

MAURITIUS

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTRE OF THE MAURITIUS COLLEGE OF THE AIR

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INTRODUCTION

The Mauritius College of the Air is a para-statal organisation under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research. It has two main objectives:

- To produce educational audio-visual productions
- To run distance education courses

Though it has existed since 1971, it was re-structured and re-organised in 1985 and its existence under the present set-up is thus less than 15 years. A division of Distance Education was created in 1994 to meet the educational needs of persons who are left behind under the traditional system of education. Distance education is relatively new in Mauritius, and can be dated as from the early 90s. The Mauritius College of the Air can be considered as a pioneer in the field.

STAFF

The National Resource Centre is the resource centre of the Mauritius College of the Air. It has a staff of 10 persons, and is headed by a qualified librarian. The latter is assisted by 6 para-professionals.

SERVICES

As the resource centre of an organisation which delivers two distinct types of services, i.e. production of educational media and provision of distance education courses, the National Resource Centre acts both as an audio-visual library and academic library. The media library provides lending services to schools, ministries and para-statal organisations. It offers a duplicating service whereby productions of the Mauritius College of the Air can be copied for clients by request. It also sells the more popular productions to schools and the general public.

As an academic library, it serves the needs of the lecturers, tutors and students of the organisation. Courses run vary from very short courses of 4-6 weeks on personal/professional skills to award courses of certificate and diploma of 2-3 years.

Subjects covered are IT, Librarianship, A-level courses on various subjects, Transport, Teacher Training, Writing in French, Basic English.

A separate library is operated for distance education students through a Study Centre. The latter organises activities such as face-to-face sessions, film shows, talks, mock examinations and reference and study facilities. Due to the limited books available in the Study Centre, books are limited for reference purposes only.

PLANS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The National Resource Centre will be moving to a new functional building within one year. The new library is near completion, and will occupy 1000 sq. metres. It will have space not only for its stock and staff but it will also house a lecture theatre, seminar rooms and viewing rooms.

It will be strengthening its staff for the Study Centre and is recruiting special library staff for its distance education activities.

Opening hours will be extended, and the library will be open up to 6.00 p.m. six days a week.

It will build up a special collection on distance education materials, and will acquire samples of course materials from other overseas DE institutions. This is expected to help staff to develop new courses and assist them in their research.

CONCLUSION

Distance education is relatively new in Mauritius and library services for distance education staff and students are only taking shape now. Training library staff in improving library services is most welcome.

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