

The concept of “self-directed learning” has been discussed widely by many educationalists. Not all writers however refer to it as such and the literature reveals a proliferation of synonymous or related terms, all of which remain ambiguously defined, despite their wide usage. Knowles defines self-directed learning as:

> a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies and evaluating learning outcomes (Knowles 1970, p18).

Moore (1977, p.9) provides a similar definition, seeing self-directed study as that which provides opportunities for the learner to make decisions about what to learn; to “pursue the study of personally significant areas in an independent manner, free of the bonds of time, space and prescription usually imposed by conventional instruction”.

Many of the definitional problems surrounding self-directed learning stem from the institutional and non-institutional implications of the term. Garrison states that:

> confusion over autonomy in self-directed learning has occurred by focusing upon independent study methods as the means of promoting and achieving self-directed or autonomous learning... self directed learning is best achieved and facilitated through interaction, not through isolated learning... the crucial element in the facilitation of self-directed learning is the interdependent and transactional relationship between learner and facilitator (1987, p310).

In the context of this thesis, self-direction is defined in its institutional context and the interactive nature of the relationship between educator and student is emphasised. The approach is that of Paul (1989, p.183; 1990, p.32) who sees independent learning not as an absolute concept, but a notion that graduates should be more “self-sufficient” learners than they were at the point of entry to a course. It involves changes in values, attitudes and the development of new skills such as time management, study skills, problem conceptualisation, research and library skills. Hence it is the distinction between educators focusing solely on delivery methods, rather than encouraging students to develop the skills which will empower them with the capability for lifelong learning.
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It is fully acknowledged within this definition that many learners are not capable of independent learning in its pure sense. Furthermore, learners tend to favour more teacher-directed learning, a point revealed in practice at SCU (Morgan and Di Corpo 1993, p.105). Establishing independence without the necessary aspects of proficiency and support present only illusionary control and result in dissonance, stress and dropout (Garrison 1989). Hence, it is the notion of promoting, encouraging or supporting self-directed learning which is of importance.

Many writers, including Burge (1988, p.38) are of the opinion that andragogical learner-centred approaches contribute to the quality of educational programs. In this context a central rationale for any course then, should be to foster self-directed learners and autonomous, self-actualised adults.

The growing body of literature on “self-directed” and “independent” learning would seem to present arguments against “teacher-centred’ approaches. The educator’s role in a self-directed learning framework is that of facilitator, rather than “teacher”. As agents of change, adult educators’ responsibilities entail involving clients in analysing their higher aspirations and the changes required to achieve them; to diagnose obstacles and plan effective strategies and in helping learners become aware of their idiosyncratic learning styles — this is achieved through adequate two-way communication for tutorial and feedback purposes. Their role is of helper, guide, encourager, consultant and resource — not of transmitter, disciplinarian, judge and authority (Knowles 1970, p.37). Garrison sees the role of the teacher as guiding the student in determining appropriate content and level, in questioning and challenging pre-existing views and values and suggesting alternative viewpoints and in helping the student assimilate and accommodate the new experience and validate the knowledge gained (Garrison 1989, p.34). In this context the educator is recognised as an all important influence on the educational strategies adopted by students. The educator has the ability to promote or curtail self-directed learning, the ability to encourage or discourage.

Self-Directed Learning and Information Literacy

Traditionally, distance educators writing on self-directed learning made only passing reference to the connection between self-directed learning and information literacy. Knowles (1970, p.20) stated that the task of education was to find new ways to link learners with learning resources. This would seem like a very vocal cry for librarians’ services, and many library practitioners have vocally expounded the connection between self-directed learning and information literacy (Dale 1982; Graham 1986; Bruce 1994; Wilson 1994). However only recently have discussions between the two disciplines converged, and the importance of information literacy has become better recognised. The literature is beginning to imply that, within some circles at least, the library is being seen as the key component in quality education (National Board of Employment Education and Training 1990; Wilson 1994). The publication in 1992 of the volume Information Literacy: Developing Students as Independent Learners (Farmer and Mech 1992) represents a significant change in approach by educators, as do events such as the 1995 ‘Learning for life: Information literacy and the autonomous learner’ conference held in Adelaide.

To become a self-directed learner one must learn how to go on acquiring information through one’s life, as needs arise. Wilson (1994) defines information skills in terms of psychomotor, cognitive (including comprehension, knowledge and critical thinking) and affective skills; skills which can be seen to be the key to self-directed learning. If learners are encouraged to pursue their own fields of interest then one of the primary ways they are going to do this is through the body
of literature related to their subject area — through research and resources. If we accept that these aspects of learning are important to the self-directed learner then it can be argued that there is a very strong case for the self-directed learner’s activities to centre around the library. It is information literacy which is the basis of empowerment in education.

Information literacy is not library or bibliographical instruction, and this is where many of the library-centred approaches to information literacy have failed. Library instruction which is an ‘add-on’ to courses is often viewed by students as extrinsic’ to the course; “Only when faculty require students to use a variety of information resources as part of class assignments do students receive the message that the ability to locate, evaluate and effectively use information is critical to learning” (Breivik 1992). I support the inclusion, within this definition, of the ability to manage information once it has been retrieved. “The value of any information is likely to radically decline if, having once been rescued from one haystack, it proceeds to be buried irretrievably in another” (Bruce 1990, p.296). I suggest that both students (particularly postgraduate students) and many educators are in need of information management skill development.

Burge (1988, p.4) describes the development of self-contained courses which do not promote information seeking as denying students their ‘rights and responsibilities’ to explore databases and literature. The much discussed “information explosion” of the late 20th century has led to a situation whereby schools and universities fail in their duty if they do not equip students with the ability and the predisposition to carry on their own professional development after graduation” (Candy 1993). As Smith (1982, p.15) states, “lifelong learning has become a necessity. In an era of breathtaking change, it is truly impossible to acquire early in life the knowledge that adulthood will require”.

A particular unit of study cannot hope to provide all the information required to fulfil the diverse information needs of its students. Furthermore, a unit of study which is self-contained cannot claim to be any more than a delivery device. A unit which promotes self-directed learning will assist the development of life-long skills for learning and information gathering:

Higher education curricula can no longer afford to focus on content at the expense of processes that enhance students’ ability to engage in independent learning. Today’s students must successfully locate, manage and use information to succeed in their tertiary courses... Clearly information literacy is an important characteristic of the lifelong learner (Bruce 1994).

Burge also discusses the facilitation of information seeking and critical analysis as a strong measure of the academic rigour of a course. If an equitable educational experience is to be provided to the external student then parallel means need to be established to translate the encouragement of these skills to the external environment.

There can be little argument that information literacy is crucial in developing critical thinking and learner autonomy and essential for post-graduate studies. While Burge (1989b, p.5) states that adult learning should not place the learner in a situation of passive dependency and uncritical acceptance of others’ knowledge, Wilson (1994, p.258) points out that some writers feel teaching of critical thinking and self-directed learning at the expense of content-based knowledge has been taken too far. Wilson speaks of frequently voiced complaints from teaching staff that information skills education impinges on teaching time (Wilson 1994, p.264.). However, Wilson states that when performed correctly, information skills education actually increases learning time in a unit through better motivation and more efficient practice (Wilson 1994, p.264.). It is such attitudes, values and
perceptions of teaching staff that are inadequately understood at present, and which this thesis hopes to explore. As Ready states, it is:

...equally important for the librarian to build up a profile of the academic’s attitude to information skills acquisition and to accommodate these attitudes into the planning process. There may well be a need for programming to educate the academic before the students are addressed (in Wilson 1994, p.263).

While not wanting to fall into the trap of the “library centred” approach there may certainly be value in this statement.

Attempts to validate and ensure the promotion of information literacy may only succeed with the support of institutions and overall educational policies, as well as significant changes in practice. In Australia, progress was made in this direction with the 1990 NBEET report (National Board of Employment Education and Training 1990, p.68-69) which stated that higher education has a critical role to play in the acquisition of information literacy by adults. As Wilson states, this report urges an appreciation that higher education must ensure that students can search the literature independently and apply that ability to their professional lives for personal, corporate and national benefit28.

Movements in higher education toward resource-based learning29 actively encourage information literacy. Farmer and Mech’s (1992) publication has made considerable contributions toward discussion of this concept stating that information literacy is not something added to the curriculum but the result of resource-based learning found through the curriculum.

If students are to learn information skills effectively, such skills need to be learnt within the broader educational framework and the cooperation of faculty is vital (Behrens 1993, p.11). However, in the distance education literature there is a conspicuous absence of direct reference to the role of libraries. This could reflect a general reluctance on the part of academics to relinquish their central role in the educational experience30 and an overall reluctance of library staff to assume a greater role in adult education, not just information provision but curriculum and course development. It should be argued here that a number of initiatives have been taken in this direction, predominantly by librarians31, but that these approaches have not been significantly embraced within educational structures.

Self-Direction, Course Design and the Library

There would appear to be controversy within the distance education literature regarding the propensity of distance education to promote self-directed learning. Writers discuss both its great potential (Verduin and Clark 1991; Dekkers et al 1992) and the problems implicit (Moore 1986; Paul 1990; Kasworm and Yao 1992)32.

Textual Materials and the ‘Hidden Curriculum’

In distance education, interaction between educator and student is largely centred upon pre-packaged instructional materials, and these are and always will be predominantly textual (Juler 1990, p.27)33 although this is not to deny the importance of other media. As Marland and Store (1982) note, quality of learning in distance education closely relates to quality of distance education materials.

These materials, then, form a bridge between the values of the educator and institution and the student. The connection between self-directed learning and the ‘hidden curriculum’ is made clearly in Behren’s statement that:
...if a lecturer has a negative attitude towards the value of library skills, the students of his course are unlikely to learn such skills. Where a lecturer shows positive attitudes towards the place of library skills, the students of that course are likely to be encouraged to learn library skills... (Behrens 1993, p.20)

It has long been recognised that the values held by those involved in course production are conveyed, wittingly or unwittingly, to students through the ‘hidden curriculum’ (McNally 1983). As yet, the literature has not made a significant connection between this phenomenon and the promotion of self-direction. In distance education written materials are the primary means by which educators convey their educational values to students (Mann 1986). Therefore, if self-direction is to be promoted in distance education, this promotion must occur, in a large part, through these textual instructional materials. A closer examination needs to be made of the values that educators and instructional designers hold and how these values are, or could be, conveyed in textual materials and ‘macro’ instructional design.

In 1981, Store (1981, p.82) described a conversation with an educator who stated that in his view library services were not necessary for external courses, and that he could ‘package’ all the materials necessary for the external courses he conducted. When Store challenged this view and suggested that his approach rather limited a student’s choice of resources he said student choice was already limited in most academic libraries through selection policies and reserve collections. Store (1981, p.82) stated that “I suspect that his point of view is by no means unique among tertiary educators. Perhaps many welcome the opportunity to offer highly structured courses where they are in complete control of materials students will use.” Numerous examples exist where values, attitudes and approaches can be seen to directly affect the information skills of students.

In studies by both Haworth (1982a) and Cook and Cook (1987) some instructors were found to be more lenient with off-campus students who were not required to read as broadly as internal students. Faculty attitudes towards the importance of library research was ambivalent.

Explicit course requirements as well as the less explicit “hidden curriculum” will influence whether or not students move beyond their prescribed study material, and locate and utilise information which has not been included in their pre-selected information package; in other words, independent information seeking. The context of library skills teaching cannot be discussed without consideration of whether or not course structure requires students to make use of the library.

Self-Direction and Course Design

Connections between teaching pedagogy and library use have been made by many authors (Howes 1983; Crocker 1984; Steffen 1987; Keenan 1989; Ruddy 1993; Cavanagh 1994b), however, little direct research has been conducted to explore the connection between library use and instructional design. As Steffen (1987, p11) states, “while positive attitudes are commendable, they do not ensure student use of libraries unless they are translated into assignments that require library use.” By examining current approaches of staff toward external students’ use of libraries, this thesis will argue that understandings obtained can lead to staff development programs, changes in library services and librarian/academic relationships which enhance the facilitation of self-directed learning.

Mann (1986) recognised the centrality of the lecturer in encouraging information seeking behaviour. At the local level (i.e. Southern Cross University’s Library) the motivational power of the lecturer has also been acknowledged. Cullen asks the question “How much research do academic staff now expect of their students?” (Cullen 1994, p. 196). As yet, no study has attempted to find the answer.
There has been a certain reluctance on the part of researchers and writers to link course material design directly to self-directed learning. Much of the writing on textual materials in distance education refers, not to self-directed or independent learning, but to deep and surface approaches \(^{37}\). One writer who does make the connection between course materials and self-direction, however, is England (1987). England states that the growing appreciation of the different approaches to study adopted by learners requires more versatile approaches to constructing learning materials.

England rejects the traditional facilitative role of instructional designers, favouring an approach which involves students in developing learning skills \(^{38}\). This notion emphasises the important potential role of instructional designers in promoting self-directed learning through their input into material design. Such approaches are highly appropriate in the conceptual framework of this thesis.

The established tradition in distance education of developing “self-contained” courses would seem, however, to reflect contrary values toward information literacy amongst course developers (Store 1981). As Burge states, if everyone “thinks (and acts as if) courses are self-contained, then the library is out of the picture” (Burge, Snow et al. 1989a, p.332)\(^{39}\).

Reif emphasises that teaching pedagogies which involve leading students through study materials and providing all materials for this purpose deprive students of the opportunity to develop “true personal understanding of ideas and concepts” (Relf 1993, p.6). Library services, he asserts, are essential in assisting students to develop critical thinking and learner autonomy.

There are, however, counter indications that students’ use of literature is irrespective of course requirements (Carty 1991). Winter and Cameron’s study (1983) revealed that provision of “readers” or “reprint” materials actually encourages students to seek their own materials and does not reduce the use of libraries (Winter and Cameron 1983, p.88)\(^{40}\). This finding, however, would almost seem to contradict investigations into learners’ behaviour which indicate that students tend to do a minimum of work required for course completion (Marland and Store 1982; Clyde 1983; Marland et al. 1984; Parer 1988; Marland, Patching et al. 1990; Marland et al. 1992; Valcke, Martens et al. 1993). A similar situation is noted by Behrens (1993, p.17) who states that “it is only the very motivated student who will learn library skills if these are not demanded for a subject course, especially if they receive no credit for applying such skills.” Hence, the extent to which courses should be self-contained remains a contentious issue.

Winter and Cameron briefly discuss distance education methodologies and the planning, writing and delivery of courses (1983). Their study mentions a variety of approaches to course development from responsibility on individual lecturers to the course team model (1983, p.88). Visits to participating institutions by the researchers indicated that there was very little participation of library staff in course preparation, findings supported by Haworth (1982a) and Cook and Cook (1987). The study recommends that:

...such participation should begin at an early stage in the planning process, in all subjects offered externally (and possibly internally). The initiative must come from the faculty or staff member responsible for course preparation, as it was found that library staff feel unable to demand participation in the preparation of all subjects, and depend on the invitation of those responsible for the course (1983, p.88).
Winter and Cameron also make extensive recommendations regarding the inclusion of information searching components in the study programs of all courses. Having said this the study then recommends such functions for librarians as accurate referencing, annotation and guidance on contents and relevance of materials, ensuring materials are available and implementing planned library tours. It could be argued that these recommendations still place the focus on ‘library-centred’ services rather than the librarian’s greater involvement in the teaching processes and life-long learning skill development.

As Haworth has pointed out, the cost of library services is greatly affected by the kind of teaching methods employed and this is an inhibiting factor in the promotion and adoption of such approaches.41

The Role Of Assessment Requirements

As cited above, several studies have supported the commonly held belief that students tend to do a minimum of work to achieve their desired ends and focus on assessment tasks to shape their study. Assessment, then, is a powerful tool for distance educators in shaping the learning activities and skill development of their students. Several writers have addressed issues of assessment in the teaching and learning process. One of the factors which Gow and Kember (1990) see as contributing to the diminishment of independent learning by students is lecturers’ use of surface assessment. Sharp (1990, p.333) speaks of the method, frequency and perceived importance of evaluation and grading practices as of primary importance.42 Boud (1990) has argued that many current assessment practices are incompatible with the goals of independence and critical analysis, citing research which suggests that assessment policy of many departments is restrictive of learning style and undermines deep approaches to learning on the part of students.

This connection between assessment, independent learning and information seeking behaviour has been made by authors such as Marland et, al. (1990, p.81), Dekkers and Cuskelly (1992, p.384) and Porter (1992). George and Love (1994, p.200) point out that assessment is generally focused firmly on the final product and how students get resources is generally not a concern. Hence there is little if any motivation for students to learn the processes involved.

Whether independent information seeking is valued and encouraged in assessment thus depends on the values of those who set and mark assessment. As Behrens states “it is only the very motivated student who will learn library skills if these are not demanded for a subject course, especially if they receive no credit for applying such skills” (Behrens 1993, p.17).

All the evidence suggests that the lecturer is therefore the big person in the process: the ultimate motivation toward library use comes from the setting of tasks by the tutor, and this guidance determines whether the library will be used and also how it will be used (Graham 1986, p.5).

This adds further support to the importance of closer liaison between teaching and library staff, conclusions drawn by such authors as Haworth (1982a, p. 158) and Steffen (1987, p.306).
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The Changing Face of Tertiary Education

Elton (1983) speaks of developments in learning and teaching and how moves toward individualised and project type learning, which Elton groups under the term “active” learning, are changing the nature of tertiary education as students become more active participants in the learning process. Graham (1986) also discussed these changes in teaching methods and, as is made quite clear in O’Reilly’s article (1991), these changes have in many respects been prompted by recognition of the principles of andragogy. These statements could certainly be said to be so of SCU.

Graham (1986) is of the belief that many of the developments in libraries in the past twenty years has been a response to these changes in educational techniques. Roe, however, feels that this change has not been great enough, stating that moves towards independent study have not affected the library as much as might have been expected (Roe 1981, p.48).

‘Library-Centredness’ and Assumptions of Importance

In the face of such rapid changes in educational provision there is a very real need for the library to reassess and justify its place in the educational experience. Haworth acknowledges this and, while arguing the importance of libraries, is ready to recognise that one cannot assume without justification the library’s central role. He recognises that, if academics are supplying students with all reading essential to pass, it may be uneconomical for the library to provide more than minimal stock and services (Haworth 1982a, p.153).

‘Library-centred’ attitudes, as were mentioned briefly at the beginning of this chapter, are conveyed by many writers in the library realm; statements such as “We can attempt to understand their (i.e. faculty’s) perceptions and work to change them by communicating our services and aggressively marketing them” (Ruddy 1993, p.235). Such statements presume that the library’s perceptions are ‘right’ and that faculty’s perceptions, if different from those of librarians, need to change. We, as librarians, may need to reassess our own perceptions and that these should be informed by educational theory.

Such an approach was supported by Relf in a paper presented at the 1993 Australian Library and Information Association’s Distance Education Special Interest Group’s (ALIA DESIG) conference. Relf (1993), an instructional designer, challenged the service mentality of libraries and debated the adequacy of library services from two perspectives; adult learning and higher degree studies. Similar views were adopted by Store (1981) who described the responses of most librarians to distance education as “unimaginative” and more recently by George and Love (1994, p.201). Graham (1986), too, has described how the provision of certain services such as reserve collection, “may arouse nascent characteristics in the student population”.

Distance Educators’ Attitudes and Perceptions

If librarians wish to strengthen the place of information literacy in the learning process, they need to become more assertive participants in the educational process by forming a partnership between themselves and lecturers. In order to do this, it is necessary for them to first have an understanding of the faculty culture within which lecturers operate. Such a partnership is dependent upon the librarians’ knowledge of how lecturers view the importance of information skills, and the extent to which they expect their students to acquire these skills (Behrens
The freedom of academics in universities to shape their own courses with minimal regulation or monitoring means that much depends on the views of the individual, rather than university policy. As Hardesty (1991) proposed, librarians will only be able to effect change in lecturers attitudes if they understand those attitudes.

Behrens refers to a number of American surveys which indicate that although faculty expect students to be proficient in library skills and find these lacking, the lecturers seldom undertake responsibility for library skill instruction (Behrens 1993, p. 12). It becomes evident that a positive attitude from faculty is vital if information skills are to be taught successfully. In short, lecturers’ attitudes can deny students the opportunity of learning independent information gathering skills.

Farmer (1992, p. 104) describes the barriers that faculty must overcome to implement information literacy and resource based learning programs as mostly attitudinal. Farmer summarises these attitudinal barriers as;

- “insufficient time” - the belief that there is a finite body of information to be transferred and that information literacy is an “add on” rather than an integrated aspect of the curriculum;
- “tried it and it does not work” - Farmer details a number of reasons why poorly conceptualised and implemented programs fall;
- “Not my problem” - in other words, abdication of responsibility.

Another barrier mentioned is the failure of institutions to support information literacy development.

Haworth’s study of Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) (1982b) concluded that user education is an area of librarianship undervalued by the majority of lecturers in the courses surveyed. Similar findings were made by Haws, Peterson and Shonrock (1989). Somewhat different assertions are made by Roe (1981, p.2) who states that educators “are eloquent about the crucial role of the library in their operations, and, even those who teach in a way which effectively discounts it, speak warmly of it”. Roe continues that many university teachers are more concerned with research than teaching and the library tends to be seen as a research resource — nothing to do with teaching.

By surveying current attitudes and approaches of staff toward external students’ use of libraries it is hoped that understandings will be obtained that could lead to staff development programs and changes in library services and librarian/academic relationships. As Hardesty suggests:

Librarians as stewards of the library, have a responsibility to inquiere into the faculty’s library-related attitudes. Librarians must develop an understanding of the needs and aspirations of the faculty. Through a better understanding of faculty’s library attitudes, librarians can enhance the library’s role in undergraduate education (1991, p.10).

The following section further describes those studies of similar nature to that described in this thesis.
Faculty Perceptions of the Information Needs of Tertiary Students

In 1982 when Haworth carried out her study into expectations of teaching staff concerning library use by external students at RMIT, she claimed that “no published study at all has been discovered of teaching staff expectations concerning library use by their external students, or of staff awareness of these students’ library use problems” (Haworth 1982a, p.153). Thomas and Ensor (1984) had made a similar statement in 1984 regarding teaching faculty’s attitudes towards bibliographical instruction. While my review of the literature has revealed relevant studies, the reported research in this area remains minimal. The small collection of published studies of similar conceptual focus to my own are outlined briefly in this section. Most of these studies however, differ either in their methodology, or, although of similar conceptual nature, focus on a different population, such as internal students or undergraduates. Methodologically similar studies will be discussed in the following section. The relationship between the findings of these studies and my own will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Haworth’s study (1982a) was based on the assumption that library use by students is related to faculty requirements with regard to the numbers of prescribed or recommended texts. The study aimed to investigate how teaching staff perceive their students’ use of the library and how well they anticipated that use by requesting the library to purchase course material. The study also sought to ascertain how far the teaching staff were aware of the desirability of cooperation with the library in the devising of user education programmes. In brief, Haworth recommends that “an increase in user education, both for students and academics, would be an effective method of increasing academics’ awareness of student and library problems in obtaining and providing recommended reading” (Haworth 1982b, p.172).

The Winter and Cameron study (1983) examined external students’ ‘attitudes’ toward library services in an attempt to analyse the way attitudes and use patterns “provide evidence for the retrospective advantages and disadvantages of the various methods of delivery”. Like Haworth, Winter and Cameron proposed that attitudes and beliefs regarding library services are important factors in the student’s decision to use them, an approach parallel to that adopted in this study.

Thomas and Ensor’s study (1984) claimed to measure teaching faculty’s attitudes toward bibliographic instruction. The authors found a connection between the manner in which teaching staff learned about libraries, as well as their own use of the library and the decision to employ formal instruction. Thomas and Ensor also refer to a former study by Read (Thomas and Ensor 1984, p.432) which found that former students of instruction were more likely to request library instruction for their own students.

Elton (1983, p. 145) refers to a project conducted by one of his students where both teachers and students were asked the question “how do you think students in this department should use the library”. Considerable discrepancies were found between the students’ perceptions of what they ought to do and what the staff felt the students ought to do and Elton states that as long as these discrepancies persist there will be inefficient use of the library.

Cook and Cook (1987) report on a study of faculty perspectives regarding educational support in off-campus courses. While examining a similar research
Information skills and the distance education student

research topic to my own, Cook and Cook’s study encompasses support services other than library.

Burge’s study (1988) titled ‘Developing Partnerships: An Investigation of Library-based Relationships with Students and Educators Participating in Distance Education in Northern Ontario’ directly addresses the connection between library use and course materials. Burge’s interviews of faculty, students and librarians requested information regarding the major difficulties in getting distance education students to use library services (1991). Factors revealed included the exclusion process, where libraries are built out of courses, course designers seeing no need to encourage students to use information gathering skills, the ‘last minute’ nature of some course planning and lack of knowledge amongst library staff about course requirements. The study found that library staff rarely discussed library services with course instructors.

The study at Queensland University of Technology described by Bruce (1990) incorporated a survey of Masters candidates and supervisors, asking them to comment on their perceptions of students’ need for information skills. This study revealed reticence amongst supervisors to compulsory formal instruction at postgraduate level while students were far more vocal about its importance and their desperate need for instruction.

Hardesty’s study (1991) titled Faculty and the Library: The Undergraduate Experience interviewed 40 lecturers in 7 tertiary institutions and is referred to by Behren (1993, p.13) as “one of the few extensive, scientific surveys”. Hardesty’s study had three main goals. The first was to develop an attitude scale which would accurately describe the library-related educational attitudes of undergraduate faculty members in the hope that others would replicate the scale at other institutions. The second was to reveal various elements or factors within library education attitudes using exploratory factor analysis to determine these elements. The third was to use the attitude scale developed to examine the relationships between library educational attitudes and various characteristics of the faculty.

This study reported that most lecturers are either not able or not willing to support undergraduates library use and many lecturers do not know why, how or when it is necessary for students to use the library. According to the findings, faculty did not give the issue of students’ library use much thought and consequently many lecturers had limited views about the role of the library in the learning process. The study found that local conditions, more so than previous experiences, influenced the faculty member’s attitude toward the library (Hardesty 1991, p.32). In other words, while individuals will vary in their attitudes to the library, the institutional culture is influential in the approach taken toward the library. Hardesty’s study supports the need for research at SCU to test institutional culture regarding library use by distance students.

Behrens’ case study (1993) of the University of South Africa (UNI.S.A) titled ‘Obstacles to user education for off-campus students: Lecturers’ attitudes to library skills’ portrays a very similar philosophical approach to that adopted in this study. While Behrens acknowledges that there are many barriers to teaching library skills to off-campus students she focuses upon faculty’s attitude towards the need for students to possess library skills as the less obvious but very real obstacle (Behrens 1993, p.11). Behrens’ study shows how several phenomena affect lecturers’ attitudes to library skills, and how these attitudes determine whether the students will have the opportunity of learning and applying information skills in their formal curricula. Behrens’ justification of her study is parallel to that presented here, namely that:
Chapter One

if faculty cooperation is essential for the successes of user education programmes, it stands to reason that the attitudes of lecturers towards library skills could affect the chances that students have of learning how to gather and utilize information effectively (Behrens 1993, p.11).

Behrens’ study found that at UNI.S.A. academics were “ignorant of library skills and of their importance to the learning process, and in some cases, had rarely considered such issues’ concluding that lecturing staff play a vital role in shaping students’ attitudes and approaches to the use of information sources. The study revealed a general feeling amongst faculty that a large number of students are not there to learn, but rather enrol for tertiary studies in order to obtain a qualification (Behrens 1993, p.16). While several conditions affecting the University of South Africa make this finding possibly of only local significance and limited generalisability, a local study by Regan and Regan (1995b; 1995a) indicates an overall ‘surface’ orientation of undergraduates at SCU on a Bigg’s Study Process Questionnaire (as referred to in footnote 37).

Graham’s study (1986, p.5) also found that library use is for most students purely a means to an end and the majority are motivated directly by the demands of the course.

Lebowitz’s survey of faculty perceptions of off-campus student library needs (1993) had aims similar to my own, namely to gain understanding of and assess needs of faculty teaching off-campus and to provide faculty with the opportunity to have input into design of library services. However her methodology is rather more limited than that of this study, relying on surveys with closed questions.

Steffen’s study (1987) into part-time faculty’s perspectives, attitudes and expectations about libraries used both questionnaire and telephone interviews. Steffen found that the majority of faculty in off-campus courses are in part-time positions. The implications of this are further discussed in Chapter 3.

Ruddy’s case study (1993) looks specifically at off-campus students at Cardinal Stritch College, Milwaukee (1993)54. The very low response rate of faculty55 is interesting as it would appear to indicate a lack of support, cooperation and hence value for libraries amongst those faculty members involved. The study concluded that although faculty professed a need for extensive library use, their assignments did not reflect this, and a number of students and some faculty indicated that research required for assignments comes from experience rather than academic research (it is acknowledged that this may be a reflection of the business orientation of courses offered at this institute).

Several studies have claimed that faculty in general are opposed to the concept of off-campus education at post-graduate level and consider it second-rate (Kascus and Aguilar 1988; Laverty 1988; Clark 1993)56.

Most studies in this area utilise closed response survey methods which limit the breadth of their findings (while allowing broader sampling). Such approaches were not felt to be appropriate given the aims of this study. However there were a number of studies which proved valuable in reflecting upon and designing my research methodology. These include those by Dodd (1984), Steffen (1987), Nunan (1991b), Lebowitz (1993) and Behrens (1993).

Dodd’s study (1984), while looking at students rather than staff, was relevant in that it claimed to examine ‘perceptions’. Both Cook and Cook (1987) and Dodd’s studies claim to be “objective”, which is, I believe, a flawed claim since ‘perceptions’, by nature, can never be objectively examined.
Ruddy (1993) utilised a questionnaire requiring yes/no answers and followed each response with space for comments. This method, while somewhat more open-ended than some was felt to force respondents into dichotomous positions and then to justify their response. I feel the positive methodology and analysis of these studies reveals very limited, structured attitudes, rather than the breadth of “perspectives” implied. It is hoped that the qualitative research design of this study can overcome the apparent weaknesses of these earlier studies.

In contrast to these studies, the research by Burge and associated writers (1988; 1988; 1989a; 1989b) is particularly valuable as it aims to “do more than simply collect descriptive statistics” but to “dig at the needs, opinions and preconceptions of the client group” (Burge, Snow et al. 1989b, p.4); aims similar to that adopted here. Their 1988 study (Burge, Snow et al. 1988) used open and closed questions in a field-tested questionnaire mailed to academics, librarians, public library staff, faculty and students.

Behrens’ study (1993), while inadequately described in the paper referred to would seem to be very similar in methodology to my own. Behrens assumed a grounded theory approach and conducted her study through in-depth interviews with purposive sampling of ten lecturers. From this study Behrens proposes a paradigm model of the theory, including causal conditions, the context, intervening conditions, action/interaction strategies and the consequences of these factors.

While unrelated to the specific field of investigation in hand, the study by Nunan (1991b) is worthy of note in that it is similar to my own focus. Nunan was working with a small group of six staff members from one faculty in a case-study approach. Nunan identified two methodologies for approaching the survey; individual unstructured interviews and a series of loosely structured group discussions. Like Nunan’s study, the research that informs this thesis also involves perceptions of academics regarding understandings, comprehensions, feelings and viewpoints (Nunan 1991b, p.388).

Hardesty used both qualitative and quantitative techniques to provide both depth and breadth to the results. Hardesty’s study does not compare methodologically to my own as he used an attitudinal scale developed through literature reviews, own knowledge and semi-structured interviews. However the method chosen for this study, semi-structured interviews, may be seen to be providing a local understanding from which Hardesty’s attitudinal scale could be later modified. In other words, it is thought that the overview obtained in this study may lead to the modification and then adoption of Hardesty’s attitude scale to the Southern Cross University context. A particularly interesting aspect of Hardesty’s sampling was the use of librarians to selectively sample faculty members such that half the faculty represented negative attitudes and half represented positive attitudes.
Concluding Comments

This literature review has traced the literature relating to the conceptual framework of this thesis as was described in the Introduction. Overall the literature draws a picture of inadequate understandings and professional cooperation and co-ordination between librarians and distance educators, in higher education. Yet it also draws a picture of a philosophical approach to teaching and learning which is potentially ripe for the embracement of information skill development.

As yet neither teachers nor librarians have assumed responsibility for the information skills of students and “promoting efficient use of resources has been nobody’s business” (Roe 1981, p.2). The implication drawn from this review is that distance educators are the key to facilitating information skill development by external students, and it is they that need to embrace its importance to learners. It is thus crucial that their current attitudes, values and perceptions are accounted for such that areas of need and directions of future development can be determined.

If distance educators accept the concept of lifelong learning and the need for “learning how to learn” as a goal, they will have to devote increasing energy to helping students acquire effective critical thinking skills, including use of libraries and information. Distance educators will have to offer independent learning activities and projects that encourage learners to exploit resources and services of libraries (Mathews 1991, p. 1).

Endnotes


2 These points have all been supported by various authors such as Crocker (1984), Burge (1989a) and Aguilar and Kascus (1991). Other authors highlight the need for library services in ensuring the quality of external courses (Cook and Cook 1987; Kascus and Aguilar 1988; Shklanka 1990; Appleton 1994; Wilson 1994), particularly in comparison to internal ones (Fisher 1986). The role of libraries in accreditation of off-campus programs in the U.S.A. is discussed by Simmons (1991).

3 The literature is replete with examples of studies into student library use patterns (Whitlatch 1983; Grosser and Bagnell 1989; Maticka 1989; Shklanka 1990; Hoy and Hale 1991; Cullen 1992; University of Central Queensland 1992; Appleton 1994; Cavanagh 1994a), evaluations of bibliographic instruction programs (Guskin et al. 1979; Farber 1989; Keenan 1989; Bazillion and Brown 1992; Craig and Schultz 1993) and recommendations for “promoting” such services (University of Central Queensland 1992).

4 George and Love (1994) discuss the “information system” of which libraries are part. In a broader sense, the library is only one part of a students’ potential information reservoir. The library could, however act as an interface and referral base for a wealth of other electronic and print based information sources.
This point is alluded to by Roe who states that ‘the orientation of libraries and the way resources are managed may also contribute significantly to maintaining the gap (between teaching/learning and resources), in spite of the user education boom; for example, by excessive preoccupation with internal efficiency - the library for the library’s sake (1981, p.69)

This is also suggested in the absence of mention, even in a section on ‘support’ in Schiosser and Anderson’s Distance Education: Review of the Literature (1994) and in Holmberg’s recent and extensive bibliography on distance education (Holmberg 1990). It should be stated that this situation applies not only in distance education, but in higher education in general, a point made strongly by Roe who states that ‘there are various possible explanations for the curious absence of reference to resources and their use in education literature even where they must obviously play a significant part. One ... is that resources are simply taken for granted... another is that ignorance and self-deception about resources and about students’ ability to handle them are rife” (1981, p.14).

This point was made by Bebrens when she stated that there is very little reported research on the role which faculty attitude plays in the effective teaching of library skills and that “this deficiency (in research) becomes more conspicuous if one considers the vast body of literature on more general user education issues such as methods, modes and particular programmes” (Behrens 1993, p. 12). Burge et. al. also states (1988, p.12) that “very seldom have adult educators given their perspectives for the library literature”.

Authors presenting this idea include Crocker (1984), Laverty (1988), MacTaggart (1991), Simmons (1991), Relf (1993) and the University of Central Queensland (1992). Burge (1989a; 1989b) terms this the ‘developing partnership model’. Involvement of librarians in the course team has also been discussed by several authors (Dale 1978; Lynch and Seibert 1980; Crocker 1986).

A number of papers, which have described attempts at building better relationships between teaching staff and libraries or including librarians in curriculum and course design, indicate the many difficulties. Lynch (1980) for example describes an experimental program at the University of Illinois where despite librarians being given faculty status, and a major emphasis being placed on teaching responsibilities, difficulties emerged in developing assignments which would serve the ends of a course while fostering library skills, and in convincing faculty to include library skills in instructional programs. Librarians found they were never fully accepted into the faculties and abandoned attempts at being included in faculty activities. Instead they favoured inviting faculty to join with library project groups, since they stated that faculty had no problem being accepted by librarians.

These writers recommend that librarians be in dialogue with academics in planning and encouraging that courses are not totally self-contained and encouraging course design whereby students research topics individually. Such recommendations are made in the light of such research as the UCQ study which found that despite all of the efforts made in encouraging students to use libraries during the trial, nearly half of the students did not use the on-line catalogue and 65% did not use the CD-ROM database (University of Central Queensland 1992, p.50).

As Moore (1986, p. 15) states, “there is a tendency for schools and universities to be preoccupied with teaching activities and neglectful of learning programs. By encouraging a focus on individuals, the central aim of the educational process, that of helping the student to acquire knowledge, will once again be realised”.

It is doubtful whether education for librarianship has embraced these concepts sufficiently, if at all. In most library and information science curricula, adult education principles and practice are entirely omitted. For instance in a major Australian library science education program, that of Charles Sturt University (1995) the curriculum (i.e. the outline of subject codes) does not address educational theory or practice at all; nor does it claim to deal with information literacy or user education, programs one would consider essential in Reference Services subjects, if not as a subject in their own right. While Aguilar (1991, p.374) calls for specialised training in the
library science curriculum to encourage best delivery and research and scholarship to create a body of literature and Booker (1991) calls for in-service training, it could also be argued that inclusion of values for information seeking skills development in the curricula of courses such as the Deakin run Distance Education diploma, degree and Masters programs would also lead to improvements in future distance education provision.

13 Burge (1983; 1988; 1989) is the key writer to emphasise this connection, arguing that “an acceptance of educative roles for librarians is developed only with a clear understanding of how and why adults learn” (1983, p.513). Burge discusses the growth of a facilitative approach from the recognition of adult learning patterns. Her conviction is that ‘adult educators must be more concerned with dialogue about information rather than the delivery of information; with learning processes rather than learning products; with the learner first, rather than with the teacher first” (Burge 1991, p.3).


15 Many writers have acknowledged the “conceptual confusion” regarding the definitions and terminology of self-directed learning (Chene 1983; Brookfield 1984; Candy 1990). Related terms which can be seen to be in various degrees synonymous with self-directed learning include “independent learning” (Candy 1990, p.1 Gow and Kember 1990; Paul 1990, p.32 Juler 1991), “lifelong learning” (Smith 1982; Candy 1990, p.15) and “autonomous learning” (Chene 1983; Brookfield 1986, p.56-59). The literature is now also focusing on related concepts such as “interdependence” and “interaction” (Daniel and Marquis 1979; Daniel 1989; Juler 1991; Moore 1994). The term self-direction was chosen for the purpose of this essay as it does not imply segregation from the educator as do the terms “independent” and “autonomous”. Self-direction carries with it the values of learner-centred approaches, as the “self” is recognised as primal. The term is also clearly able to remain in appliance in the institutional context which is of concern in this paper.

16 For Moore, self-directed study implied the freedom of students to choose goals and resources, and to determine their rate of progress. It also involves self-motivation and self-evaluation. Bagnall (1989) succinctly defines educational self-direction as being the “educational expression of individual’s autonomy” and like Candy differentiates between self-management and self-determination Verduin and Clarke (1991, p.125) see self-directedness as a hierarchy of skills including skill in discussion, in independent study, an ability to learn from various media, recognise important and unimportant data and record meaning of important information in abbreviated form, an ability to write well and an ability to research and write on topics related to coursework.

17 The institutional approach involves observing how adults learn outside educational institutions and applying this to the institutional context (Moore 1977; Wedemeyer in Keegan 1986; Moore 1986) while the non-institutional or autodidactic approach sees self-direction as applying only (or properly) to learning situations outside educational institutions (Smith 1982; Leslie 1987). Other writers recognise the dichotomy and deal with the concepts separately (Moore 1986; Candy 1990). The school of thought adopted in this paper is the first. However the value is recognised of challenging “the false dichotomy in which institutionally sponsored learning is seen as purposeful and deliberate and learning occurring in non-institutional contexts is held to be serendipitous, ineffective and wholly experiential” (Brookfield 1984, p.60).

18 In this sense, the approach of Chene (1983) is adopted — that learning involves collaboration, exchange and participation. Self directed learners often need assistance because they do not know what resources are available or what activities are necessary for learning and there is a need for them to confirm their judgements regarding their learning to ensure everything necessary for success is done. Self-direction and independence, in this sense does not depend on isolation but the “degree of control exercised by the student in a given situation” (Juler 1991, p.19).
The Adult Independent Learning Project, described by Carr (1986) presents a model of learner and librarian working together to create an “ideal seeking system” (Wilson 1994, p.259). Wilson states that this challenges one of the conventional beliefs that adult independent learners are “socially independent, analytical, inner-directed, self-identified”. Such an approach is reflective of that of Reif (1993) and derives from the concept of a third generation of distance education (1993), that of dialogue in distance education, as described by Evans and Nation (1989b; 1989a).


Knowles (1970) promotes the establishment of a climate of mutual inquiry and “dialogue”, involving the recognition that the reader brings experiences, ideas and views with them to the reading. “The real issue for distance educators is providing immediate and sustained two-way communication between teacher and student so that learner needs, values and perspectives are balanced with those of the teacher and decisions are made collaboratively” (Garrison 1988, p. 126). It is implicit that this nurturance and mutuality requires a high degree of interaction and dialogue.

Knowles (1970, p.67) recognised libraries as resources for learning, along with peer groups, individuals, seminars etcetera and Moore (1977, p.9) refers to self-direction as freedom to choose resources. Daniel and Marquis (1979) discuss many aspects of interaction and independence including counselling, tutoring, and facilitating group meetings. However no mention is made of interacting with library services. Verduin and Clarke (1991, p.125) mention the skill of research and learning from various media.

Considerable discussion of the nature of information literacy is provided in the proceedings to the conference ‘Information Literacy: the Australian Agenda’ held in Adelaide in December, 1992. At this conference Robinson (1993) defined information literacy as “the ability of individuals to find, read and evaluate the information needed to function as productive members of society” (Booker 1993, p.4). The American Library Association’s Presidential Committee further defined it as both being able to recognise when you have a need for information and being able to identify the kind of information that can help in that particular situation, to locate it, evaluate it, organise it and use it effectively. In other words, learning how to learn (Breivik 1992; Booker 1993, p.10).

‘Self-contained’ refers to course materials which are designed to fulfil all the needs of the student enrolled in that course.

The issue of information literacy for lifelong learning, particularly in times of rapid change becomes a strong argument in favour of self-directed approaches (Knowles 1970, p.18). As Candy (1990, p.51) continues, the educational environment presents a relatively stable, structured and predictable environment in which to gain knowledge, practice and learn how to access information. This contrasts to the real world where the need for learning is more chaotic, random, urgent and diverse. If the education system in which the student find him or herself (i.e. teaching staff, teaching materials and the overall philosophy of the teaching institution) actively supports and encourages self-directed learning, then the student will inevitably be drawn towards the pursuit of their own resources, and hence libraries.

As the UCQ study states (1992, p.3) “all students regardless of mode of study must be able to research a topic independently and be able to apply that ability in their professional lives for personal, corporate and national benefit.”

Similar moves have been made overseas. In particular, Simmons’ article (1992) discusses the growing recognition of information literacy development in accreditation processes. This
article discusses the expected role of faculty in information literacy development. Jones (1992) also presents an illustration of information literacy being embraced by the educational system in Minnesota, USA.

29 Resource based learning requires students to critically analyse and synthesise information from a variety of sources, with the goal of developing students as active learners who can obtain, integrate and apply information from diverse sources (Farmer and Mech 1992, p.2).

30 Several writers including Haworth (1982b; 1982a) and Roe (1981), speaking in non-institutional contexts have described the library as a ‘surrogate tutor’; “a library need not be and is not always a supplement to a teaching programme. In certain circumstances, it can be and often is a rival educational process” (Roe 1981, p.21). However as was previously stated, the context in which self-directed learning is addressed in this thesis is an institutional one, and the library is not being viewed as a rival to the faculty process.

31 A good illustration was the workshop facilitated by Paul Lupton at the 1992 Information Literacy Conference (Booker 1993, p.136-8) entitled “Course design and delivery: Librarians and teacher librarians working with educators to maximise information literacy skills for students”. The aim of this workshop was to “develop a set of understandings and strategies which should facilitate the delivery of courses to integrate the skills of information literacy, so that the students acquire these skills in the context of their studies”. The workshop’s recommendations included the explicit recognition of information literacy skills in assessment, the idea that librarians think laterally about resource supply and that teachers are encouraged to consider the resource implications of assignments; the increase in cooperation between teaching staff, librarians and students leading to greater transfer of skills and confidence across disciplines; shared understanding of roles, responsibilities and expectations between information professionals and educators, and issues of shared understanding and increased communication.

32 Dekkers et. al. (1992, p.384) state that “a feature of distance education is that it caters for a student-centred paradigm in which the focus is more on learning than on teaching and in which students are encouraged to pose questions and negotiate criteria for their own study and assessment.” Verduin and Clark (1991, p.167-168) see distance education programs as being personalised and affording students more opportunity for individualised instruction. Moore (1986, p.23) has acknowledged that distance education is potentially a more efficient and effective force for achieving enhanced learner autonomy than face-to-face approaches, but that it can also equally produce greater control by teachers and educational institutions.

33 Chene (1983), in discussing the inappropriateness of the term “autonomous” learner, states that the teacher cannot disappear without reappearing in another form, since learners have to test their knowledge against somebody else. A similar point is made by Juler (1990, p.11) who states that interaction with people often camouflages a discourse between at least two people and a text. Hence when textual resources are accessed than they become a “new teacher”.

34 The ‘hidden curriculum’ refers to learning outcomes that are either unintended by the teacher or are intended, but not openly acknowledged to the learners. It is concerned, particularly with values, norms, attitudes and skills students learn independently of cognitive subject matter. Such messages are usually non-verbal, or embedded in the deep structure of discourse (Husen and Postlethwaite 1994, p. 2586). The literature relating to this concept is explored in more detail by Husen and Postlethwaite.

35 As Paul notes (1989, p.187), pre-packaged course materials, may carry undue authority for many students, and because they are highly visible to academic peers as well as students, courses tend to be overly heavy in content, encouraging students to concentrate on digesting content, rather than focusing on meaning and application. Paul continues that courses tend to be built around prescribed and supplementary reference materials which while logical and helpful, do not encourage students to search out their own sources or develop library skills. Furthermore, because of diminished contact with students and staff, students are less apt to challenge and question what they read.
“Macro” design is used in this thesis to refer to those design features of instructional packages which can promote self-directed learning, such as assessment approach, access to the subject literature, content structure and the ‘hidden curriculum’ (i.e. the values, attitudes and approaches of those producing the instructional materials; faculty and instructional designers). This definition excludes “micro” design features such as headings, overviews, questions, pre-tests and page layout such as are discussed extensively by authors such as Marland and Store (1982), Marland (1990), Parer (1988), Valcke (1993) and others. This is not to say that these aspects are not important to student learning but that these features are less integrally related to the promotion of self-directed approaches. This “macro” aspect of instructional design is not well defined or discussed in the literature. Parer (1988), for instance, in providing his summation of the four major textual components for course materials does not account for what I would term “macro” design features.

The deep approach can be paralleled to our discussion of self-direction although the latter is a more widely encompassing term. As Gow and Kember (1990, p.308) state, “there is more to being an independent learner than adopting a deep approach, but it is a precondition of independence.” Deep and surface approaches are discussed in depth by Biggs (1987, p.11) who developed a study processes questionnaire (SPQ) to measure students’ motives and strategies against three criteria, surface, deep and achieving. The SPQ of Biggs has been used by Regan and Regan (1995a) to survey first year students at Southern Cross University and the results analysed in relation to age, gender and faculty variations. The findings of this research are referred to later in this thesis.

This changing role of instructional designers is addressed also by Valcke et. al. (1993, p.97).

In other words, as Relf states “the pedagogy and organisation of notes does not necessarily encourage communication and interactivity” (Relf 1993, p. 10-1 1). This finding is also supported by Whitlatch (1983), Steffen (1987), Burge (1988; 1988; 1991), Latham (1991), Cook and Cook (1987), Winter and Cameron (1983) and Haworth (1982a). Haworth’s study (1982a) found that in some institutions up to 50% of faculty believe that off campus students receive enough material in study guides and readers to complete courses satisfactorily. Burge’s study (1988) found that 90.3% of instructors indicated that either all or most of the material required by students to complete their course are provided. Burge also investigated the role library staff played in course design, documenting only a “small involvement” (1988, p.37). 60.8% of instructors expressed an opinion that library staff have a role to play in the course design process. Although this is significant, it is not carried through in practice, with 63.8% responding that in course development, they do not involve librarians at all (Burge, Snow et al. 1988, p.37-38). Similar results have been obtained from students. The UCQ study (1992) found that the most common reason given by students for not using libraries was “no need” (14-19%). These figures refer to postgraduate students, a group we would expect to be required by teaching staff to be information literate. This finding is also supported by Whitlatch (1983) and Steffen (1987) and Winter and Cameron (1983) who quote a figure of 9.6% of students stating that study guides and materials were generally sufficient for all the students’ information needs. Burge (1991) reported that 67% of students reported they received all materials required for their course, and it is thought that this difference phrasing of the question produced the greatly diverse results. Whitlatch (1983) indicates that for more than forty years, student use of libraries (or lack there of) and teachers’ views toward the library have not significantly changed.

Winter and Cameron continue that the receipt of readers (i.e. study guides and books of readings) was statistically significant in its relationship with the student’s expectations of academic success, their expectations to go on to further study and their confidence in using libraries to find study materials (Winter 1984, p.103).

Costing of library services to external students has been addressed extensively by Cavanagh (1991) and University of Central Queensland (1992).

This idea is supported by numerous other writers including Marland et. al. (1990) and Dekkers et. al. (1992), who found that the main factor motivating day-to-day study by distance
education students is assignment work and exams. Sharp (1990) continues that students tend to use deep approaches where evaluation is of lesser importance, is relatively infrequent or of a different type than is normally used. Sharp also states that deep approaches to learning tend to be found in project type courses, this being supported by Biggs (1987) and Gow and Kember (1990). An evaluation which requires the student only to regurgitate material obtained through lectures and required reading virtually forces the student to use a surface approach... an evaluation which requires the student to apply knowledge... to the solution of problems ... cannot be tackled without a deep understanding” (Sharp 1990, p.334).

Graham (1986, p.2) mentions such changes as the swing toward seminar and tutorial teaching, the development of assignments requiring a greater degree of independent work, including project learning, extended essays and open exams. Graham believes that these changes have been brought about as a result of factors such as; the sheer growth in knowledge, awareness that it is impossible to cover all the disciplinary ground in 3-4 years of the undergraduate degree, interdisciplinary courses, the rise in vocational post-graduate courses and the lessening distinction between undergraduate and postgraduate study. It is interesting that Graham also does not add the growth in recognition of self-directed learning and facilitatory teaching styles. More recently, decreases in funding and increases in class sizes in higher education have stimulated renewed economic rationalism which has prompted renewed changes in distance education provision.

Competency based training (CBT) is being embraced by several sections of the University, particularly those working with the Industry Partners. The relationship of these approaches to the study is discussed in Chapter Three. Competency Based Training (CBT) was adopted as the approach to be taken to training in Australia in 1989 by the Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training (MOVEET). The essence of CBT is to concentrate on the end product — on what people can do as a result of training. Competency is defined by the National Training Board (in Worsnop 1993, p.3) as a focus on what is expected of an employee in the workplace, rather than on the learning process, and embodies the ability to transfer and apply skills and knowledge to new situations and environments. Unless the CBT program explicitly lists information literacy skills as a required competency they are unlikely to be addressed by such programs, however an example of where this is occurring is provided by Tierney (1992).

As Graham continues, “while it is both natural and sensible to obtain information in the easiest form “failure to look beyond the most basic of services can lead to ineffective use of material and raises questions about the form both of teaching courses and of reader instruction” (Graham 1986, p.6).

Hardesty discusses several definitions of the term “attitude”, referring to Allport (1968) as offering the following widely used and accepted definition — “a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive of dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situations with which it is related.” Attitude has two important aspects - first, individuals learn attitudes and second attitudes relate to behaviour (Hardesty 1991, p.11). Hardesty continues that sociologists and psychologists often define attitude through the likelihood of a specific behaviour occurring. The ultimate reference of attitude is behaviour — we cannot see attitudes directly but must infer them from behaviour. Hardesty also provided a more specific definition of “library education attitudes” being “attitudes toward the role of the library in achieving the goals and purposes of undergraduate education and toward methods of using the library in achieving these goals and purposes” (Hardesty 1991, p.16)

For the purposes of this study, the definition is not limited to undergraduate education.

Haworth’s study (1982b) revealed that lecturers usually confined their user education programmes to internal students and of those who did not make arrangements for such programmes, 20% had not considered the idea and most of these did not know that library user education programmes designed for specific subjects were available. Those lecturers of courses not requiring on-campus requirements aimed to obviate library use difficulties by the comprehensiveness of course notes.

Haws, Peterson and Shonrock (1989) describe a study of faculty attitudes towards a basic library skills course. Results indicated that faculty members prefer to have the responsibility of
teaching library skills taken out of their hands. Despite beliefs that freshmen do not have the necessary skills to do library research and that it was important for students to know how to use the library between 12% and 50% of faculty required library research, only 22% indicated that bibliographic instruction was integral to their course objectives and only 10% used library staff to present course-related bibliographic instruction.

49 To this end, the study’s questions related to issues such as the extent to which lecturers have their required reading supplied directly to students, the extent to which lecturers expect students to use the teaching institution’s library for required reading, the extent to which lecturers endeavour to have all required and recommended reading for their students held by the teaching institution’s library, the extent to which students are given a free choice in selection of library materials used in coursework and the extent to which lecturer’s take part in the teaching institutions’ library user education programme.

50 While there are many valuable aspects to Hardesty’s attitudinal study there are also several major flaws. The directions which precede the questionnaire are highly subjective and value laden, stating that “The academic library is an important part of every college and university. Nevertheless, considerable evidence exists that many undergraduate students neither use nor know how to use the academic library”. Such pre-emptive statements would highly influence responses. Furthermore, respondents are asked to supply their names, meaning that anonymity would not prompt honest and open responses. Hardesty’s attitudinal scale with be further discussed in Chapter 4.

51 Hardesty analysed factors as they related to faculty members’ characteristics in four groups; library-resistant faculty members, library-minimisation faculty members, library traditionalisms and library active faculty members. The characteristics of these four groups can be used to examine and compare the approaches of SCU staff.

52 These include the geographic dispersion of students, shortage of library resources, and insufficient staff or funding available for user education programmes.

53 For instance poor schooling which is a legacy of the political history of the country mean that many “freshmen” come from environments where there are inadequate or no library facilities and hence students tend to arrive at university with a lack of library and information skills and little or no library ethos (Behrens 1993, p.13). Furthermore, if the lecturer has to spend additional time teaching reading and writing skills... the need for library skills is unlikely to be a priority in the lecturer’s opinion (Behrens 1993, p.17).

54 Ruddy poses such questions as the expectations of instructors for their students’ knowledge and use of the library, the perceptions students have of these services and their level of satisfaction with them and the expectations the libraries have of the faculty’s understanding of a modern library.

55 Of 130 surveys distributed by Ruddy to faculty, only 24 (18.5%) were returned. Eighteen of the 24 faculty members who responded believed that their students could not complete their courses without the use of a library. However only half responded that they required their students to use library resources for their modules. The other 50%, Ruddy reports, gave confused or contradictory answers.

56 For instance Clark’s study (1993) investigated the attitudes of both participating and non-participating faculty toward distance education itself. Clark’s questions focused on general receptivity to distance education, the relationship between professional characteristics and attitudes toward distance education and the connection between previous distance education experiences and receptivity and attitudes toward different distance education media and methods. Clark’s study used a brief questionnaire, with multiple choice and three open-ended questions.
Chapter 2

Methodology and Data Analysis

Introduction

As previously stated, the aim of my research is to examine the approaches of SCU distance educators toward the information needs of their external students. The exploratory nature and limitations of this study, my examination of the local situation at SCU and my literature review strongly influenced the methodological approach and selection of methods. This chapter will outline the methodology adopted in this research, describe the population and sample and the methods used for data collection. It will then describe the approach taken to, and the methods employed for, data analysis.

As will be further described, a grounded theory approach is adopted and hence because of the theoretical sampling and constant comparative analysis employed, there is considerable overlap between the processes of data analysis and data collection. Discussions of the two inter-related processes are thus inseparable within the contexts of this research and hence their discussion within this chapter overlaps.

A Post-Positivist Framework

The paradigm from which the research will be approached is “post-positivist”. This approach is appropriate for this thesis in that the research does not aim to explain and predict but to achieve understanding. The paradigmatic position can be described as illuminative or interpretative. Illuminative research, as described by Parlett and Hamilton aims to understand what is really going on in a complex organisational setting and attempts to make sense of the multiple realities of complex phenomena (in Morgan 1991, p.1). The emphasis is on description, interpretation and understanding rather than measurement, prediction and control. Interpretative research is that which “seeks to uncover, interpret and illuminate meanings of what is happening, being done, being understood or being interpreted by those involved in the activity under investigation” (Nunan 1991a, p.26). In many respects this study also assumes a phenomenological stance as it is interested in obtaining people’s descriptions of their own consciousness.

This paradigmatic approach was adopted because it was consistent with the type of knowledge being sought. Attitudes, values and perceptions are themselves highly subjective and the decision to study these aspects of individuals’ personas is founded in the belief that “in order to understand the way human beings behave in given situations, one must understand how the actors define that situation” (Foddy 1994, p.15). The study is inductive in nature and based on a grounded approach. Concepts, insights and understandings of teaching staffs attitudes will derive from the data collected. The research aims to be exploratory and to uncover as broad a foundation of information as possible which could be used as the basis for future investigations.
This choice of methodology has been informed by the literature concerning qualitative research techniques and approaches (Bogdan and Biklen 1982; Lofland and Lofland 1984; Taylor and Bogdan 1984; Lincoln and Guba 1986; Patton 1990; Tesch 1990; Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Miles and Huberman 1994).

The flow of stages in post-positivist research tends to be emergent and non-sequential as is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

![Figure 2.1 The non-sequential flow of stages in post-positivist research (derived from Caulley 1991).](image)

As has been established in the previous chapter, the methodological approach taken in this study differs from that assumed by many researchers investigating this area to date.

An interpretive paradigm informs the study in the belief that understandings of social situations can only be achieved through interaction with that social world and learning what is meaningful or relevant to people or how they experience their everyday lives (Newman 1994) — in other words, their construction of reality. Attitudes, values and perception are internally experienced senses of reality. Given my belief that social reality is based on social interactions and socially constructed meanings (Newman 1994, p.63) investigation of this subjective sense of reality is crucial for understanding of social life.
Chapter Two  Methodology and Data Analysis

Qualitative research is frequently criticised in relation to its trustworthiness — that is, to what extent can we place confidence in the outcomes of the study? Do we believe what the research has reported? (Foddy 1994; Maykut and Morehouse 1994, p. 145). Criticisms of qualitative research methodologies focus upon issues such as:

a) the probability that observations are selectively reported;
b) the impossibility of gauging the extent to which responses are typical;
c) that the act of conducting the research influences the respondent’s behaviour;
d) that interpretations typically have low reliability because of the low level of control over selection of data for analysis and the difficulty of replicating findings1.

However by providing a detailed description of the research process and outcomes the reader is provided with a basis for judging the credibility of a study. Thus a richly detailed, ideographic representation of the research is an essential requirement for qualitative research and is provided in this thesis.

Despite acknowledged limitations of qualitative research methodologies it is felt that in the context of this study the potential benefits of such an approach far outweigh the problems. While many of these problems are in part overcome by the analysis methods employed, every attempt will be made to account for them during data analysis.

Methods

From within this methodology decisions were then made regarding methods for data collection. It was decided that given the time limitations and exploratory nature of the study it would be best to conduct in-depth interviews with a small number of people. Data was thus derived from the interaction of myself (the interviewer) and the interviewees.

The Population and Sample

The population the study focuses on are the distance educators of SCU who were directly involved in developing and delivering external courses in Spring Semester 1995: ‘Distance educators’ are defined in the introduction to this thesis. Each faculty of the University which offered external units was included in sampling. To determine details of the population each faculty was approached by means of a letter (see Appendix B) and follow up phone calls and/or e-mail and visits to the external studies unit within each faculty. This occurred at the beginning of Spring Semester, 19952.

From the information which was provided, tables were collated and a code allocated to each distance educator. These tables and codes are included in Appendix C. The total number of distance educators identified was 77. From these tables it was possible to determine the composition of external staffing across the faculties and the average number of units in which each staff member was involved, as shown in Table 2.1.
Table 2.1 Composition of faculty teaching external students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Number of individual staff involved</th>
<th>Number of units</th>
<th>Average no. external units per individual</th>
<th>Faculty % of population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because no attempt was being made to generalise from the sample studied to the larger population it was not necessary to use random sampling. The study aimed to uncover a breadth of attitudes, perceptions and values, thus it was preferable to aim for maximum variation. Hence purposive sampling was used to select ‘information rich’ cases for study in depth. Flexibility had been allowed for in sample size estimations.

It was decided that the study would firstly target distance educators on the basis of two criteria;

   a) the number of external units in which they were involved
   b) the number of external students enrolled in these units

It was assumed that educators with a significant workload in terms of these criteria could provide valuable information in terms of experience in either/both external development or delivery. Initially, educators with an above faculty average on the two above criteria were considered for sampling. These decisions are illustrated in Appendix C.

Nine distance educators were sampled during data collection. Eight of these were selected from the faculty provided information. One other, an instructional designer, was selected because he was referred to by many interviewees and seemed to be in a position of university-wide influence and involvement. As a proportion of the total population of distance educators at SCU (i.e. 77 individuals) the sample was reasonably representative, as shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Breakdown of the population and sample by Faculty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>% of population</th>
<th>Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>25% (see endnote 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This method of selecting ‘information rich’ cases meant that the sample did not resemble the population of interest, as the majority of interviewees had above average external workloads. Furthermore, part-time staff tended not to have been included in staff lists, although wherever possible these people were considered in discussions with full-time staff. However, as previously described, the sample did not aim to be representative and potential bias could be accounted for in future studies. Recognition of these characteristics of the sample will be shown to be accounted for during analysis.

**Approaching Potential Participants**

Each selected distance educator was sent a Plain Language Statement, as provided in Appendix D. To the extent that it would not overtly affect the findings, respondents were informed of the aims of the study. Both the letter of initial contact with interviewees and the introductory statement are based on the premise that it is better that respondents know the overall purpose of the study and the purpose of individual questions (Foddy 1994, p.71). These letters were then followed up by phone or e-mail contact. The issue of people’s willingness and availability to participate in the study also affected sampling. Of the 14 distance educators approached 9 took part in the study.

**Ethical Considerations**

In preparing and conducting this research consideration was given to any potential sources of ethical concern. The only potential threat was foreseen to relate to the confidentiality of respondents, and conduct of the research project was aimed at maintaining this confidentiality at all times. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary and all teaching staff interviewed were asked to sign a consent form before the interview in which confidentiality and anonymity were assured (see Appendix E).

The research proposal was approved by the Ethics Committees of both Deakin University and SCU as well as the Registrar of SCU. The research also complied with the draft Code of Ethics of the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia (1995).

**Interviewing for Data Collection**

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were employed for primary data collection. Interviewing techniques were chosen in preference to surveys or questionnaires as they allow opportunity for clarification and summarisation and to explore atypical responses. In-depth interviews provide the opportunity for interviewees to express, in their own words, their own perspectives on their lives, experiences and situations (Taylor and Bogdan 1984, p.77). Such self-expressed responses were crucial to this study’s aim of gathering data on attitudes, values and perceptions. Interviews also allow for tacit knowledge to be gleaned, features necessitated by the nature of the research project.

The very nature of the information this study attempts to reveal is inherently problematic. It is well recognised that respondents’ attitudes, beliefs and opinions are extraordinarily unstable and that sometimes small changes in wording produce major changes in response (Foddy 1994, p.3). Despite these recognised problems the basis of the qualitative methodology is that “in order to understand the way human beings behave in a given situation, one must understand how the
In conducting the interviews, care was taken to avoid influencing the responses of interviewees. Interviews require the suspending of beliefs, perspective and dispositions (Taylor and Bogdan 1984, p.6) and the assumption of a neutral, observational role. Questioning techniques were informed by the established literature on qualitative data collection (Stewart and Cash 1974; Spradley 1979; Taylor and Bogdan 1984; Douglas 1985; Minichiellos et al. 1990; Foddy 1994).

While the purpose of the interview, in the context of this study, was to illuminate the subjective responses of the interviewee it is recognised that “although people’s verbal accounts may lend insight into how they think about the world and how they act, there can be a great discrepancy between what they say and what they actually do” (Taylor and Bogdan 1984, p.1). It must be acknowledged that individual’s impressions and reflections on their own thoughts and actions are not only subjective but situational. The context of the interview may well affect the responses given. There are also recognised problems in assuming that respondents have the information required by the researcher (Foddy 1994) or that they are capable of describing their internalised states. However the nature of the group under study, tertiary distance educators, meant that I could expect interviewees to have well established communication, reflection and critical analysis skills.

For the purpose of this study it is recognised that these limitations exist and every attempt is made throughout analysis to acknowledge where data may have been influenced by the limitations of the interviewing process. However, despite these limitations the data able to be gathered from the interview is invaluable in the context of this study. It should be remembered that the study claims to be examining teaching staffs attitudes, values and perceptions. These will always be subjective by nature and further studies will be necessary to ascertain whether these stated approaches are in fact reflected in practice.

### The Interview Guide

Although the ideal of the project was to follow an emergent design and conceptual framework, time and sample limitations necessitated a degree of prior focusing for data collection to facilitate data reduction. Interviews were based on an interview guide but I remained free to build on conversations and diverge as required. A small amount of demographic information was also obtained-through the use of a short questionnaire included in Appendix F.

The interview guide developed for this project was structured firstly through broad categories of inquiry and under each of these headings subheadings derived from the interviews, as described by Patton (1990). The interview questions were influenced to a large extent by the literature review. It was felt that any areas which other researchers had found to influence teaching staffs approaches to distance education or library use should be explored in this study.

Questioning techniques were informed by the literature (Patton 1990; Maykut and Morehouse 1994). The majority of questions posed were open in nature, allowing interviewees to respond in their own words, indicating their level of information, their salient issues and the strength of their feelings. I aimed to see what sort of issues teaching staff would raise themselves with minimal probing. As Foddy notes (1994), open questions allow complex motivational influences and frames of reference to be identified. Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p.91) suggest that factual and brief information is best gathered at the end of the interview, as its
collation can be perceived as intrusive. Following this principle, demographic information was collected verbally at the conclusion of the interview. If time was running short, however, the questionnaire was left with the interviewee or forwarded to them after the interview.

Interviews were transcribed in full and then returned to participants (with the letter included in Appendix G) who were asked to make any changes if they felt the transcript was not an accurate representation of their intended response or if they had anything to add.

Data Analysis: A Grounded Theory Approach

Qualitative data analysis entails an effort to formally identify themes and to construct hypotheses (ideas) as they are suggested by data and to demonstrate support for those themes and hypotheses (Bogdan and Taylor 1975). It involves:

. . . working with data, organising it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesising it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others (Bogdan and Biklen 1982, p.145).

Within this thesis data analysis was approached from a ‘grounded theory’ framework. The grounded theory approach involves two interrelated elements; theoretical sampling and constant comparative analysis (Battersby 1981). While the approach to sampling has been described previously in this chapter, this section will describe the interplay between the sampling and constant comparative analysis.

In qualitative studies, data analysis occurs concurrently with data collection. Data is analysed inductively through categorisation and comparison and the search for relationships within the data. This analysis process is systematic and comprehensive, but not rigid. Tesch (1990, p.115) provides a useful framework for analysis, referring to the concepts of “de-contextualization” and “re-contextualization” Similarly, Miles and Huberman (1994, p.10-11) view qualitative data analysis as three concurrent flows of activity; data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction is the process of simplifying and transforming the “raw” data of written field notes into a form more amenable to analysis and conclusion drawing. This is a continuous process through the research project. Data display is the process of organising information to permit drawing conclusions and action taking. In qualitative analysis data takes the form of text which is cumbersome, complex and poorly structured.

Miles and Huberman argue that better display of data is the major avenue to valid qualitative analysis. The large quantity of unstructured data which is collected from interviews is analysed inductively through categorisation and comparison, and the search for relationships within the data. A code-and-retrieve process occurs, consisting of labelling passages of data according to what they are about, and then collecting identically labelled passages. As with the other stages of data analysis, conclusion drawing and verification occurs continuously throughout the research process. This process involves noting regularities, patterns, explanations, causal flows and propositions.

Traditional approaches to data analysis such as the ‘Cut-up-and-put-in-folders’ approach and the file-card system described by Bogdan and Biklen (1982) are tedious. Recent advances in computer programs provide many advantages to
manual methods. Although this project is relatively small, it was decided that it would be well worth developing a sound analysis system which could be utilised in later projects.

After reading both descriptive and evaluative literature relating to possible data analysis software programs (Tesch 1990; Fielding and Lee 1993; Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Miles and Huberman 1994; Qualitative Solutions and Research 1994b; Richards and Richards 1994; Lewins 1995; Rodgers 1995) it was decided to use the computerised software package NUD.IST.

**NUD.IST and the Analysis of Data**

Q.S.R. NUD.IST\(^{13}\) was chosen because of its extreme versatility and flexibility. NUD.IST utilises a tree-structured index system to graphically display theory development and can produce reports to show stages and thought processes in the analysis process. It allows users to store and retrieve any number or variety of data documents, index them in any number of categories and explore and retrieve data by asking questions about index references. Results of index searches can be saved as further index references. The program facilitates concept definition and the creation of memos\(^{14}\). The development of ideas and the construction of categories is automatically dated and recorded.

As Tesch (1990, p.165) describes, the main theory-building function of NUD.IST is “the search for co-occurring or overlapping coding within data segments or within entire files. . . plus the corresponding search for counter-evidence”. Analysis using NUD.IST follows the ‘constant comparative method’ of analysing data, as described by Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p.134) in that it combines inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of all units of meaning obtained. As each new unit of meaning is selected for analysis, it is compared to all other units of meaning and subsequently grouped (categorised and coded) with similar units of meaning. If there are no similar units of meaning, a new category is formed. The definitions of categories can be seen as ‘rules of inclusion’, and are the properties or characteristics of the data clustered together in that category. Definitions are thus very important to establish the characteristics of the data categories.

The analysis process using NUD.IST is represented in the following chart (Figure 2.2) from the NUD.IST manual (Qualitative Solutions and Research 1994b).
Non-Numerical Unstructured Data

Figure 2.2 The flow of analysis using the NUD.IST program, drawn from Qualitative Solutions and Research (Qualitative Solutions and Research 1994b, p.2.12)
The Database System

NUD.IST was used to code and manipulate both on-line documents (i.e. transcripts and memos) and some off-line documents, in particular key book sections and journal articles. Appendix H describes the types of data which was collected and a conceptual diagram of the analysis process.

Transcripts and summaries of articles were introduced to NUD.IST as individual documents, and lines of text were used as text units. Text units are automatically numbered by NUD.IST from one onwards, within each document and these text unit numbers are used in the following chapter to reference all quotes so that they can be traced back to their source.

Transcripts of interviews were not “reduced” in any way before introducing them to NUD.IST. Once within NUD.IST, however, the allocation of text units to ‘nodes’ performed the role of data reduction. Not all text units needed to be indexed, thus only relevant data was retrieved in reports. This method had the advantage that no data was de-contextualised, and at any point, a comment by an interviewee could be traced back to its original context. The formulating of research questions also forms part of focusing on the problem and hence data reduction.

The Indexing System

Qualitative analysis always involves the development of ideas about the data and exploration of these ideas. Sometimes the project begins with descriptive categories. Categories are also created from the data during the project and linked in ways that describe the data. New theories are constructed and tested by exploring their links with data (Qualitative Solutions and Research 1994a, p.2-4).

NUD.IST helps manage categories in tree-structured index systems which facilitate analysis. The index system is highly flexible and can be modified throughout the life of the project.

Categories and sub-categories of data formed in the analysis process are stored as ‘nodes’ in the hierarchical tree structure of the project. When an index system is created, numbers are used to specify the location of nodes, thus each node has a numerical address. The index system can be redesigned by shifting, copying and cutting index nodes, the memos about them and references to documents. Hence the index system can grow to express emerging ideas and theories.
Attached to each node is a definition (see Figure 2.3) which defines the data indexed at that point. This facility of NUD.IST addresses the rules of inclusion’ issue discussed by Lincoln and Guba (1986).

Figure 2.3 Node information screen.

Text units in documents are linked to nodes by adding and removing index references from text units. Text units relating to any node in the tree (and hence ideas and concepts) can be then drawn together and outlined in a report. This report, then, represents all data relating to a particular idea18.

NUD.IST also provides other advanced searching options which fall under five groups; collation searches, contextual searches, negation searches, restriction searches and tree-structured searches.

In this research the categories into which information was grouped arose out of the literature review and were developed further during analysis of data. The ‘start list’ of categories was created simultaneously with a preliminary project design, as described in the following section. However these categories and codes remained flexible and evolved as the study progressed. Some codes did not work, while others proved to be too broad and were broken down.

In the initial tree-structure designed for this project a highly intuitive approach was taken, based on the predicted flow of questioning. However because of the highly exploratory nature of the research, this altered considerably during the analysis process. The diagrammatic representation of the indexing tree is presented below in Figure 2.4.

Figure 2.4 The indexing tree

A more detailed excerpt from the final tree structure is presented in Appendix I and a report on the nodes, showing each final node address and definition, is presented in Appendix J.

The end categories used for data analysis are used to present the findings of the research in the following chapter.
Modifications to the Interview Guide

As previously mentioned, data analysis occurred concurrently with data collection. Hence issues which arose during the analysis process were able to shape the directions of future data collection.

The study continued to be seen as exploratory in intent, and as such respondents were encouraged to raise issues of concern to them, thus challenging any assumptions I may have held regarding the direction the research would or should take.

Throughout the interviewing process a number of issues were raised by the interviewee which led me to add certain questions to the interview guide, or to modify those questions already existing. Reflection upon the type of information being gained in the interviews also led to some questions being refined and expressed in more specific terms. For instance, the following changes occurred:

- To prompt discussion regarding the interviewee’s approaches to teaching, a question was added asking what their ‘goals’ as a teacher were, and whether they varied for internal and external students.
- When asking staff whether they aimed for their materials to be self-contained, they often interpreted this term differently to that intended. It was decided to investigate whether these definitional interpretations held true for all teaching staff, so the term was not defined in subsequent interviews. Rather, the general question was followed with the question “So when you design your materials, do you intend students to seek information outside the materials?”
- Questions regarding self-directed learning were placed much later in the interview than originally structured. This ensured that discussion did not influence the definition of and feeling toward the concept or the interviewee’s responses toward the other questions. A typed definition of self-directed learning, drawn from the writings of Knowles (1970), Moore (1977) and Verduin and Clarke (1991) was used to facilitate discussion of the concept. Interviewees were shown this definition and then asked their feelings towards the concepts proposed in it.
- The term “information skills” was used consistently, rather than “information literacy” and questions were added which addressed more directly distance educator’s expectations of students regarding information skills, and their perception of how they felt teaching staff could affect the information seeking behaviour of students.
- A question was added enquiring whether teaching staff felt information was of importance to their students’ futures, and what sort of information was most useful.
- A question was also included about how the interviewee perceived his or her relationship with the library and library staff.
- A question was added concerning influences on distance educators’ attitudes towards libraries and how they learned to use libraries, where these issues were not raised by interviewees themselves.
- In some cases the issue of course development and delivery and the Internet was discussed (generally when raised by the interviewees), although this was not one of the areas of questions outlined in the Interview Guide.

The interview guide which formed the culmination of this development is presented in Appendix K.
Endnotes

1 Four suggestions made by Lincoln and Guba (1985, in Maykut and Morehouse 1994, p.146) in order to overcome these criticisms include multiple methods of data collection (triangulation), building an audit trail working with a research team and member checks. Audit trail refers to providing documentation which allows the researcher to walk another through the research work, from beginning to end, so that they can understand the paths taken and judge the trustworthiness of your outcomes. The term member checks is used by Lincoln and Guba to refer to the process of asking research participants to tell you whether you have accurately described their experiences. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) have found that members’ feedback is very valuable and sometimes helps us see or emphasise something we missed.

2 It was recognised that there would be problems implicit in identifying this population. For instance, courses may have been developed in past years and those involved in their development may not currently be present in the University. The information which resulted from contacts with each of the faculties differed greatly. Although each faculty was requested to provide, as far as possible a list of units being offered externally in Spring 1995, those staff involved in these units and the number of students enrolled, different faculties had differing degrees of difficulty in providing this sort of information. Some faculties could provide student numbers while others either couldn’t or wouldn’t (usually because this information was not readily and easily available). Some faculties were able to provide details about the roles of those involved, for instance whether they were writers or lecturers. The comparability of information was complicated further by the fact that some faculties operated on a trimester basis, and provided year-round staffing information which it was difficult to break down into a single trimester. Some attempt was made to go back to faculties and elaborate and clarify these figures at the end of 1995, when more figures were available, even though in some instances the sampling could not be adjusted in the light of new information.

3 It should be noted that the Faculty of Business operates on a trimester basis, therefore it was not possible to make a direct comparison here between faculties. This figure is also skewed by being measured across all the course structure, i.e. all units in the undergraduate and postgraduate programs, with no breakdown on year or semester.

4 Opportunistic sampling is fundamental to all post-positivist inquiry; in other words, decisions will be made during the research process to take advantage of new opportunities for data collection.

5 In qualitative research, sampling ‘adequacy’ is attained when sufficient data has been collected such that variation is both accounted for and understood (Morse 1994). As Taylor and Bogdan state in “theoretical sampling the actual number of cases studied is relatively unimportant. What is important is the potential of each ‘case’ to aid the researcher in developing theoretical insights into the area of social life being studied” (1984, p.83).

6 If one particular educator (H4) who teachers in 2 faculties, is counted in Business rather than Health, the Business figure would be 37%. Thus faculty sampling can be seen to fall within 7% of faculty percentages. However this lower level of sampling is also acceptable given the differences in the nature of the figures provided (as already outlined). The overall population’s ratio of females:males was 35%:65%. The sample ratio was 22%:78%. However, since the average number of units per male staff member was 2. 1 and the average per female was 1.9 this small bias, while not intended, may possibly well represent the distance education teaching loading of SCU staff.

7 An unexpected factor affecting sample selection was my appointment to a position within Education, Work and Training in October 1995. This new internal involvement with this faculty altered my relationship with these faculty members and meant that further sampling was deemed unfeasible. Two faculty members had already been interviewed from the faculty. The third member who had been approached was notified of the intention to not go ahead with the interview, and the reasons.
8 All recordings and transcripts were treated securely and were coded such that they could not be linked back to respondents. Transcription and data analysis took place by the researcher in private settings thus minimising threat. All personal contacts (i.e. phone contacts and interviews) were arranged and conducted with discretion.

9 Tacit knowledge is inarticulated knowledge, such as the type of knowledge we have in the act of doing something. Explicit knowledge, on the other hand is that which is or can be written down in words, maps or mathematical formulas (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, p.1). The difference between the two types of knowledge is that explicit knowledge can be subject to critical reflection, while tacit knowledge cannot be reflected upon.

10 Recognised factors affecting the responses to questions include misinterpretation of questions, the order of questions such that answers to earlier questions can affect answers to later questions and question format, and cultural contexts (Foddy 1994).

11 Foddy states that researchers have never managed to reach consensus on how attitudes should be defined and that the link between attitudes and behaviour has never been demonstrated to be very strong (Foddy 1994, p. 158). Despite this I feel it is valuable to explore these attitudes, if not to draw conclusions directly from them.

12 The first term involves separating out the relevant portions of data from their context. Data is then coded before it is reconceptualised, in other words the segments are placed in the context of their topic.

13 NUD.IST is a computer software package produced by Qualitative Solutions and Research (Qualitative Solutions and Research 1994a). NUD.IST stands for Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorising. It is designed to aid users in handling non-numerical and unstructured data in qualitative analysis. It does this by supporting processes of indexing, searching and theorising (Qualitative Solutions and Research 1994b).

14 Miles and Huberman (1994, p.72) define memos as “the theorising write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding”. They may take the form of a sentence, paragraph or several pages. Memos are about ideas and are conceptual in intent; not just reporting but linking pieces of data together in clusters. They are regarded as informal notes and are uncensored, such that when ideas strike, they are immediately written down in memo form.

15 For the purposes of this research, only key journal articles have been summarised and utilised as on-line documents. The choice of which articles to treat in this way was based on their similarity to my own study and their relevance in data analysis. The articles identified as relevant for summarisation and on-line manipulation include Behrens (1993), Cook and Cook (1987), Clark (1993), Burke (1988; 1988; 1989b), Lebowitz (1993), Haworth (1982a), Steffen (1987) and Winter (1984). Off-line documents are those whose text is not stored in the NUD.IST database. NUD.IST records the document’s name, the number of text-units and a header of information about the document. Off-line documentation was not incorporated in this research project, although it could be used more extensively in later research.

16 The point where a branch on an index tree splits is called a “node”.

17 Through a process known as “system closure” results of searches and analyses are fed back into the system rather than taking them out of the system. In this way, memos are indexed with the nodes they concern. Times and processes of major changes in the database are automatically recorded, providing a history of analysis. This record then becomes part of the data.

18 Rapid indexing can be carried out using the searching text facility of NUD.IST. Here, NUD.IST gathers together all occurrences of words, phrases or strings of characters and saves
their index references. This facility was used, for example, for ‘research’, ‘self-direction’ and ‘Learning-Assistance’.

19 The development process could be traced from that which appeared in my Research Proposal of July, 1995.
Chapter 3

Discussion of Findings

This chapter will outline and discuss the findings of the interviews. It is structured according to the categories which were used for data analysis, as outlined in Appendix J, and discussed in the previous chapter. For the purposes of building a logical discussion, these are not addressed in the order of the NUD.IST tree structure. The node references are provided to strengthen the dependability and confirmability of the findings through an emphasis on a strong audit trail. Interviewees' quotes are referenced throughout this chapter by way of the convention (Interviewee code:Text unit number/s) as explained in the previous chapter. They can thus be referenced back to the transcript documents.

Description of the Sample

Demographic information\(^1\) regarding the nine interviewees is summarised in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Summary of base data on interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee*</th>
<th>B32</th>
<th>E8</th>
<th>E5</th>
<th>B26</th>
<th>H4/ B28</th>
<th>S2</th>
<th>S13</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>L1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Bus</td>
<td>EWT</td>
<td>EWT</td>
<td>Bus</td>
<td>Hea/B us**</td>
<td>Tou</td>
<td>Tou</td>
<td>Hea</td>
<td>Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years employed in Higher Ed**</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years involved in external teaching**</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years studying externally</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of External Study Postgraduate (p/g) or undergraduate (u/g)</td>
<td>p/g</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>u/g</td>
<td>u/g both</td>
<td>u/g</td>
<td>p/g</td>
<td>p/g</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Experience (yes or no)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency Library Use****</td>
<td>W- M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M-I</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* See Appendix C for code derivations.
** Statistically counted as Health.
*** Where part-time, these are counted as half years.
**** D=Daily, W=Weekly, M=Monthly, S=Seldom, I=Infrequent (described as In fits and starts’ or ‘Spasmodic’, heavy but infrequent usage).

From these demographic characteristics we can draw a picture of SCU distance educators as fairly experienced in higher education teaching, with an average of 15 years experience and a mean of 11. Their experience in external teaching was considerably less, with an average of 8 years, this figure being skewed significantly by one interviewee, the mean being 4.5 years. Eight of the nine interviewees indicated that they had studied externally themselves.
Feelings toward Research

Only one of the nine interviewees had not been involved in research in the past 3 years, and all indicated their future intentions in initiating a project (S13:258-60). Overall, interviewees indicated positive approaches to research although they expressed conflicts in commitment between teaching and research, particularly in relation to promotion criteria, findings supported by Hardesty (1991). Given SCU’s recent transition to University status and hence commitment to research, these positive attitudes are heartening and would positively influence the ‘hidden curriculum’ regarding information seeking conveyed to students.

Reflections on External Experience

Interviewees were, in general, very positive about the value of distance education to students. Several interviewees recognised and empathised with the difficulties of external study. Such comments frequently evidenced a strongly ‘student-centred’ approach.

Interviewees Own Library Use

Thomas and Ensor (1984) had found a connection between educators’ own use of the library and their decisions to employ formal library instruction. In my own investigation, library use by interviewees was generally erratic and several respondents indicated personal frustration and embarrassment regarding its frequency. Such time limitations on library use were also found to be presumed of external students. Some interviewees described more frequent use of remotely accessed databases, but did not presume to consider this ‘library use’.

As will be discussed consequently, in all cases ‘information’ use was far more frequent, illustrating that in day-to-day terms, the library is not a primary information source. This finding is consistent with Steffen’s (1987) and other studies referred to by her.

Interviewees Approaches to Distance Education

Individual and overall approaches to distance education were gleaned to determine the distance education culture which existed at SCU, a culture which could greatly affect institutional and individual approaches to teaching and learning at a distance.

Feelings and Values toward Distance Education

A highly positive impression was drawn of the distance education culture existing at SCU. Comments made by one interviewee in particular are worth quoting at some length:

I think there is a really healthy approach to distance education here I really like it....I mean I don’t think that we are fabulously efficient... but the academic staff have strong ownership over distance education processes and products and activities ... the good side is that very easy contact and it is embedded quite firmly in the academic psyche. Distance education student support is right up there jostling with the face to face student for attention. So I think it is good. I think they also see that distance education/open learning/flexi-mode all those other strictly non- face-to-face other modes that are developing here are our future, so they need to get a hold of it (ID:94-127).
Interviews with other distance educators reinforced these sentiments, particularly regarding ownership, student contact and to a lesser extent, adaptability. These issues will be elaborated further in this chapter. SCU’s culture would thus seem very receptive and positive toward distance education, findings counter to those of studies referred to in Chapter 1 which exposed opinions that distance education was second rate. This indication is significant given Hardesty’s finding (1991, p.27) that institutional influence strongly shapes attitudes of faculty members to libraries.

**Interviewees Approaches to Students**

I believe that they have to think that you feel they are important. That what they have to say and what they are doing is important. And it is important (B32:577-579).

As discussed in the previous section, the distance education ‘culture’ at SCU would appear to facilitate and encourage interaction and ‘dialogue’ with students. Interviewees indicated that this occurred both through formalised “systems” and teachers’ personal approaches; “They can do more than the minimum required by the system” (B26:260).

Communications with students were seen, not as mechanisms for information transmission, but for support and relationship building. In terms of ‘hidden curriculum’ these informal discussions are just as much if not more likely to convey values and enthusiasm which will affect self-directed and information seeking behaviour of students.

Personal experience as an external student was seen as a great aid to student empathy and understanding, particularly in understanding time management issues, and the importance of quality materials and flexibility in delivery:

I think anyone who works in external mode has a far greater advantage if they have done their studies externally. I’m not saying you can’t do the job if you haven’t studied externally, but you understand the needs of the student. ... I think it affects my approach in everything I do (B32: 141-5;460).

It was thus positive to find that 89% of the sample had studied externally. Distance educators overall indicated sound andragological and learner-centred approaches. There was evidence of them taking account of adults’ life experiences and learning needs, of dialogue and in most cases, facilitatory approaches. Flexibility in relation to course content, delivery and assessment was a point in question and will be discussed later in this chapter.
Characteristics of Students

They work full time, study part time, the whole emphasis is swapped... most of them have got jobs, a lot of them have got families. Most of them are mature aged students. And therefore study becomes the second most important... So the motivation to learn is there. That is fine. It is not a problem (S13:164-76).

Most interviewees held that the majority of their external students were employed in the profession in which they were studying. Percentage estimates varied from around 50% (Li) to 95% - 99% (S2). An interesting qualification was provided by one interviewee who stated that:

(When we) first started out we were assuming that we were working with part time students and full time workers. This is no longer the case... Many of the students are pre-working or they are out of work at the moment. Whereas in the Graduate Diploma it is the norm that people have been sponsored... by their workplace (E5:67-73).

Other interviewees commented on the wide dispersion of students (B32, S2) or their lack of recent experience in study (B32:343). Several interviewees expressed their perceptions of external students’ motivations, which usually focused on the desire for qualifications (B32: 122). Such statements support studies by Regan (i995a; i995b), Behrens (i993) and Graham (1986), as discussed in Chapter 1. A direct connection between such motivations and library use was made by the instructional designer (see Endnote 4) who recognised that “survival levels” of skills were unlikely to be exceeded if they ‘ want the bit of paper’ and that this determined the level of engagement with libraries (ID:296-304).

The nature of students was seen to affect courses in a number of ways, including;

- the importance of a relevant and applied approach;
- the importance of relating learning to experience;
- the importance of contact with staff;
- different approaches required when their students are drawn from differing rather than homogenous professional groups (B32, 52).

Such approaches are consistent with student-centred learning characteristics described in Chapter 1.

Interviewee’s Role in External Studies

Interviewees identified their distance education roles as many and varied, including:

- course promotion;
- course co-ordination;
- student recruitment;
- writing course materials;
- editing materials;
- assessment;
- student contact;
- unit co-ordination (including co-ordinating part-time staff);
- course administration.

The roles identified by the instructional designers are addressed later in this chapter.
Chapter Three  Discussion of Findings

Interviewee’s Goals as a Teacher {Node 5 2}

When interviewees were asked what their goals as a teacher were, responses included to:
- bring students up-to-date on current practice (B26);
- stretch students’ imagination and mind (B26);
- provide good quality and well recognised course program;
- address students’ needs (i.e. for applied and practical information);
- help them achieve their goal of getting an equitable qualification;
- benefit organisations through their students;
- stimulate critical thinking;
- develop students’ skills.

It should be noted that one interviewee indicated their desire for students to be able to find and critically analyse information, however there is a strong possibility that this response was stimulated by the focus of the study itself5.

The approaches to teaching and learning amongst distance educators were, overall, andragogically sound and learner-centred. As will be further explained teachers moved students from dependency to autonomy, they built on students’ prior knowledge and social roles and tended toward problem rather than subject orientation. However there was little direct evidence of distance educators aiming to perform such roles as helping students analyse their aspirations and the means of achieving them, or to become aware of their learning styles (as was previously discussed in conjunction with the nature of self-directed learning).

Interviewees’ Approaches To Courses {Node 6}

Whether independent information seeking is assessed as part of the information skills totality depends on the learning framework of the course (Behrens 1993, p.17).

Nature of Courses {Node 6 1}

All interviewees described their external courses as ‘applied’ or professionally oriented with an emphasis on currency and thus requiring continual revision of materials (B32:506-12). Elton (1983) had spoken of developments in learning and teaching and their increased demands on libraries. The indications of my study are that at SCU, changes in educational provision are in fact placing increased reliance on information sources other than libraries.

The “transmission model of teaching” discussed by Burge (1991, p.7) was not particularly evident in my study. An emphasis on students relating their learning to their workplace experiences tended to counter this, rather than any emphasis by educators on independent information seeking by students.

Feelings towards courses {Node 6 1 3}

Many interviewees spoke of their courses in terms of having the largest number of enrolments of any course in the University, of being the only course of its nature in Australia or the world, or of it drawing international enrolments. Such comments indicated a sense of pride amongst educators about their courses. Such positive feelings and enthusiasm were sensed to be transmitted to students, even at a distance, and as will be later established, were felt to influence students’ information seeking behaviour.
Internal versus External Approaches

Five of the eight interviewees with teaching responsibilities (i.e. excluding the instructional designer who had no ‘teaching’ responsibilities) indicated that they taught students internally and externally. These interviewees were asked whether their courses differed between modes. Some indicated that they “tried not to” vary the course, using ‘the same assessment, same exam, same assignments, same everything’ (L1:67), while others varied certain aspects such as use of seminars for assessment (E5:91-7). Such indications would seem consistent with Lebowitz’s (1993) findings. Overall, distance educators seemed to struggle with the practical problems of presenting equitable courses to external students.

The differing nature of the external students was seen as the main factor affecting course structure, particularly their industry experience:

When you are working with internal students we are the industry as well as the academic side, so consequently we would be giving the industry examples. When you are doing external materials, you give industry examples, or you say, well from your experience how do you relate to this... (S2:96-9).

Approaches of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students to their Courses

The major difference identified, not surprisingly, between undergraduate and postgraduate students was in their capacity for critique; “Undergraduates, early in their courses, have the view that if it is in print it is the truth, and often they can’t cope when they find two things in print that disagree with each other” (H4: 111-112). This factor was also noted as affecting students’ approaches toward information seeking:

Undergraduate students I’ve found, tend to assume that what was in a particular unit all that was supplied if you focused on that then you would pass and graduate. Of course there are exceptions... who saw the material issued to them as the starting point. And they wanted more information. If it wasn’t forthcoming, and it generally wasn’t from the university then they would tend to go and seek it themselves (B26:207-14).

Yet contrary values were expressed by other teaching staff. It was somewhat surprising to find a greater emphasis placed by some staff on workplace information, rather than theory and literature, particularly with postgraduate students. One interviewee stated that postgraduates were not encouraged to read outside course materials while undergraduates were:

I don’t understand what the difference is there but I think it is a traditional approach of particular groups of lecturers... I think they want, with the postgraduates more control - where its all coming from. I don’t really understand it (E5:222-5).

This comment supports Store’s statement (1981), referred to in Chapter 1 regarding lecturers’ desire for control over students’ reading. It is, however, an extremely surprising approach as the naturally possessed inclinations of postgraduates for information seeking (described by one interviewee) are being negated by the ‘no need’ factor. This is a clear representation of both the great influence of teaching staffs approaches and the “mismatch between the philosophy of the parent institutions and the needs and information-seeking actions of the students themselves” discussed by Carty (1991, p.70).
Approach to Course Development

For self-directed learning and information skills development to be facilitated in distance education these values must be incorporated into and conveyed through course materials. Course development is thus a crucial process and in need of examination.

Who Is Involved

Seven of the nine interviewees indicated that they had been involved in writing course material. Reviewing and updating material was seen as a large component of all distance educators’ roles. The amount of external involvement in course development, however, was surprising. Writers were drawn, not only from within the faculty, and from other faculties at SCU, but from other institutions and from industry (including both writing and curriculum development in the case of the Industry Partners).

A number of problems were acknowledged with the use of external writers; “The ability to understand the needs of learners....They don’t have the ability, often, to transmit that information or they presume the students would have a lot more knowledge than they already have got” (B32:77-83). The broadly dispersed nature of writers would also seem to make any attempts to influence course development (for instance, to promote information skill development) extremely difficult.

Tutors did not seem to play any particular role in material development, although the potential role for feedback from students being incorporated into course materials was recognised by a couple of interviewees. No interviewee made mention of involving library staff in course development, a finding consistent with the literature review discussed in Chapter 1.

Influences on Course Development

Factors cited as influencing course development included:

- target audience (job situations, current level of education);
- isolation of students;
- relating materials to industry;
- learning objectives and outcomes;
- assessment criteria;
- learning strategies and principles (i.e. reinforcement, structure);
- instructional designers;
- the LIC (embracing student support)
- institutional ‘economic rationalism’;
- incorporation of multimedia resources (audio, video, World Wide Web)
- restraints of time and resources.

The Teaching and Learning Unit (mentioned in the Introduction) was not seen as an influence on distance education provision and was not mentioned by any distance educators. A direct question to the instructional designer regarding its role reinforced this observation, although the Unit was said to be incorporating a slot in future staff orientation workshops, and involving the interviewee in conducting this session.
Role of Instructional Designers

Instructional designers are our great helpers because you just can’t run units without good instructional designers (B32:86-7).

Response to the role of instructional designers was very positive from all interviewees; “There are instructional designers and there are good instructional designers - we’ve been lucky because we’ve had good ones... They have a great understanding, by their nature, of the needs of students” (B32:88-90). Their objectivity in looking at material and moderating between the writer and the student was broadly acknowledged.

The instructional designer who was sampled due to his cross-institutional contact indicated being involved in 25 new units each year. Presuming each unit represented a staff member, this equates to intense contact with 32% of distance educators a year, aside from the more casual contact described.

Instructional designers usually became involved as a funded part of course development, depending on the financial resources of the faculty. Their involvement was broad and highly flexible; “it can range from curriculum development and needs analysis and up front activities, right through to production...and they can choose what level of help they need” (ID:31-5). Experienced writers used instructional designers for editorial support and as a “sounding board” while both instructional designers described themselves as playing a large staff development role, particularly with new staff (or staff new to distance education methods). Both described their techniques for diagnosing the needs and abilities of staff, negotiating their role and making “suggestions”10. The faculty-based instructional designer co-ordinated external writers and conducted workshops for individuals who had not written external materials before.

Instructional designers could be seen to perform a crucial role in explicating the ‘hidden curriculum’ of the internal environment and translating this into the distance education mode:

I try to draw out from them things that they have perhaps never articulated before, but is embedded there about what works when and why and what the principles are behind it and then how that might be translated into distance education mode (ID:64-8).

Approach to Course Delivery

If the library plays only a small role in the study programmes of external students, is it because academic staff do not expect much of libraries and do not communicate or co-operate with them sufficiently to exploit their resources (Haworth 1982a, p.153).

Who is involved

The range of people involved in course delivery was surprising. Tutors and markers were drawn from a similar demographic basis as individuals involved in course development. In the CBT models there were also a broad range of other people involved in non-traditional roles11.

The level of interaction between full-time academic staff and these other individuals varied greatly; “Sometimes I talk to them about issues, but mostly now I don’t need to contact them at all because the units just chug along” (H4:27). External consultants and markers were seen as problematic and inconsistent for a number of reasons including time delays, marking criterias and academic
standards. The level of appointment of part-time staff involved in course delivery was considered crucial to the level of interaction permissible with students. Students were also often encouraged to make contact with professionals in their community or workplaces in ‘mentor like’ arrangements, or to facilitate access to local industry based information, a point discussed later in this chapter.

The problems associated with ‘institutionally anonymous’ tutors have been discussed by Whitlatch (1983), Steffen (1987) and Burge (1988, p.59) who describe their unfamiliarity with the home institutions’ services as inhibiting their ability to help students effectively utilise them. As will be further discussed, this also affects attempts to promote self-directed learning through dialogue with students and through assessment. Thus these findings tend to support claims by Steffen that “if librarians want to influence large numbers of students... through their instructors, they must shift some of their faculty outreach efforts to part-time faculty” (1987, p.308).

Workshops and residential

When they come to residential they are just like sponges. They love coming up. And they are in to that library the whole time... And a lot of them gather information for their assignments (S2:336-8).

Four of the eight teaching staff (omitting the instructional designer who is not technically involved in course delivery) indicated that they incorporated residential or face-to-face components in their courses (B26, E5, E8, S2). Mostly these were conducted at the SCU campus, however one respondent discussed conducting workshops in capital cities. In all cases it was indicated that these were non-compulsory.

Interviewees who indicated that their courses had residential components were asked whether there was any contact with the library at these. All four indicated that there was and that librarians were directly involved in these. One interviewee also indicated the involvement of the Learning Assistance Unit (i.e. for essay writing and examination skills). The workshops which were held in capital cities did not incorporate a parallel library experience.

One respondent indicated that residentials were an opportunity to introduce students to e-mail skills (E8:200-2). It would be a natural progression from this to introduce other information seeking skills such as remote database access and internet usage at the same time.

Residentials were identified as a means of developing closer relationships with students. However the four distance educators who did not have a face-to-face component in their course seemed to have established equally personal communications with students as is noted below.

Self Containment of Course Materials

Interviewees were questioned regarding whether they viewed their materials as ‘self-contained’ to ascertain their approach to students’ information seeking skills.

A degree of definitional confusion arose regarding the concept of ‘self-contained’. Several interviewees indicated that they did view the units as “self-contained” (E8, HN S2) in the sense that they were “stand alone” or did not require prerequisite units. It would seem that those with some theoretical background in distance education interpreted the term in the intended sense.
In discovering this lack of definitional clarity I continued to approach each interviewee in the same manner to ascertain his or her understanding of the term and then posed the further question; ‘Are they expected to gain information from outside the materials provided?’ The following is indicative of responses:

I don’t require them to go outside at all. The high distinction students always do. There is no doubt about that. The students that do very well in the units go outside what they are given but the philosophy of this faculty in developing its external units has been that there should be no need to go outside the material given in order to pass (H4:61-4).

Some interviewees indicated an overt approach to conveying these values to students; “What we say to students is that you can achieve... a high distinction using what you’ve got, or you can achieve a pass, it is totally up to you”. Others indicated a more covert faculty culture. Some respondents were uncertain whether their approach was explicit or assumed; “Some people I think still, I don’t know that it is stated overtly, but somewhere the feeling is that you will do better if you can access a library, and sort of read a little more widely and read a bit around” (S13:280-2).

One interviewee supported self-contained approaches in terms of external students’ isolation, but argued that selection of readings which represented “contrary people, authors who don’t agree with each other” (E5:293-4) was crucial in promoting students’ critical thinking. Another interviewee expressed concerns regarding the quantity of reading students are currently expected to work through; “So you wonder sometimes whether you can give them that much that you limit them going outside by what you give them....they just can’t afford that time in a 13 week trimester” (B32:310-315).

Even though some lecturers indicated that they rewarded evidence of information seeking, there were elements of inconsistency, and writing style seemed to override information seeking skills; “Well some students do well even with the materials they are given. They write well, they think well. They are just cunning when it comes to that” (H4:66-8).

Those interviewees, particularly the instructional designers who interpreted ‘self-contained’ in the sense intended saw this area as problematic and topical:

Well I think that there has been some quite interesting issues about this that have arisen here this semester... Some conceive of the package as being self-contained and they want to do the biggest brightest all singing all dancing 400 page assembly of everything they can get their mitts on. And I have my concerns about that, not only in terms of manageability... but also it is not really encouraging them to take a self-directed approach to resource gathering... (ID:158-64)

While books of readings have been demonstrated as not in themselves discounting library use (Winter 1984, p. 103), these approaches and values of distance educators are likely to affect the information skills of students.

Thus my study reveals values consistent with those exposed by Burge (1988) — that students could adequately complete their courses with the materials provided, but could achieve better results by going beyond them. Thus although there were elements of the “one-stop-shop” course mentality described by Behrens (1993) overall there were indications that teaching staff ‘rewarded’ information seeking. It is another issue, however, as to whether and how it is fostered.
Approach to Assessment

One of the most effective methods of increasing library use by students is to convince faculty to make assignments which require library use (Steffen 1987, p.306).

Both instructional designers devoted a large period of their discussion to the notion that students, particularly distance education students “structure their activities around assessment” (ID:246). However the instructional designers differed in their acceptance of this. One stated that “I have no difficulty with that at all. It is quite a legitimate way to go about your study” (ID:249). The other stated that “What we are trying to do is get students away from just doing the assignments. That is what 90% of them do, but if I can just sort of get even 5% - we are actually doing better” (S13:43-5).

Seven of the nine interviewees were involved in setting assignments, although there were cases where ‘external’ writers were also involved. Competency based assessment, once again was a complex process.

The type of assessment employed by interviewees included:

- workplace projects - applying learning to the workplace where students are encouraged to use “real not fictitious organisations” (B32: 195);
- literature searching;
- learning contracts;
- case studies;
- writing strategic plans;
- critiquing readings;

There was very little emphasis placed on exams.

Justifications of these approaches related to organisation benefits (B26, ES, E8); “assessment tasks which are going to meet the organisation’s needs as well as our needs” (E8:78-9) and the building of better employees.

There was an overall trend toward undergraduate assessment being more theoretical and postgraduate assessment being more practical. As previously discussed, these approaches were puzzling and problematic in terms of information skill development.

Some interviewees mentioned allowing flexibility and choice for students with regards their assessment topics and methods. However this was very much an individual thing; “I am, but not everybody is. I mean, I am fairly pragmatic in my approach to students” (H4: 156). In an institutional climate of ‘economic rationalism’ such approaches to assignments were rather ‘self-sacrificing’ on the part of educators.

One interviewee who described a flexible approach also indicated his misgivings; “the only way I can assess they have actually undertaken those other topics... and met the objectives of the unit is to have some form of assessment. To see that they have actually read and digested the material in that unit” (B32:451-5). This seems to indicate a residual need for ‘control’ over content delivery.

The role of assessment in promoting, fostering and rewarding information skills development was explicitly recognised by the instructional designer who stated that “...it is not just the library’s responsibility... to teach them those skills. It is the teachers’ problem. Because they have the mandate. They are there in the
This supports the points made in Chapter 1 regarding the necessity for teaching staff becoming involved in information skill development. Comments regarding recognition and rewarding of additional information use again raised concerns regarding ‘external’ markers.

Several interviewees discussed the explication of assessment criteria, including “accessing information” or “relating to the literature”; “they are given that criteria from the beginning - what their assignments are marked on and if one of the aspects of marking is the access to extra information then they should show that they’ve done that” (B32:267-70). Setting this criteria is the first step. The second is reinforcing these values with feedback; “when I mark their first assignment if they haven’t I tell them it is a weakness... I use assignments as another teaching technique. I give feedback on assignments, not just a pass fail” (B32:332-7).

Both instructional designers were found to have a fair bit of input into the development of assessment items and thus it was encouraging that they viewed assessment as a method of teaching skill development. Teaching staff, however, did not always seem to share these views and in cases seem to focus on final products rather than methods of resource gathering as was found by George and Love (1994. p.200).

Interviewees’ Approaches to Information Skills

If faculty/staff have low or nil expectations of library use among their students or are satisfied with students who read little further than the course materials, then students have no incentive to become library users (Cavanagh 1994b).

How are information skills conceptualised

From interviewees discussions a picture was drawn of their concepts and understandings of information skills. Educators indicated that they would like students to be “judicious” about what is and isn’t good quality information. They emphasised a broad definition of information seeking skills which extended way beyond the library based literature.

Critical selection of information was emphasised, and currency in a bibliography was seen as the way to determine whether additional information had been accessed. This currency was viewed as being achieved through media and current awareness Skills in information retrieval from databases were, in general, not emphasised.

What are the Expectations Regarding Information Skills

It was clear that most teaching staff expect students to turn to libraries as a source of information; “I can’t see how you could pass without having spent a fair bit of time in the library” (L1:245), yet implemented mechanisms that countered these expectations, as several previously quoted statements reveal.

Several confused responses indicated that distance educators had not fully thought through the role of information skills in their external courses. They seemed uncomfortable speaking about information skills, and in describing what was involved, a point consistent with Behrens’ findings. It seemed many struggled to reconcile their values regarding information skills and the problems of distance education delivery; “We do give them books of readings because many of our
external students may not be near libraries - things like that but it does mean that they do need to use libraries in addition” (S2: 167-8).

Since many educators indicated that it was a distinct advantage to use information resources, access and encouragement become an equity issue. Equity of access is an issue acknowledged both in the literature and by interviewees. Equity of encouragement, however, is something that has not been as well addressed.

Two interviewees (B26, S2) in particular did expect students to seek information, but not necessarily personally or independently; “if they don’t have the skills then again we are talking about management students at graduate level, they tend to have staff working for them or with them who can provide them with the skills. So they have access to the skills” (B26:127-30). In the career context there was a feeling from these two individuals that if these students were in a senior position then they would be delegating the responsibility for information seeking anyway. Similar sentiments regarding the value of accessing information, but not the skills of retrieval were conveyed by others. Yet contrary values were revealed by one instructional designer who stated that these graduates are “going out into a workplace which is going to make demands upon them. And the content is replaceable. It is movable, it is rubbery. But the skills remain” (ID: 443-5).

**Expectations of Where Students Seek Information**

Teaching staff had a broad range of ideas about where students could and should be seeking their information, including:

- libraries in their place of employment;
- local community and public libraries;
- tertiary institute libraries, including TAFE;
- SCU library catalogue and databases by remote access;
- professional libraries, such as those of the Accountants’ or Engineers’ Associations;
- private collections of professionals in their community;
- organisations or workplaces themselves i.e. company records, discussions with managers/staff;
- newsgencies;
- media i.e. television, radio, newspapers;
- life skills and experience;
- texts on SCU Open Reserve;
- mentoring groups;
- contact librarian;
- videos of visiting speakers, made available for external students by faculty.

On-line information skills were seen as important but an equity issue (B32:299-301).

There were indications that teaching staff believed (it is uncertain with what validity) that remote distance education students used libraries other than SCU’s; that students;

... in the middle of nowhere, you know out in the Northern Territory. They don’t have access. They have to write away to a library in Alice Springs or something to try to get materials. So it is tough for them... I leave it up to them to find a way. And if they need extra time I just give them extension after extension after extension. I don’t bother about the time too much (H4:94-99)

Although this statement sounds somewhat blasé, it is actually a fairly positive, flexible approach in terms of self-directed learning. This distance educator is
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actually requiring information skills and allowing for problems students might incur with this without compromising his expectations.

It is worth noting that as more SCU faculties move toward specialist courses such as Naturopathy and Forestry there will be increased difficulty in external students finding appropriate resources at locally situated libraries. As was indicated by one interviewee from such a specialised area, often there is very little established literature that is academically rigorous.

**Observations of Information Skill**

I think they are doing well. They are getting better. I’ve been teaching this unit now for five years, and in the early days some of them would simply look around the wards of the hospital to see what they could pick up. That would be their idea of a literature review. They were pretty naive about what was required. But almost all of them now are managing to access CINAHL and MEDLINE [health databases] (H4:80-4).

It would seem that in this case such changes in skill levels were prompted more by information seeking expectations in the workplace than alterations in teaching styles. In fact general indications were that teaching staff were fairly ignorant of students’ processes of finding information. Several interviewees also clearly indicated that they didn’t think external students had the necessary skills, but very few attempts were being made to alter this situation.

Postgraduate students were presumed by many interviewees to have information skills, perhaps with justification given their status as mature age students who have already completed a degree. There were, however, indications that such presumptions were not substantiated. These findings tend to support those of Behrens (1993) that although information skills were found to be lacking, teaching staff did not tend to take responsibility for their development.

**Concerns Regarding Information Skills**

Concerns regarding the promotion of information skills development included:

- the unfeasibility of developing these at a distance;
- the limited time in the semester for accessing information;
- the busy and isolated nature of the external student themselves;
- the resources of the library; “I don’t think they have the people power to actually - the amount of work involved in liaising with external students is really major (E5:252-4);
- the lack of critical judgement by students regarding the quality of information;
- equity issues.

Many of these concerns are discussed further in future sections.
Influences on Information Skills Development

When asked how they believed students learnt information skills, responses included:
- at other institutions;
- at undergraduate level (in the case of postgraduates);
- from workplaces and work colleagues;
- workplace facilitators (in the case of the Industry Partnerships);
- through necessity, “on their feet”, as part of their employment (H4);
- residential (usually non-compulsory).

Only the last of these involved distance educators themselves. Many directly abdicated any role or responsibility for teaching these skills; “They have really had to do it by themselves. And I assume that if they have any trouble they go to the LIC and ask them” (H4:126-136).

Quite different facilitatory approaches were revealed with internal students, yet when questioned whether they paralleled these experiences with external students, statements such as the following were forthcoming; “We haven’t tried it with externals. I have just recommended that they do so. We haven’t done anything physically about it” (E5:247-8). Problems cited as hampering the facilitation of library use included:
- the large number of external students;
- unequal access to libraries;
- low library staffing levels.

One interviewee discussed a novel way of promoting the value of information seeking skills. They encouraged their students to collect new and current information, to fax it in and they then disseminated it to students. This interviewee also mentioned informal support groups amongst students for information sharing. Another described assignments where students kept scrapbooks of information they found. All these ideas seem highly positive in terms of encouraging independent information seeking.

The Role of Distance Educators

Interviewees were asked how they thought teaching staff affected the information skills of students:

Oh dramatically. A staff member can just issue them materials...and in the materials not generate an enquiring attitude. So it is not only what is written but how it is written. And if you like what challenges are put to the candidate by the staff member. So the staff member can have a passive role in getting the information across and that probably won’t engender a great deal of enthusiasm and initiative in the candidate to seek more information. On the other hand, the other extreme, a staff member can issue or write up all the materials in a challenging sense, virtually challenging candidates to seek more or to question what they have been given. To read beyond what is there. So the teacher is critical (B26:226-37).

The words “challenging” and “enthusiasm” were used by several interviewees. A particularly valuable and perceptive response was provided by an instructional designer and this is worth quoting at length:
information retrieval. It is a whole range of skills they need to be developing as lifelong learners. As graduates going out into a workplace which is going to make demands upon them. And the content itself is sort of exchangeable. It is replaceable. It is movable, it is rubbery. But the skills remain. And the skills are the really important thing. So when they are setting assessment when they are writing course materials, when they are writing activities, one part of it should have a content goal, one part of it should have a skill goal and information retrieval is right in there as an essential skill but would be jockeying there with assignment writing skills - you know those core skills that would be expected of any graduate. And no it is not just the library’s responsibility, I don’t think, to teach them those skills. It is the teachers problem. Because they have the mandate. They are there in the classroom (ID:439-51).

Recommendations for Information Skill Development

The instructional designer provided a particularly strong description of how information skills could be developed, recommending firstly awareness of the target group and their skill development level and then “pushing them further in terms of the objectives of the course, quite apart from the content” (ID:215).

Interviewees’ Approaches to Self-Directed Learning

Several interviewees discussed, with varying degrees of awareness, the concept of self-direction, even before it was raised in questioning. Both instructional designers discussed this learning approach in relation to their practice and research. One instructional designer evidently placed central focus on the concept, and a large proportion of this interview dealt directly with theoretical and practical approaches to stimulating self-direction. The other instructional designer favoured the term ‘flexible learning’, a concept he used synonymously with ‘self-direction’.

Interviewees were first asked whether they were familiar with the term ‘self-directed’. Response included Nods (E8) and Mmm (E5), “To some extent” (B26:329), “Well no explain it to me” (B32:387), “Yes, Can you qualify it” (S2:468) and “You explain it to me and I’ll tell you if I am familiar with it” (S13:511). Interviewees were then asked to reflect on the definition provided in Appendix F, and most worked through each point in the definition in an almost ‘self-analytical’ manner. Most of these responses are reflected in the following section.

The instructional designers’ impression regarding teaching staffs understanding of the concept of self-direction are considered particularly valuable, and worthy of quoting in some detail;

There is a lot of lip service paid to it, and not much understanding of ways in which self-directed learning can be enhanced. It is more of an ad hoc thing rather than something that is really embraced. Self-directed learning for a lot of academics would be the time out of a 150 hour unit that doesn’t get consumed by the study guide and the assessment activities. If there is any time left over that is self-directed learning, which of course no body would do. {both laugh} You often see it in the unit outlines (ID:355-361)³⁸.

Only one of the interviewees interpreted self-directed learning, from the definition, as study independent of a teacher and argued that the teacher was very important.
Feelings and Values Toward Self-Directed Learning

Overall, responses were indicative of the statement; “I like the self-directed study idea. I use it. But I have to mix in other procedures - with practicalities (B32:784-5).

Negative responses to the feasibility of self-directed learning were extruded predominantly from one interviewee. However several other interviewees identified problematic factors affecting implementation of self-directed approaches, including:

- External students’ inability to cope with this approach (S13) or preference not to work in this manner (E5:B32);
- The need for students to be able to work in teams and in a controlled or directed manner (B26:353-9);
- Time and money constraints (B26:364-8; B32:776-83);
- The need for equitable assessment (513:621-2);
- Concerns regarding students covering all course material (B32);
- Lack of preparation in the secondary education system (E5:444-5);
- Difficulty of transferring techniques to the external delivery mode particularly in dialogue and discussion;
- Institutionally determined rate of progress (B32, H4);
- Institutionally determined course structures (E5: 402-5);
- Certain courses that required highly directed approaches, for instance laboratory experiences.

One interviewee drew a direct parallel between the definition of self-directed learning and the career skills his students would need (L1:202-207). This interviewee also related the concept to the transient nature of knowledge in his discipline.

There were indications that while distance educators may be quite conscious of facilitating self-directed approaches amongst their internal students they may not be as consciously transferring these values to external students. It would seem that educators struggle with interaction issues in conveying values in a non-face-to-face medium. To convey values through print educators must first self-analyse their values and thoughts and determine how best these can be conveyed in instructional material. It is my belief that a one-line-statement in course materials is not the best approach to conveying values, but that these values must be intrinsically integrated into the structure of the program.

Several interviewees mentioned the skills development aspect of self-direction discussed in Chapter 1; that often students need to be taught how to learn on their own. This was also discussed in detail by the instructional designer who created a direct link to course development and assessment:

Students need to be structurally supported in developing skills as a self-directed learner. So it relates to - in my mind, the way in which you design materials, the openings you give for learners to be able to negotiate meaning rather than the meanings being fixed and finite. It relates to the activities you encourage the students to engage in. It relates to the level of autonomy and choice of approaches to the material, pathways, through the material and means of assessment. It relates to - negotiability on a whole range of components of their experience. And yes - it is very - I think the CPD [Centre for Professional Development] has probably done more than anyone else on campus (ID:364-371).
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For one interviewee this facilitatory role was seen as problematic;

Maybe I’m not as direct as I could be... I have had feedback from students over the years that they say you are more a facilitator than a teacher and maybe at the beginning you could give us a little more direction... Usually, after a few weeks or after a little while they appreciate the chance to be self-directed and to help set the goals for the course. But at the beginning they find it difficult because it is something they haven’t experienced before (E5:439-42).

Yet this is a wonderful illustration of skill development within a facilitatory environment. This interviewee is encouraging the development of his or her students toward a self-directed learning approach, however it is somewhat unclear what level of support is being provided through this process.

Approaches to Self-Directed Learning

Overall, faculty approaches to self-directed learning were generally more implicit than explicit; something embraced subconsciously by staff, but without explicated policy:

...in the Bachelor of Social Science it is a philosophy. Part of our goals are to encourage self-directed learning and lifelong learning. That is agreed. We have that value. ... Well I think it might be written somewhere! In some of the planning documents. It is clearly... like the unwritten constitution. But yes. It is clear. So we try to promote that in every way we can (E5:446-453).

One particular discussion with an interviewee is worthy of quoting in detail (with the insertion of the diagram drawn by the interviewee - Figure 3.1). The excerpt describes the existence of a “hidden curricula” for facilitating students’ progression towards self-directed learning.

S13: The Centre’s philosophy is in fact that there needs to be a transition (draws diagram on piece of paper)

Figure 3.1  Diagram drawn by interviewee 513

So as they go through - at the beginning - they really need to be told. It is really like having - as I have - a nineteen year old child...In most courses here you have one year’s worth of core units. Nothing else. It is only somewhere here (*) that you start having some choices. And when you come to here (**) you should in theory be all electives - it’s not always.

RP: So in between here and here there would appear to be a process whereby students learn to be more self-directed.

S13: Yes.

RP: So what is your concept of what happens in the middle there?
Chapter Three

Discussion of Findings

S13: Ah. Haphazard. More by luck than good judgement. We all agree that this is a good way of doing it. But we have never actually sat down and said that this is how we are going to teach students this way. In our individual ways, that is what we think and that is what we try and do... we try to do this transition, but it has not been a concerted thing where we have all sat down and - RP: Sort of a “hidden agenda”? S13: Yes. A little bit. And OK. Maybe that is not such a great thing to do, but at least it’s something we’re trying to do. We are trying to move students from telling them what is happening through to you have a choice (S13:627-632).

In this model, course structure (i.e. the order in which units are undertaken) is crucial. Yet as one interviewee noted this can create difficulties; “there is no actual structure to the degree (a different degree) at all, in terms of what they do when... And that causes a whole lot of other pedagogical issues about... skills development” (ID: 230-8).

Techniques cited by interviewees as promoting self-directed learning include:
- choice in readings (H4:57);
- major project units in “personally significant areas”;
- learning contracts22 - “setting their own assessment”;
- industry based projects (B32) in “personally significant areas”;
- negotiated goals (B32);
- “anchoring the learning to their own experiences” (E8:266-270).

Maintaining communication with students was seen as a challenge, and several distance educators indicated concerns about those students who were not in regular contact; “Some students ring up a lot more than others. What I am always worried about is those that don’t ring up and say how they are doing” (S2:321-3). Such comments reflect teaching staff’s approaches to self-directed learning. However once discussions on self-directed learning began, mixed and ambiguous feelings were revealed in this area;

They don’t get as much out of it as the student who makes contact, but they can still be successful. And some of them are very independent students. And if you really want the definition of an independent student is it is someone who contacts you little (B32:733-40).

The explicit embracement of self-directed learning approaches in the Faculty of Health was described by one interviewee as a natural result of the clientele targeted:

We had a classic group of highly skilled adult learners who were coming back to study ...They were the student group who were potentially very prominent in their profession. And had had the misfortune, some might say, of having the goal posts changed...So if ever there was a case for a self-directed approach to learning... they had the maturity, they had the confidence... (ID1:374-8;385-6).

Institutional Climate and Self-Directed Learning

Once again, the instructional designer as ‘objective outsider’ provided some valuable comments regarding the institutional climate for self-directed learning:

I don’t think there is much of a climate for self-directed learning, autonomous learning. And I think it has a lot to do with the managerialism which is coming into higher education. The sense of getting back to basics. A sort of measuring those objectives and - you know, quality, quality, quality. I think that that has seeped into our consciousness quite considerably in the last three or four years. And it is all outcomes, outcomes, outcomes. It is all economic rationalisation. And self-directed learning is also about a lot of dialogue and about a lot of
individual support and there is a sense that that can’t be sustained. That things have to be streamlined. It is not that it can’t be done. It is just harder. And it is not as well supported (I&D:402-409).

Several interviewees, those with the most explicitly expressed student approaches indicated that they persisted with self-directed approaches despite the disincentive of the organisational climate.

**Role of Information in Self-Directed Learning**

When asked what role interviewees perceived information skills as playing in self-directed learning, responses ranged from “well I think it makes it easier” (E8:273) to “I just think they underpin it entirely” (JD:434).

“I think information skills are at the heart of the learning process. People come to University because they are seeking information. It is as simple as that. If they knew what they needed to know then they wouldn’t be here. They come here to know what they don’t know” (B28:198-201)

It is unclear, however, to what extent these responses were promoted by my interviewing.

**Interviewees’ Approaches to Libraries**

As the University campus grows I feel there is a sense that the library is becoming further removed; “that flaming great building on the other side of the campus” (E8:276-7). While it may be becoming close in the sense that many databases including the catalogue are accessible from staff members’ offices, there are many indications that in terms of personal and added services it is moving further and further away from the daily lives of teaching staff.

**Values Regarding the Library**

Most interviewees expressed positive values toward libraries. However as previously stated, other information sources were more often personally consulted, with parallel expectations of students. The library was certainly not viewed as being of central value to distance education students, as Cavanagh (1994a) and others have optimistically maintained.

Interviewees strongly believed in the value of browsing and teaching staff indicated that they would occasionally travel to a capital city to access larger libraries themselves. Inability to browse was seen as a major disadvantage to distance education students in Crocker’s study (1984, p.37). Reciprocal arrangements with other libraries for external students were widely recognised and valued. In some cases it was almost taken for granted and assumed.

No evidence arose from the interviews that educators presumed that students would share their value for libraries, as was found in Ruddy’s study (1993). Indications were that distance educators felt that persuasion and referral were felt to be required, particularly with undergraduates.
Relationships with the Library and Librarians

Some distance educators described a strong reliance on library staff while others seemed to have little interaction. One interviewee indicated a close relationship with Learning Assistance, involving them directly in course delivery. Overall, feedback was very positive; “They are very aware of our students and their needs” (S2:388) and there was positive response to librarians’ involvement in Board of Studies.

Several interviewees expressed concerns regarding the amount of two-way communication which occurred between library staff and external students, suggesting a more personal service may be necessary. This situation should not, however be presumed as correct, as many interviewees indicated that they knew very little about students’ interaction with libraries. Others indicated that they have not thought about or addressed this aspect; “I’ve never had any problems. I just assume it’s happening. It is one of those things that is invisible to me. I don’t really notice it” (H4:173-6). These findings would seem consistent with those of Hardesty (1991), that overall there is poor communication between teaching staff and libraries.

It should be stated that while there were indications of teaching staff discussing some issues, such as availability of materials, with librarians, there was no evidence of more direct involvement in courses development.

The lack of real communication was emphasised by the Instructional Designer who stated that:

I think a whole lot of what happens is issues come up from the library end but don’t get translated back to the teaching staff, and vice versa. It is sort of another world up there. And it is not any one individual’s fault… What I think tends to happen is for distance education courses, the units hit the streets, the students hit the streets and then the library staff respond” (ID: 314-32)

Knowledge of Library Services

Services. [lengthy pause] I don’t know. What services does the library provide apart from teaching you how to use the catalogue? (E5:310-1)

This hard hitting comment was not the only indication that educators were unaware of what services the library offered. Such comments would seem consistent with those of Graham (1986, p.17) that “to some teaching staff, the provision of material resources and basic services is all that they expect of the library”.

It must be stated that those who seemed more informed about the library could state with some conviction that “I know there is good service through this institution as there are through most of the good distance teaching institutions. There are good library support facilities. So you can basically just get what you want” (ID:301-4). However it can only be concluded that library services are not well promoted, or that what promotion is provided is not getting through to teaching staff. In particular, interviewees were unaware of what services were offered to external students and had not viewed the library booklet which goes out to students from the library. It would seem that librarian/teaching staff communication is in critical need of review.
Feelings about Library Services

I think it is good. I think it is excellent in fact. And in terms of CPD students there are very rarely any complaints or concerns about it (ID:306-307).

Concerns regarding external students access to information related to:
- competition with internals for access to information;
- time issues, particularly with shorter semesters;
- lack of personal contact with librarians (B26);
- problems with catalogue use, subject headings etc.

Two interviewees in particular stated that since they had had no complaints from students then library services must be going OK (B32:305-8; L1:156-7); “But I don’t know ... I can’t really comment about how many of them use the library”. This however would seem to emphasise the weakness in communications between librarians and distance educators.

The Role of the Library in Course Delivery

...the challenge is to raise distance education providers’ level of awareness of their students’ library need (Carty 1991, p.71).

Responses regarding the role of the library in distance education provision were mixed. “Well it is obviously the focal point or the potential focal point for candidates anywhere in Australia. It becomes a reservoir that they can dig into and be guided from” (B26: 135-6).

Others indicated a much greater emphasis on information sources other than the library; in particular on current affairs.

There were some interesting and unexpected responses regarding library use with undergraduate and postgraduate students. As previously explained, two interviewees (ES and B32) indicated that they used the library more with their undergraduates than their postgraduates. This was contrary to the expected response, and to the values portrayed by Crocker (1984, p.35). However in at least one of these instances (where the interviewee had internal undergraduates) what this interviewee may be unconsciously saying is that she uses the library less with external students than with internal students.

Several interviewees indicated a ‘prescribed text’ approach to teaching, and their primary use of the library was to provide multiple copies of texts, with some copies designated for external student use.

Although it was never explicitly stated, there were a small number of individuals in the sample who could be said to be relying on “The Excuse” - “the notion that since students are not on campus, they cannot be expected to use the library and therefore do not require library skills” (Behrens 1993, p.20). There were several indications that educators may not be placing emphasis on the importance of the library and its services, or necessitating its use in their courses (L1:159-163) because they presume there will be difficulties with access. “It might be very frustrating to try and get books, to try and get journals” (S13:3 19-21). Yet on prompting, they indicated that these presumptions were based on little evidence; “That is just my feeling. I don’t think I’ve ever had, no. Most students don’t have any problem (S13:325). Such comments support George and Love’s (1994) description of the “lowest common denominator” approach.
How Do Students Learn to Use Libraries?

Previous findings that lecturers “seldom undertook responsibility for library skills instruction” (Behrens 1993, p. 12) were certainly supported by this research, but only in the external environment. While external students were not expected to already have these skills, as was indicated in Behrens’ study, they were expected to develop them independently without structured input from teaching staff.

While external students’ information skills development was left somewhat to chance, a more structured component of the course was provided for internal students. This indicates that distance educators haven’t determined ways of paralleling these teaching methods in the distance education environment.

Library visits which were incorporated into residential programs, while positive, are insufficient as they are non-compulsory and somewhat characteristic of what Burge (1991, p.7) termed the “one-shot” orientation to libraries.

How Did Educators Learn to Use Libraries

Hardesty’s study had found that faculty members were confident of their library skills, skills they had “learned largely without the guidance of a librarian” (Hardesty 1991, p.91) and believed such assistance unnecessary; “Students can learn how to use the library through trial and error - just as I did. The library is not so complicated that someone who wants to use it can quickly learn how. No special effort is required” (Hardesty 1991, p.97).

Interviews tended to reflect these findings, however overall, teaching staff were far less confident of their own abilities.

Suggestions Regarding Library Services

My request for suggestions regarding library services provoked imaginative and lateral responses from some interviewees, from more full-text CD-ROMS to a futuristic camera concept which could substitute for browsing. However as one interviewee stated “you can have idealistic systems and then you can have compromise because of cost” (B26:281-2).

Other suggestions included:

- input into course ‘Survival Guides’ (E8:249);
- provision of modems (see the following section) and training in network use;
- a video on the use of the library; “so if students wanted to have a copy they could keep then they could send a blank video in and get a copy” (E8:216-18);
- more communication between teaching staff and librarians28;
- postage paid return envelopes;
- notification of information available on the Internet.

Notably, none of these suggestions made by distance educators regarding library services parallel those of Burge’s study (1988, p.51). However comments made by one instructional designer are somewhat more recognisable;

RP: Have you seen any involvement of library staff in course development?
ID: No. No. I mean I don’t know to what degree it would be wasting their time. That is the only thing. I mean I think that at some point they could potentially come in. And discuss resourcing issues, but I don’t think they would want to be part of the ongoing team... But certainly some sort of structured involvement in unit development. So that they could see materials in a draft form, and have input on resource implications, resource issues of any
description. Skills development, things that could be built in in terms of information access... What I think tends to happen is... the units hit the streets, the students hit the streets and then the library staff respond... Find out that suddenly this text has been cited as a highly recommended text and there is only one copy in the library... But I think that it is not just a case of the teachers advising library staff of what resources shall be used. I think there is a step before that, of a more consultancy style of liaison where the subject matter is made known to the librarian and the objectives of the unit and to give the librarian opportunity for input... that the librarians are seen as a stakeholder in that process... I mean it could even occur at planning stage too... I think that would depend on the interest level of the librarian and the time available (ID: 320).

These sentiments were also borne out in Burge’s study (1988, p.57) which described librarians “reacting at the eleventh hour” because of poor communication and non-involvement on course teams. The instructional designer suggested a more “consultancy style of liaison where the subject matter and the objectives of the unit is made known to the librarian to give the librarian opportunity for input” (ID: 338-40).

Access to Technology

When properly introduced, technology can stimulate the imagination of off-campus students and encourage them to seek out information beyond the traditional course framework. It gives them the opportunity to acquire and practice the independent learning skills they need to succeed both in a degree and in a career (Bazillion and Brown 1992, p.68).

Computer literacy was an important issue in externals’ approaches to library use29. Teaching staffs’ impressions regarding their students’ computer access were interesting, and seemed to vary radically between individuals.

Interviewees commented that access to computers differed for postgraduates and undergraduates, quite a commonsense observation given the employed nature of postgraduates. One interviewee estimated almost 100% access rates by students to computers, about two thirds having remote access (B26:117-119). It proved interesting to compare these impressions with a 1994 study conducted at SCU by Ellis, Debreceny and Hayden (1995), which showed that 95% of off-campus students had access to computers and 63% (of both on and off campus students) have access to modems30.

E-mail contact with students seemed a good indication of students’ access to Internet facilities. However, in general, interviewees indicated that only a handful of students currently communicated this way31. Several interviewees felt that their students were heavily using the University Centres for catalogue access, but not e-mail however as Ellis, Debreceny and Hayden’s study (1995) indicated 90% of the off-campus students who used the University Centres have home access to computers. Interviewees’ feelings were that most have access to computers at work and furthered that “there would be very few students who don’t use word processors as a tool now. It’s not far from a word processor, for a couple of hundred dollars to attach a modem” (E8:231-4).

The idea of World Wide Web investigating and establishing courses to be conducted via the Internet32 was enthusiastically welcomed by some, referring to advantages for immediate provision of current information (B32:672-3) and feedback (H4:229-31). Others were far more suspicious;
We’ve done a bit of a survey, like a straw poll. We find that the men are using the Web and the women are not. ... I haven’t found it of any use to me personally so I haven’t put a high priority on it. I guess if I learnt how to use it and I did find it useful, I would. We find that the men are more interested in that technical, exploring, learning, playing, fiddling with technology than women are, and the men here seem to put it on a higher list of priorities (E5:368-84).

As far as information access is concerned, such educational innovations will represent revolutionary information access for external students. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to deal with this in detail, it is worth noting that the approaches of teaching staff toward this newly emerging medium would be crucial to its success.

One interviewee had already moved one of his units to web format. Another stated that; “In 10 years time it will be done this way because kids are coming through schools with those skills (B32:718).

Equity of access was still stated as the major obstacle to the full embracement of technology. As was previously mentioned, a couple of interviewees indicated that they felt the library had a role to play with facilitating access to modems.

Concluding Statements

Overall, the findings of the research paint a picture of SCU as an environment where teaching staff are quite cognisant of andragogical approaches and embrace learner-centred values in their teaching styles. They are enthusiastic about their courses and positive about distance education methods. While interviewees tended not to be theoretically versed in the notion of self-directed learning as an educational approach, they exhibited many aspects of it in their teaching approaches and were positive about its importance.

As far as their approaches to the information needs of their students is concerned, distance educators placed little practical emphasis on libraries but emphasised a broad range of other information sources. In facilitation of information skill development, educators seemed to have strong facilitatory methods in place with their internal students but struggled, or had not attempted, to translate these approaches to external delivery.

In addressing the three aims of this thesis, the research has revealed that there is a very broadly dispersed group of distance educators who influence external students’ learning experiences, and thus a broad ‘target group’ to which improvements in communications and co-operative relationships must be aimed.

In the light of this difficulty, the instructional designer emerges as a possible solution. Their recognition of the value of information skills development together with the nature of their role makes instructional designers a prime potential mediator for the facilitation of information skill development.
As the study revealed, educators are enthusiastic about the value and role of information skills (in the ‘wider than library’ context) yet struggle to translate these values off-campus. While this finding is in itself valuable, the implications and recommendations outlined in the following chapter would move SCU forward in terms of quality in external course delivery.

It is fitting to conclude this chapter’s exploration with the words of one interviewee, speaking of information skill development;

... teachers can’t jettison those skills. They have to weave them in to everything that they do. So that content and the skills development just sit side by side in any learning encounter (ID: 461-3).

Endnotes

1 Such demographic details were considered important as Thomas and Ensor (1984) had found that factors such as faculty members’ method of learning to use libraries, frequency of library use, publishing history (not studied here, but may be indicated by research background), length of services and opinion of students research abilities affected decisions to provide formal library instruction. Although such generalisable findings are beyond the scope of this thesis, it was felt that it was worth collecting such data to facilitate further analysis.

2 One interviewee indicated a reticence to research early in their career and tertiary education, but that they had “learnt as they went along”.

3 Examples of responses include “weekly to monthly, varies with time of year” (B32:15), “monthly, for a couple of days intensively” (E5:15) and “monthly unfortunately and much to my personal disgust” (E8: 12).

4 This interviewee was purposively selected, as described in Chapter 2, due to his position of central contact and influence. Although not the only interviewee with instructional design responsibilities this interviewee became known as ‘the Instructional Designer’. As an instructional designer, working with educators from many faculties this interviewee’s perceptions are valuable as those of an ‘objective outsider’. This instructional designers’ evident theoretical and practical experience in distance education made his perceptions and input highly valuable.

5 Given the lack of evidence that teaching staff provided of assisting and encouraging students to undertake the ‘find’ component, it seems that this statement should be tentatively addressed. However if this value was consistently maintained, it would positively affect the ‘hidden curriculum’.

6 Lebowitz found that 47% of faculty used different assignments for internal and off-campus courses, while 34% used different course outlines.

7 One interviewee was responsible for co-ordinating writers but had not yet written any course materials herself (E5).

8 Course development, particularly in the case of the CBT model implemented in the Industry Partnership programs was a highly complex process. The writers are brought together as a team. At that stage we get the instructional designer to sit in. The industry partner is also usually present at that meeting too. The writers are give the Writers Guidelines (see footnote 10)... They go off and write their module submit it to us in printed form and on disc. The proof form goes off to the reviewer, or reader. And then we get the OK from the reader. If there are any changes
we bring the writer back and negotiate. ... And then the instructional designer becomes involved. The instructional designer goes through the layout and so on and then it goes to desktop publishing. Another way we may do it is if the partner wants it we might let it go as far as instructional design before it goes to the reader or the reviewer. Because really what they are looking for is content but some of them might be looking at content and style.

9 “I think that the LIC has embraced the distance education student and has embraced the support of the distance education student and that has contributed to the culture” (ID: 130-3).

10 Sensitivity to staff was seen as a big issue. One instructional designer described it as particularly important to “tune in to the teaching style of the individual too. I don’t wish to impose upon them a whole style of teaching with which they are not familiar, or they don’t have any ownership of, so I will try to gauge what their pedagogical values are and particularly in regards to this particular unit” (ID:57-61). Suggestion provided to writers were ‘argued’ in terms of learning strategies, learning styles, good teaching practice, those sort of things...” (S13:61-80)

11 These included the Project Manager who oversees course development and delivery, ‘workplace facilitators’ who conduct tutorials and workshops and provide individual supervision for on-the-job components and ‘mentors’ who are connected to workplace and provide support to students. Mentors and facilitators perform the roles of demonstrating, explaining, allowing for practice, providing joint of individual review and encouraging application of learned competencies. Writers, in addition to producing the written study materials also produce a Facilitator’s Guide, which is used by mentors and facilitators, and which clearly outlines the competency standards. Assessors were also drawn from the workplace and the interviewee described a “fairly rigorous training program” which these workplace assessors had to go through.

Writers in this CBT framework are provided a copy of the Writers Guidelines (1994). This reference proved particularly valuable in providing information on the design and development process undertaken in that faculty to produce course materials. It deals extensively with the instructional design process and while making passing mention of “directing learners to resources” (1994, p.10) there is little real attention paid to information literacy or libraries. Instructional design has the explicitly stated aim to match objectives, content, instruction method and assessment. If the development of information skills is not part of the course objectives, then it will consequently not be a goal of the instructional design. The Writers’ Guidelines do outline notions of andragogy, including self-directed learning (1994, p.28-9), however the beliefs implied in the statement “Adults are able to perform their own tasks, make their own decisions, and operate with a high degree of self direction” imply a non-facilitatory approach.

12 Although the incorporation of residential was not directly questioned of participants it seemed that all those who did incorporate face-to-face components raised is as concerning their interaction with students and students’ interaction with libraries.

13 The CBT model of assessment involved “workplace assessors who have to go through a fairly rigorous training program, either offered by us or offered by a third party... they look at the task on content/context and when it comes to the university assessor they look again at context. They also look at the way the arguments are developed, the level of critique or reflection that takes place; the more academic aspects of assessment” (E8:12 1-7).

14 Similar comments were made by Behrens, who described contradictory or inconsistent responses as possibly indicating that lecturers were uninformed or unaware of the value of library skills instruction.

15 For instance, one interviewee stated that “theoretically with our library you don’t need any skills really, external students, you just fill out a form. I think that is how they do it... And even if you want a book that has been suggested, a lot of us now put call numbers next to it as well. So you don’t have to even know what that means. You just write out what you see on a piece of paper (S 13:432-9). When asked whether they thought this approach was acceptable, interviewees indicated that they had not really thought this through.
16 In the case of the Industry Partnerships, purchases in these libraries were influenced by teaching staff. In another case, it was indicated that workplaces could also supply access to databases such as CINAHL and MEDLINE.

17 This approach would only be appropriate with a small number of student enrolments,

18 This in fact did seem to be the case, as a similar statement was found in one set of materials provided to me by an interviewee.

19 One particular faculty, was described as having originally promoted a highly flexible approach to course delivery, in as far as offering of units and assessment, but as the interviewee indicated students found this hard to adhere to; “They like to be told ... By leaving it open ... quite a lot of students didn’t finish it” (S 13:525-36).

20 Several interviewees clearly indicated their receptivity of the concept of self directed learning, describing internal techniques for promoting it, yet seemed to grapple with transferring these techniques to the external environment.

21 One interviewee indicated that initial programs based on flexibility had been “wound” back in over time because of the beauraucracy of the university “… they have to complete it within the sixteen week time period that it takes other students. We have got to process their results in batches so we can get grade distributions because this university wants us to have grade distributions now….So that takes us away from a lot of the criterion based assessment we used to use. More and more we are being pushed towards non-referenced assessment. So I think the concept of self-directed learning is a noble one, but I think as soon as you set it within an organisation it starts to break down” (H4:183-195).

22 One interviewee described the learning contracts as follows: “They have to set their own learning objectives, their own resources and strategies... what they want to be assessed on, how they are going to be assessed. And they send it to me and we sign the contract. So that is really a research based proposal (B32:364-372). Learning contracts were particularly promoted by one instructional designer; “What we were doing had some influence. Because we always used to suggest learning contracts and had expertise in how to administer them and how to support them. It was here that we could share with other people” (ID1:397-9).

23 Given the lack of evidence of information skill development being facilitated with external students it would seem that these responses from the teaching staff, if not the instructional designer, may have been highly influenced.

24 The unfortunate positioning of the LIC to the far extreme left of the campus has always been a point of recognised weakness to the staff of the LIC. Despite suggested moves while the campus was in its early growing stages, the physical centralisation of the library was never really an option.

25 “Now I am just trying to think, are we all fully aware of what the library actually provides for external students? Now you are making me think. Am I actually fully aware of what services our library provides for external students, and is there a leaflet?” (52:419-421) Another interviewee had only just became aware of reserve arrangements for external students, a service which had existed for many years.

26 Crocker states that “a method that supplies students with ‘all the reading essential’ is inappropriate in a large number of undergraduate courses, particularly in the humanities... where wide reading is almost a prerequisite... it is an entirely unsuitable method in postgraduate courses, where limited or prescribed reading would be the antithesis of any course objective” (1984, p.35).
27 Because many students are in remote areas and have limited access to resources, the student is provided with all materials they are expected to use and “relieved of time consuming searching and freed from the distraction of irrelevant material” (George and Love 1994, p.201), an approach seen as “good teaching’. A similar point is made in UCQ study (University of Central Queensland 1992, p.23) which indicates that these approaches are upheld in postgraduate study.

28 Well I’ve always thought there isn’t a lot of dialogue between the teaching staff and the people at the coal face in the library... perhaps from both directions. I think a whole lot of what happens is issues come up from the library end but don’t get translated back to the teaching staff, and visa versa. It is sort of another world up there. And it not any one individual’s fault...(ID:309-316)

29 While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to address this in detail it is worth noting that the study revealed little evidence that this was being addressed with external students, with the exception of one interviewee who spoke of an orientation to the use of e-mail at a residential.

30 Such figures are increasing dramatically. For instance in 1992 the University of Central Queensland (1992) found that 85% of postgraduate students surveyed had access to some type of computer and 17% to a modem. Ellis, Debreceny and Hayden’s study found that approximately 40% of students (overall) indicated that they would purchase computers in the next three years, with 55% of these indicating they would purchase a modem as well. Such projections may prove highly conservative as “student purchases may be affected by the University delivering more services electronically, technology cost reductions and by the potential for multiple uses such as entertainment” (Ellis, Debreceny et al. 1995, p.215).

31 One interviewee indicated having had requests for e-mail assignment submission and stated that “I am a bit worried about that. I am quite willing to do that but I am a bit worried in case something lost in the great e-mail in the sky (52:375-7)”. This indicates a residual level of techno-phobia, as in reality assignments probably have a far greater chance of being lost in the post, and with e-mail there is the facility for immediate confirmation of receipt.

32 The 1994 University Plan, Into the Next Millennium, indicates that over the next few years all courses will be developed for electronic delivery, that staff and students will carry out much of their knowledge acquisition from home, and that the role of teaching staff will shift from lecturer to resourcer and facilitator of learning. For such changes to be effective teaching staff must embrace such moves, as they will be directly affected. In 1996 the TILT Unit (Technology in Learning and Teaching) was established with the role of “assisting the University with the development of units and programs of study for electronic delivery; to provide the staff of the university with training and development opportunities in the area of network technology; and to assist in the development and promotion of technological innovation projects” (Position Description, 28/3/96).

33 Although equity issues are still recognised as problematic by interviewees; “the only way you can get around that is to say to students that you can only enrol if you have access to a computer...And then we are limiting the number of people in the program” (B32:692-6). Studies such as that by Ellis, Debreceny and Hayden (1995) suggest that this may not as big an equity issue as teaching staff expect.
Chapter 4

Implications and Recommendations

The major conclusions that can be drawn from this research have been discussed in Chapter 3. To reiterate:

- Distance educators intuitively practice student-centred teaching to promote self-directed learning. Some can articulate the theoretical basis for this in andragogy and others have learnt this from the practical world of being a distance educator;
- Distance educators struggle to translate self-directed approaches into the distance education delivery environment;
- Distance educators place little practical importance on the role of libraries, emphasising other sources of information;
- There are a broad range and number of people involved in course development, however most units are influenced by instructional designers in some way;
- Teaching staff have not fully considered the information skill development of their students.

Despite the exploratory nature of this research, a number of implications and recommendations can be drawn from the data analysis process. These can be grouped under three broad headings;

1. Implications for distance education provision;
2. Implications for SCU structure and function;
3. Implications for further research.

1. Implications for Distance Education Provision

A number of implications are of broad application to the distance education environment of higher education.

a) Promotion of Information Skills Development

The study revealed that many distance educators had confused and poorly formulated approaches to information skills development in the distance education environment. While most of the interviewees expected their internal and external students to seek information, they were less likely to facilitate information seeking skills in their external students than they were with their internal students. Those who used residential for a ‘one shot’ orientation to libraries, did not necessarily see information skill development as extending further than that. As George and Love recommend, libraries should be promoted not as an ‘add on’ component of learning a field, but as part of the field itself “and must be dealt with in a highly integrated way” (1994, p.201). As Steffen recommended (1987, p.312) an “extensive and persistent public information campaign” is required, “so that teaching staff fully understand how information literacy can benefit students”.

Recommendations:

i) Promotion of what information skills are;

ii) Promotion of the role of distance educators in self-directed learning;
iii) Dissemination of information about information skills and techniques for assisting students to develop them (after further research into this; see 3. Implications for Further Research)

These three recommendations could be implemented by a variety of means including:

- publications in distance and higher education literature;
- staff development programs (see below);
- production of a guide/booklet for all staff (full-time and part-time);
- incorporation of skills development issues in Distance and Adult Education courses (such as the Deakin run programs);
- incorporation of skills development issues at distance and higher education conferences;
- enlisting the cooperation of instructional designers for promoting such skill development through course materials.

b) Curriculum Development and Pedagogy

The study revealed an overall struggle by distance educators to find means of facilitating information skill development with distance education students. From these findings it is clear that techniques need to be developed, implemented and evaluated to establish a repertoire of instructional design techniques and principles which facilitate information skill development as an integral part of the curriculum.

Recommendations:

i) See 3. Implications for Further Research

c) Assessment Design

As this study illustrated, assessment is the main means available to teaching staff to promote self-directed learning and information skill development with external students. This implies that approaches to assessment design must be carefully formulated for information skill development to occur.

Recommendations:

i) Further research into various assessment methods and their effect on information seeking behaviour;

ii) Formal and informal involvement of librarians with distance educators to ensure information skills development through assessment;

iii) Formal involvement of instructional designers in assessment construction;

iv) Cooperative research between librarians and instructional designers into information skill development at a distance.

It should be noted that some very novel and potentially effective assessment approaches were revealed during the study. The success of these methods in promoting information skills could be a particular focus for further research.
2. Implications for SCU Structure and Function

a) Library Structure

While distance educators did not speak of specific flaws in relationships with library staff, there was irrefutable evidence of poor communications between the two groups, particularly with regards distance education (see 2b below).

Recommendations:

i) A dedicated library staff member be responsible for distance education, preferably one with a background in distance education course development and/or practice.

This staff member would perform functions such as the following:
- establishing closer relationships with distance educators;
- creating faculty profiles;
- examination of external course materials and evaluation of the materials capacity for facilitating skill development;
- analysis of staff concerns regarding facilitation of library use;
- regular dissemination of information regarding services, resources etc;
- attending distance education staff and student functions;
- staff development functions, including segments in staff orientation programs;
- faculty workshops and seminars. The library currently places great emphasis on student “user education” programs, but I know of no established programs for faculty members;
- research into distance education methods and information skill development;
- cooperation with instructional designers in course development and research.

ii) This dedicated library staff member to become a contributing member of the curriculum development team for distance education programs.

b) Library Services

While library services to distance education students were seen to be very good, there was much to indicate that distance educators simply did not know what services were offered to external students. This lack of awareness in many cases caused educators to design their courses to avoid involving the library, presuming that any involvement was not feasible. Such approaches hamper students’ information skills development.

Recommendations:

i) Dissemination of External Library Guide to all distance educators;

ii) Discussions between librarians and distance educators regarding availability of services.

There were many indications that the information which distance educators require their students to access was not the traditional library based literature but rather ‘applied’ information, both at undergraduate and postgraduate level, particularly the latter. Within this framework it is clear that the library is not a primary source of information. In many cases students are not being encouraged to consult literature beyond that supplied in course materials, but rather to approach
workplaces for professionally oriented material. It is also unclear to what extent the library could better service these needs, and whether, in fact there is a need. What is clear, however, is that it is quite possible for students to complete their degrees without needing to acquire library based information skills.

Recommendations:

iii) Investigation of alternative means of addressing non-conventional information needs such as for workplace based information, including technological solutions.

c) Staff Development

The Teaching and Learning Unit’s staff orientation workshops could be seen as a future medium for influencing distance education culture and approaches. However the geographical dispersion of staff members involved in development and delivery inhibits the use of this medium alone.

Recommendations:

i) Involvement of librarians and instructional designers in staff orientation programs;

ii) Development of ‘orientation kits’, for all staff involved in course development and delivery, in conjunction with continuing staff development. These would include sections on facilitating self-directed learning and information skills development.

Comments from distance educators emphasised the value of personal experience in distance education study. While most distance educators did have personal experience as an external student, it seems important that this be made a preferable criteria in selection of staff.

Recommendations:

iii) Institutional encouragement of staff (librarians and faculty staff) to enrol in distance education programs for professional development;

iv) Recruitment of staff with distance education experience.

d) Cooperative Relationships with Instructional Designers

Overall a very strong indication was drawn of the highly influential role of instructional designers. As has been mentioned, their potential value in influencing the approaches of distance educators cannot be underestimated and could be harnessed to positively influence the information culture within SCU. These individuals were found to play a central role in distance education provision and are in contact with a broad base of teaching staff, internal and external, experienced and inexperienced. They were found to exert a large degree of influence over not only course development but aspects of delivery, particularly the powerful tool of assessment. They also played a strong diagnostic and support role. Furthermore, they were found to already hold many of the values for self-directed learning and information seeking skills addressed in this thesis.
Chapter Four                                      Implications/Recommendations

Recommendations:

i) Instructional design becomes a structured component of all course development in all faculties;

ii) Instructional designers become involved in University-wide discussions regarding self-directed learning and information skill development, including involvement with librarians and administrators;

iii) Embracement of information skill development techniques in discussions with distance educators;

iv) Collaborative research between librarians, distance educators and instructional designers.

e) University. Commitment to Information Skills

As the University of Central Queensland study (1992, p.x) recommends, it is important that Universities recognise the importance of information retrieval skills. This is certainly essential for SCU where University structure and policy was found to strongly influence adoption by distance educators of flexible approaches to teaching and learning.

Recommendations:

i) Formulation of. Policy to ensure that courses are not totally self-contained and that students are encouraged to research topics individually;

ii) Structuring of instructional design as a key component of all course development and modification;

iii) All relevant staff to be involved in policy decisions;

iv) Policy to be informed by collaborative research as previously recommended.

3. Implications for Further Research

In light of the preceding discussion and the arguments of this thesis, there are several potential questions that could inform further research in the area of information seeking skills, information literacy and self-directed learning in distance education.

Potential Research Questions

i) What relationship is there between expressed attitudes of distance educators to the information needs of their distance education students (as revealed in this study) and their approach to course material and assessment design?

ii) Do undergraduate distance education students value information literacy?

iii) How do librarians perceive the information literacy needs of external students?

iv) How do SCU distance educators’ approaches to student information needs differ from those of educators at different organisations?
v) In what way does assessment influence information seeking behaviour of distance education students? This may encompass further investigation into the ability and means of assessment to influence information skill development, in particular, continued investigation into the role and potential benefits of the ‘learning contract’ (Morgan and Di Corpo 1993) and its effect on information skills.

Adaptation and implementation of Hardesty’s attitudes scale (1991, p.142-147) could also provide a valuable basis for further research. Modifications should be based on the findings of this study and should counter the many perceived weaknesses of Hardesty’s questionnaire, as previously discussed.
Reflections and Conclusion

In conclusion, it is felt that this study has, in the context of SCU, moved us closer toward improved relationships and increased understandings between distance educators and libraries. It has pointed to the areas of need if self-directed learning and information literacy are to be embraced as a means of improving students’ learning experiences and it has laid a carpet for greater understanding and cooperation across this and other higher education institutions to enhance quality distance education provision.

It is fitting to conclude with these words drawn from one of the key writers who has contributed to the conceptual framework of this study:

To make a difference... librarians need to understand the complexities of faculty culture. Librarians need a broad understanding of the faculty perspective. This understanding will help to allow librarians to move beyond the confines of the library and to work with individual faculty members (Hardesty 1991, p.32).

Endnotes

1. This involvement was also suggested by Haworth (1982b, p.170).

2. This approach was recommended by Burge et al. (1988, p.68), who suggested that this person maintained a proactive and skilled interpersonal approach.

3. Some of these functions are derived from the very early recommendations by Guskin, Stoffle and Boisse (1979) which would still seem to have some relevance today.

4. This could involve holding individual interviews with faculty to learn about their courses, and at the same time provide relevant information regarding library resources and services and customising these to the needs of individual staff and courses.

5. For instance, as one instructional designer stated during interviews, “by looking at the assessment items, that they draft up, it gives you a very good idea of what their expectations are of students”.

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Appendices

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### Appendix A - Student Enrolments by Course Level and Faculty

<table>
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<th>Faculty</th>
<th>1993</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>P/G Diploma/Certificate</td>
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<td>229</td>
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<td>433</td>
<td>714</td>
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<tr>
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<td>107</td>
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<tr>
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<td>OVERALL TOTAL (ALL FACULTIES)</td>
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Appendix B – Initial Letter to Faculty

From: Renata Phelps, Southern Cross University Library
To: Faculty
Date: 14th August, 1995

Regarding: Request for Course/Unit information for research purposes.

I am writing to you regarding the research project I propose to undertake for my Masters in Distance Education which I am enrolled in through Deakin University. My project is currently being submitted to the Ethics Committee and has been approved by the Registrar of the University.

The purpose of my research project is to examine the attitudes, values and perceptions of Southern Cross University teaching staff toward the information needs of the external students in the light of their approaches to distance education provision. My research will be carried out through in-depth interviews with a small sample of teaching staff.

Although my sample size will not be big, I am interested in compiling a fairly comprehensive table of units offered externally by Southern Cross University, and the staff members responsible for their development and/or delivery. Information regarding current enrolments would also be very useful. This information will be used for sample selection and for general reference.

I was hoping you may be able to assist me in obtaining this information. I realise this information may be difficult to compile and may be in a state of constant flux. Any assistance you could provide, however, would be greatly appreciated.

I feel my research has great potential benefit for Southern Cross University and the welfare of the students in general. I look forward to being able to work with your faculty, and in being able to provide feedback from my study which may assist in improving the quality of external provision.

If you require further information regarding my project, please feel free to contact me.

ph. 066 203 100
fax. 066 220 093

regards, Renata Phelps
Appendix C - Derivation of Coding for Staff Involved.

Where two staff were involved in a unit, the student numbers were counted for both.

**TOURISM**

<table>
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<tr>
<td>S2</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>151</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>53</td>
<td>Chosen - Interviewed</td>
</tr>
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<td>S4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Letter sent. Extended leave</td>
</tr>
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<td>S5</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>49</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>S8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>Letter sent: suggested by S2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S11</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>S13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Letter sent: suggested by S2</td>
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**Science (Tourism)**

Faculty Statistics

- F = 50%
- M = 50%

Average no. units per staff member = 1.3

Average no. external students per staff member = 49.1

---

**EDUCATION**

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<th>Number of Students Spring '95</th>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>E2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>131</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>245</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sampled</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>216</td>
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<td>Letter sent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>115</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>E16</td>
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<td>E17</td>
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<td>84</td>
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<td>E18</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Education Faculty Statistics**

- F = 41%
- M = 59%

Average no. units per staff member = 2.2

Average no. external students per staff member = 94.53

* Note: Sampling in this faculty affected by changed employment status of the researcher in October 1995, as noted in sampling section.
### HEALTH

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<tr>
<td>H2</td>
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<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>H3</td>
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<tr>
<td>H4</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>44</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>73</td>
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<td>H8</td>
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Health Faculty Statistics
- F=75%
- M=25%
- Average no. units per staff member = 1.1

Average no. external students per staff member = 34.5

### LAW

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Law Faculty Statistics
- F=57%
- M=43%
- Average no. units per staff member = 1.1

* These figures not provided.
### BUSINESS

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<td>B24</td>
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<tr>
<td>B32</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Business Faculty

Statistics

F=90%

M=10%

Average no. units per staff member = 2.7

* These figures not provided
Appendix D – Plain Language Statement

From: Renata Phelps
To: Potential Interviewee

Regarding: A study of teaching staff's approaches to library use by external students.

I am currently enrolled in a Master of Distance Education program at Deakin University. My supervisor is Christine Spratt. As part of my degree I am undertaking a research project to investigate the approaches of teaching staff toward the use of libraries by their external students.

It is hoped that this study will provide information and insight to both teaching and library staff which will help improve the quality of educational provision for external students, both of Southern Cross and other universities.

I believe you are currently involved in the delivery of external courses at Southern Cross University, and I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

If you decide to participate I would like to meet with you and discuss your feelings with regard to library services and your students. I would estimate the interview may take about half to one hour. It may also prove necessary to meet more than once but it is not expected that subsequent meetings would take as long as the first. In addition to these interviews I would also ask you to fill out a short questionnaire to provide me with some background information about yourself.

If you agree I would also like to tape-record our discussion. Transcripts will be made from these tape recordings and these will be forwarded to you before any analysis occurs. You will thus be free to make any changes or omissions if you feel these are necessary.

All information obtained in these interviews will remain confidential and will not be able to be identified with you. Your name will not appear on the transcripts of the questionnaire form and a code will be used by myself only to link the data.

If you decide to participate you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time.

It is expected that the results of the study may be published or used as a basis for future research. Some of the information gained in the study may be quoted verbatim but anonymously. If there are any statements made in the transcript which you wish not to be either

a) used in data analysis OR

b) quoted directly

then opportunity will be provided for you to annotate this on the transcript. A short summary of the findings of the study will be forwarded to all participants and a copy of the final report will be placed in the library archives and would be available on request.

If you feel you have any additional questions please feel free to contact me on:

phone: 222 879 h or 203 100 w
fax: 220 093 confidentiality cannot be assured as general fax.
e-mail: rphelps@alsvid.scu.edu.au

I will be contacting you shortly after you have had time to consider participation in this study. If you have decided to participate we can discuss further arrangements then. Attached is a copy of a consent form you would be required to sign. I would like to emphasise that your participation is entirely voluntary.

Regards, Renata Phelps
Appendix E – Consent Form

Consent Form

I ____________________________ of ____________________________ have read the information above regarding the study of teaching staff’s approaches to library use by external students. I agree to participate in the study being undertaken by Renata Phelps.

I acknowledge that:

1. the aims, methods and anticipated benefits of the research study have been explained to me.

2. I voluntarily and freely give my consent to my participation in the research study.

3. I understand that findings of the study will be used for research purposes and may be reported in journals, but that all information gained in the study is confidential and will not be able to be linked to me.

4. I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from me will not be used.

Signature: ____________________________ Date: ________________
Appendix F – Demographic Questionnaire

To: Participants in the study into teaching staff's approaches to library use by external students

The following is a short questionnaire which I will ask you to fill out to provide me with some background information about yourself. I have asked you to provide this information through this questionnaire as I felt it would be faster for you to supply the information in this way and it will allow more time for us to talk about other matters in the interview. As with all other information you provide me with your responses will be treated confidentially. You are not asked to place your name on the sheet but the form will be coded so that I can link the information to that obtained in the interview.

ID Code: 

Faculty: __________________________ Sex: M / F

How long have you been employed in higher education as a “teacher” tutor or lecturer including employment at other institutions? _______ years

How long have you been involved in external teaching? _______ years

Are you currently employed part-time? ______ full-time? ______ Other? ______

Have you ever studied externally yourself? ______
   If so, for how many years? ______ years
   At what level? ______ undergraduate, postgraduate? ______

Have you been involved in research in the past 3 years? ______

What would you say best describes the frequency of your own library use?
   Daily_______ Weekly _______ Monthly_______ Seldom_______
Appendix G – Return Letter

Thank you very much for the time you spent with me in our recent interview, and for your valuable input to my project.

As I outlined to you in my original letter, my research project involves making full transcripts of these interviews. I attach the transcript of our discussion, as recorded on the cassette. There may be sections which were difficult for me to transcribe, and if there was any doubt as to words or phrases these are marked in brackets (‘?’).

No analysis has yet been done of these transcripts as I wished to return the document to you first to offer you the opportunity of making any changes or omissions.

I would appreciate if you could return the document in the envelope provided, whether amended or not, as this will signify your acceptance of the document as an accurate representation of our interview.

If any further questions should arise during analysis which I feel were not covered during our discussion and may prove important, I may need to contact you. Such contact would only be brief and informal.

Once again I would like to thank you for your cooperation and time.

Regards,

Renata
Appendix H - Types of Data and the Analysis Process

Data took a number of forms, as described below and these are identified graphically in the following flowchart by the use of the following symbols.

**Original and Working Transcripts**

Primary data was in the form of interview transcripts. Transcripts are referred to as original transcripts (O/T) before they are returned to interviewees. After any annotations necessitated by this process they are referred to as working transcripts (W/T). Working transcripts only were used in analysis.

**Interview Reflection Sheet**

Immediately following each interview an Interview Reflection Sheet was completed which recorded such information as place and circumstances of the interview, non-verbal language and nuances, what the relationship with the respondent was like, second thoughts about the meanings, doubts about the quality of data and personal feelings, elaborations or clarifications. Points from the interview reflection were then added to Memos. Reflections were also added to the transcript itself using the convention of { } to differentiate personal reflections from the body of the interview proceedings. These were used in the case of contextual or definitional confusion or uncertainty, or in the case of interruptions.

**Memos**

These personal reflections were created at various stages of the research process. They were used for such thought recording as summarising the main themes, issues, problems and statements, new hypotheses, speculations or guesses brought out in both the interview transcript and the interview reflection form. By recording the reflective process and documenting this through memos, the accountability of the study is increased. Memos were also used to plan future contacts and suggest new or revised codes for further analysis. Memos were initially made in written form and then salient points were entered into the memo facility of NUD.IST as described subsequently).

**The Relevant Literature**

The relevant literature also becomes a form of data to be used in comparative analysis. As will be discussed further, the key literature is utilised as either on-line or off-line documents.
The Analysis Process

The analysis process can be illustrated visually through the following flowchart.
Appendix I – Excerpt from Final Tree Structure
## Appendix J – Node Addresses and Definitions

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<tr>
<th>First Branch</th>
<th>Second Branch</th>
<th>Third Branch</th>
<th>Fourth Branch</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Node Address</th>
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## Appendices

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| Computers/Technology | Any statements relating to computers and students/technology etc | 7 |
Appendix K - Interview Guide

As mentioned in letter I am wanting to gather information about teaching staff’s approaches to the information needs of external students. As someone who is currently directly involved with external students I believe you can provide valuable insights into what the information needs of external students really are. I am interested in finding out the breadth of your opinions, attitudes, values, reservations, needs and suggestions. I’m most interested in what you have to say; in letting you elaborate on the areas I’m investigating. Therefore if you have any thoughts during our discussion that you feel may be relevant, I’d be very interested in hearing them.

I’d like to tape record the interview if that is O.K. so I don’t miss anything or inadvertently muddle anything you’ve said. If you would like to stop the tape recorder at any time, please feel free to do so.

As I said in the letter confidentiality is assured - what you say in the interview will not be able to be connected with you. If there are any questions you don’t want to answer, just say so.
Any Questions before we begin?

TAPE RECORDER

• I know very little about distance education in your units. I wonder if you could tell me a little about how it operates in your faculty? What is your role? Who is involved? Which courses/units you are involved with?
• Can you describe how you went about developing your course? Who was involved in the process? What factor/s have most influenced your distance teaching style? How do you structure your materials? Where do you draw your ideas and information from?
• How does your course presentation vary for internal versus external students? How do your assignments differ for on- and off-campus students?
• Do you feel either method better suits your course presentation? Why?
• What are your goals as a “teacher”? (To determine whether their approach to delivery of courses is facilitatory). How would you summarise your approach to teaching?
• Why do you think students enrol in your program? What are their goals? Do you feel your program meets the need of students?
• Do you feel the approach external or internal meets your goals as a teacher? The goals of your course?
• How do they vary for post graduate and undergraduate students?
• In developing your courses do you aim for your materials to be self contained? How? Why do you adopt this approach? So when you design your materials, did you intend students to seek information outside the materials?
• What role do you feel information seeking skills play in your external courses? What expectations do you have of students with regard to seeking material outside to their course package? How do you feel about your students’ current use of information?
• How do you think teaching staff affect the information seeking behaviour of students?
• Is information of continuing importance to your students? What sort of information?
• How do you currently encourage use of information resources in your course presentation?
• How would you compare the information seeking skills of off-campus students to on-campus students?
• What, if any role do you see libraries as playing in your course delivery? Librarians?
• How do you believe your students learn to use libraries?
• What expectations do you have of library services for external students?
• In what ways does the library service meet or not meet these expectations?
• What are your feelings regarding the library’s approach to distance education?
• How would you describe your relationship with library staff? How would you describe librarians’ relationships with teaching staff? Do you feel that contact at BOS works? Would you involve librarians in your course development?
• What reservations do you hold regarding library services?
• What suggestions do you have regarding library services?
• How could the library best serve your needs with regards external teaching? How could the library best serve your off-campus students’ needs?
Information skills and the distance education student

- What has most influenced your attitudes to libraries?
- Are you familiar with the concept of self-directed or independent learning? What is your understanding of the terms?

Self-directed study implies the freedom of students to choose goals and resources, and to determine their rate of progress; to pursue the study of personally significant areas in an independent manner. It also involves self-motivation and self-evaluation.

Self-directedness involves a hierarchy of skills including skill in discussion, in independent study, an ability to learn from various media, recognise important and unimportant data and record meaning of important information in abbreviated form, an ability to write well and an ability to research and write on topics related to coursework.

- What are your feelings and opinions about these definitions?
- What are your feelings toward “self-directed” or “independent learning” approaches to teaching and learning? What do you think the university’s approach to self-directed learning is? Do you feel this approach would be appropriate for your course? Why! why not? Would you describe your course at present as promoting “self-directed” learning? How?
- What role do you feel information seeking skills have to play in promoting self-directed learning?
- Is there anything else you would like to add before we finish?
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