International Health Telecommunications Project:
Computer Mediated Communications and the Library.

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The International Health Telecommunications Project (April 1989 - September 1990) of the Network of Community-Oriented Educational Institutions for Health Sciences is attempting to utilize computer mediated communications systems to improve international health sciences education.

The long-term goal of this project is to assist in strengthening member institutions by enhancing access to colleagues and information sources. The specific objectives of the project are to:

> (1) demonstrate the feasibility of establishing electronic communication links among member institutions,

> (2) determine and support training needs,

> (3) assess factors that enhance or impede more widespread use of these technologies within institutions, and

> (4) develop indicators for, and assess, institutional changes resulting from introduction of the technologies.

Activities underway to achieve the objectives include:

> (1) computer conferencing linkage of member institutions in Canada, The United States, Egypt, Nigeria, Indonesia, The Netherlands, The Philippines and Thailand,

> (2) the establishment of several computer conferences on topics such as Women and Health, Community-Based Education, and the Africa-Asia Project on Innovative Health Sciences Education, and

> (3) selective integration with other communications technologies.

Evidence being collected to evaluate achievement of the objectives includes numbers and identities of users, breadth of material being discussed, and the speed and utility of responses.

The Health Sciences Library at McMaster University is a central participant in this project. The establishment of this CMCS project has challenged the Library to respond in new ways to library service. A global CMCS permits a library to offer services well beyond its normal user community.

This paper will examine how the Library has addressed this challenge. It will focus on issues such as:

(1) setting up the network

(2) training and troubleshooting

(3) facilitating communications

(4) providing CMCS-based library services

(5) facilitating information access