

Pennsylvania Libraries: *Research & Practice*

News

Marywood Librarians Teach in Africa

Scranton, PA -- Librarians Leslie Christianson and Julie Watson from Marywood University have been working to educate Catholic nuns in Africa. Funded by a grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA) project is a partnership between Marywood University and Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) in Nairobi, Kenya. HESA provides an alternative means of education for Catholic nuns, giving them technology training and tools and providing support to acquire a Bachelor's degree. The sisters will complete one year of distance learning with Marywood and then matriculate to CUEA where they will work towards degrees in education. Once educated, the sisters will have the necessary credentials to take leadership roles in their congregations, communities, and countries. Because the high demand for qualified leaders in Africa cannot be met via traditional face-to-face education, HESA provides a new pathway to higher education for Catholic nuns in Africa.

As embedded librarians for HESA, Watson and Christianson created a special library portal for HESA, available at libguides.marywood.edu/HESA. In November 2012, they participated in HESA orientation by delivering eight hours of synchronous library instruction via WebEx. Although the sisters had some previous computer training before entering HESA, they faced some difficulties when using the technology. Technical difficulties also interrupted the training. Many times the network was sluggish, and one morning the sisters lost power in Nairobi for close to an hour. Despite these setbacks, the librarians registered the sisters for library cards, conducted a baseline survey, and introduced them to the library portal and databases. They will continue to support the sisters' needs (asynchronously via Moodle, a learning management system) throughout the duration of the program. They hope to conduct further assessment of the sisters' information literacy skills as the program progresses.

For more information about HESA, see www.asec-sldi.org/programs/hesa/.

Submitted by Julia Watson, Marywood University



Leslie Christianson and Julie Watson from Marywood University serve as embedded librarians in a program that provides education opportunities for Catholic nuns in Nairobi, Kenya. (Photo courtesy of Marywood University)