

The Graduate School of Library and Information Science

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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PBS On-line Education Documentary Features LEEP3

CHAMPAIGN-URBANA, IL—The distance scheduling option offered by UIUC's Graduate School of Library and Information Science is among the on-line education programs featured in a documentary airing on PBS stations this fall. The show, *net.LEARNING*, covers a variety of on-line options and opinions, acknowledging LEEP3 as the nation's first on-line master's program in library and information science and following student Scott Kiefer as he pursues his Illinois degree from his Alaskan home.

"Scott exemplifies the possibilities and the life-changing impact of our LEEP3 program," says Dean and Professor Leigh Estabrook, who also appears in the documentary. "He knew he needed the degree to pursue his desired career in library and information science, but he also loathed giving up the life he loved in Alaska . . . where he couldn't obtain the education necessary for this field. By enrolling in our school via the LEEP3 option, he was able to complete our well-regarded, ALA-accredited degree and reach his career goal. The program, *net.LEARNING*, does a fine job of telling Scott's story and explaining our distance education philosophy."

Ninety students currently are enrolled via LEEP3. Students from as far away the island of St. Croix and Kobe, Japan, are enrolled in the master's program this semester. Since its inception, LEEP3 has drawn students from across the country, and in-state students reside in all parts of Illinois. Twenty-one of the 31 original students who enrolled in the summer of 1996 already have graduated, including Kiefer—who was among the participants at the school's May 1998 "virtual commencement" and is now working as the media manager in academic media services at the University of Alaska Fairbanks library.

"Our program is unique among schools of library and information science, and it provides significant advantages in a field increasingly involved in organizing and using electronic information," Estabrook explains. "Simply put, our nationally recognized faculty combine very brief periods of on-campus instruction with Internet instruction and independent learning. Students complete the overwhelming

majority of course work at the site they choose—usually their home or office—not a university satellite site. We use advanced technologies that provide live, Web-based instruction: students hear faculty as they speak; they see slides and other graphics, and hear music and audio clips, as the professor discusses them; they ‘chat’ with the professor and each other.” Students meet on campus once each semester, and this group learning continues on-line in small-group discussions and in collaborative group projects aided by special software.

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is considered a leader in distance education, and the *net.LEARNING* documentary also features Burks Oakley II, UIUC associate vice president for academic affairs with major responsibility for the UI Online initiative, and UIUC professors teaching calculus on-line to rural high school students. Other schools highlighted in the program include Dartmouth, California Polytechnic University, Drexel University, Simon Fraser University and New Jersey Institute of Technology.

The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation funded *net.LEARNING*, which was produced in association with South Carolina Educational Television by the Anytime Anywhere Network Inc. Howard Weinberg, founding producer of *The MacNeil-Lehrer Report*, is senior producer, writer and co-director; technology expert Karen A. Frenkel is director, co-writer and co-producer.

net.LEARNING airs Monday, Oct. 12, at 8 p.m. on WILL-TV Channel 12 in Champaign-Urbana. Consult local PBS listings for details about air dates and times in your community. For more information about the show, visit the *net.LEARNING* Web site at <http://www.pbs.org/netlearning>; details about UIUC’s LEEP3 are available at <http://www.lis.uiuc.edu/gslis/leep3/>.

The Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois is consistently ranked one of the top three library and information science programs in the U.S. The University of Illinois, founded in 1867, is regularly named one of the leading universities in the country.

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