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## Future Colleagues: Documents Education in Library and Information Science Programs Teaching Government Information on the Internet

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Offered each fall, LIS 567 Government Information is the most heavily enrolled elective in the School of Information and Library Studies, University at Buffalo MLS program. The class requires weekly reference-type practice exercises, two exams, and a Client Search term project—a customized information package produced for a local non-profit or government agency. Students embark with a mix of trepidation and anticipation: as they're warned up front, what starts out as fun (who's immune to the charms of documents examples like Molly Moo or Fred, the Horse Who Eats Bread?) soon becomes a demanding trek through a rarified body of knowledge.

An Internet version of the course was initially taught in spring 1999, with an enrollment of fifty (the classroom version draws 45-50 students). Rather than Client Searches, the term project was Government Information Pathfinders created for either Doane College in Nebraska (library liaison was Donna Jurena) or Montana State University—Bozeman (liaisons were Adam Wathen and Jodee Kawasaki). Communication with the Doane and Bozeman librarians about pathfinders was through a class discussion list, while student-teacher communication was through e-mail or Web Bulletin Board.

The course is asynchronous, with weekly content modules and assignments posted on the Web, along with a midterm and final exam. An optional hands-on computer session provided one-on-one instruction from the professor in support of the first knotty assignment, covering MOCAT, SPC, and WorldCat. Two "guest lecturers" offered a glimpse of the real world: Charles D. Bernholz, Reference/Documents Librarian at the Farmington Public Library (NM), and Kristen Wilhelm, National Archives and Records Administration.

Although the course is password protected, two sample modules are available at <http://www.sils.buffalo.edu/faculty/Robinson/depos/review.htm> and <http://www.sils.buffalo.edu/faculty/Robinson/depos/review2.htm>.

Advantages of the Internet version of the Buffalo course included:

1. In-depth teaching and student counseling
2. Convenience for distance students
3. Ability to reach out-of-state students
4. Vitality of Web delivery

Disadvantages:

1. Teacher workload
2. Dependence on computer staff for administering exams & maintaining Bulletin Board
3. Awkwardness of e-mail and Bulletin Board communication
4. Difficulty creating a sense of community
5. Loss of spontaneity
6. Teacher loneliness

Other Internet government information courses have been taught by Charley Seavey at the University of Arizona (IRLS 572 Government Information: Policy and Resources) and by University of Illinois–Urbana-Champaign through LEEP (LIS 424: Government Publications)— taught in fall 1998 and spring 1999 by Marilyn Moody.

The University of Arizona course is asynchronous, with weekly content modules posted on the Web and communication through a bulletin board, Web chats, and e-mail. The Urbana-Champaign LEEP course combines asynchronous and synchronous delivery, with weekly content modules posted on the Web and weekly "live" Web sessions (audio, text chat, with the ability to post slides and other graphics).