

ACRL DOLS Strategic Plan 2024-2027

Adopted by the DOLS Executive Committee May 15, 2024

Overview:

The Strategic Plan was created with guidance and information from the ACRL DOLS Strategic Plan 2021-24 and the results of the Strategic Plan Survey sent to DOLS members in March-April 2024.

Review:

The Strategic Plan will be reviewed annually and revised every three years.

Section Mission Statement:

The Distance and Online Learning Section (DOLS) is a Section of the [Association of College and Research Libraries \(ACRL\)](#), a division of the [American Library Association \(ALA\)](#). DOLS supports and promotes library services to off campus, distance education, and online students and provides a vehicle for the professional development and exchange of ideas among librarians working with off campus and distance education students.

Core Section Values:

The Distance and Online Learning Section is committed to:

- Leadership in the area of distance and online library services from within the Section, cross unit collaborations within ALA, and providing our members with the tools necessary to be leaders within their communities
- Member support through services, resources, and professional development
- Supporting libraries and librarians serving distance and online learning populations
- Creating welcoming learning environments for all distance and online learning stakeholders with a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility
- Collaborating with other Sections, divisions, committees, and organizations through our research, leadership, communication and promotion, and professional development

The plan is divided into five focus areas: research; leadership; communication and promotion; professional development; and diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA). The goals are interrelated and build on the Section's previous activities.

I. Research

The Distance and Online Learning Section addresses the major forces affecting distance and online learning library services through proactive promotion of relevant research.

Objective 1: Foster and disseminate research studies in library support for distance and online learning communities.

Potential Action Items:

- Mentor members in research and publication concepts and processes
- Sponsor research presentations at the DLS, ACRL, and other relevant conferences
- Advocate for submitting research to scholarly journals (e.g., *Journal of Library*

& Information Services in Distance Learning) to support distance and online learning

Objective 2: Identify current trends, issues, data that reflect changes, and developments in the external environment related to distance and online library services.

Potential Action Items:

- Conducting an environmental scan, surveying the membership or specific constituencies (instruction librarians, resource sharing librarians)

Objective 3: Initiate projects, research studies, ad hoc committees, and discussions that promote best practices and contribute to the knowledge base in distance and online learning library services.

Potential Action Items:

- Conduct research with librarians around their perceptions of distance and online library services

II. Leadership

The Distance and Online Learning Section is the acknowledged leader in developing and articulating effective practices in distance and online learning library services.

Objective 1: Promote best practices in distance and online learning library services.

Potential Action Items:

- Find ways to partner and collaborate with ACRL and ALA units outside of DOLS to collaborate and innovate around distance and online learning
- Increase visibility of the Section beyond ALA through communication of Section activities to non-ALA associations, such as the American Association for Higher Education, Distance Learning Association, EduCause, IMS Global, etc.

Objective 2: Become the leading source for locating best resources and tools on distance and online library services.

Potential Action Items:

- Develop resource guides for distance and online learning library services

III. Communication & Promotion

The Distance and Online Learning Section provides timely, accurate, and useful information related to distance and online library services.

Objective 1: Communicate and promote the activities and resources of the Section to the distance and online library community.

Potential Action Items:

- Maintain and continuously improve communication channels, utilizing all available tools
- Promote and distribute the ACRL Standards for Distance Learning Library Services

Objective 2: Provide member support services to promote networking and communication.

Potential Action Items:

- Encourage an increased use of ALA Connect for people to ask questions, discuss new ideas, and create a communities around distance and online librarianship
- Support the exploration of a community of practice within distance and online librarianship

Objective 3: Recognize contributions to the profession and distance and online library services.

Potential Action Items:

- Acknowledging outstanding achievements in service and research with awards
- Continue to highlight and publicize research in distance learning librarianship

IV. Professional Development

The Distance and Online Learning Section committees facilitate the development and sharing of expertise, practice, and resources in distance and online learning library services among librarians, administrators, teaching faculty, instructional team members, and students.

Objective 1: Promote and provide opportunities for professional development in all aspects of distance and online librarianship for both DOLS members and nonmembers.

Potential Action Items:

- Hosting discussion groups, interest groups, program planning, webinars and workshops in appropriate environments
- Developing programs for presentation at ALA, DLS, and regional library conferences
- Developing formal training for librarians who want to improve their distance and online learning skills
- Explore partnering with MLIS programs to provide students with a credential in online learning

Objective 2: Offer opportunities for DOLS members to develop leadership skills.

Potential Action Items:

- Maintain DOLS mentoring program
- Facilitate other Section service opportunities

V. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA)

The Distance and Online Learning Section aims to embed diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility principles into all aspects of online and distance learning. By proactively addressing these values, we strive to create a learning environment that respects and responds to the diverse needs of all stakeholders, promoting equitable access and inclusive practices across digital platforms.

Objective 1: Translate DEIA work into the online space and make concrete and practical guidance available for stakeholders.

Potential Action Items:

- Define what anti-racism, equity, inclusion, and accessibility leadership looks like in distance and online library services, resources, programming, etc.
- Maintain best practices list for creating inclusive learning environments, ensuring the tips are practical and promote psychological safety
- Organize virtual roundtable discussions to collect diverse perspectives on inclusivity in digital education and refine best practices
- Create multimedia resources, such as videos and infographics, that demonstrate inclusive techniques in action
- Integrate DEIA into all Committee work: Add a new question to the Annual Committee Report template that asks how the Committee advanced the Section's DEIA work
- Determine and share how individuals are doing anti-racism, equity, inclusion, and accessibility work

Objective 2: Model and share best practices related to accessibility for synchronous and asynchronous online instruction.

Potential Action Items:

- Conduct workshops and webinars on implementing accessibility tools and standards in online platforms
- Develop a checklist for educators to assess the accessibility of their online courses and provide resources for improvement

Objective 3: Foster an anti-racist culture in online learning environments.

Potential Action Items:

- Develop a training module focused on anti-racist practices and pedagogies for online learning
- Create a peer-review system where online courses are evaluated for cultural sensitivity and inclusiveness, with feedback provided to course creators
- Establish a forum for students and educators to share experiences and strategies for combating racism in online learning spaces
- Expand community partnerships and centering of BIPOC leadership plus lived experiences through collaboration with groups such as [BCALA](#) and [APALA](#)

Objective 4: Foster an inclusive and responsive Section culture reflective of DEIA principles.

Potential Action Items:

- Survey DOLS members for feedback on 1) gaps in DEIA-related programming, services, and training as well as 2) how the DOLS decision making process can better include and support those with non-dominant identities
- Conduct a Section climate study, including people in current and past appointed roles (aka Exec Committee and other Committee members)

- Collect demographic data of Exec Committee members to audit diversity over time
- Track and share spending (categorize budgetary transactions) related to DEIA related programs, initiatives, etc.