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### *Information needs and use of distance education students of College Assurance Plan (CAP) Distance Education (DE) Program\**

Distance education is becoming an important educational concept and practice nowadays. This form of education serves as an alternative form of education to students with "special" cases and reasons for not being able to attend regular schooling. This study aimed to determine these students' needs, specifically the CAP College Foundation, Inc. Distance Education Program students' current and prospective information needs and use in terms of the content and format. It also revealed the DE students' perception and personal assessment of the usage, role and relevance of their own host university library and its information delivery programs (CAP College Library) or any other library in their information research and retrieval. The descriptive survey method was used in this study whereby the questionnaire was used as the data-gathering instrument. These were distributed personally and online. Purposive sampling technique was utilized. Research sample size was 128 DE students from the originally 158-sample size. Limitation to such sample was greatly influenced by the distance of the students to the campus, the time of data collection and their connection to the Internet. The findings of the study revealed that the type of information most DE students need by content is the current events development information and that information needs and purposes are greatly influenced by their courses or their fields of specialization which, if compared to traditional schooling, would appear similar. The information format most preferred is the online format since it is the most accessible, relatively complete and available for their part.

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Information seeking for the part of the DE students was done mostly as fulfilment of their need to provide specific information needs for their work or research and/or by their need to meet their course requirements. Searching the web or using the Internet was also utilized in their information search indicating and affirming their preference towards the usage of online or the Internet. Book reviews and CD-ROMS are the most used tools in locating information. Accessibility-availability of the information and its appropriateness in the learning level also come as a concern for the DE students in their information needs and demands. The library as an information provider appeared significant for the students' information needs and use as reflected by their high usage of the CAP library, which the same way, they find necessary and relevant and contributed to their learning. With this it can be said that the CAP library was able to perform its role in information seeking of the students. The Internal Library Resource Network in CCOW of the CAP library online counterpart's usage and significance appeared little and maybe due to the fact that the site was not yet fully developed. The inadequacy of the CAP College Library's facilities turned out to be the most perceived problem by the students. Recommendations are towards more online and electronic services in nature like: electronic delivery system, subscription to online journals, access to full-text databases, video-conferencing, computer-based training, more updated and relevant library facilities, better database or incorporation of web OPAC in the Internal Library Resource Network (ILRN) and more updated library collections (print or otherwise) must be done to publicize and promote the scholarly and academic role of a library (CAP College Library) in honing minds and facilitating distance education.