NSDL

THE NATIONAL SCIENCE DIGITAL LIBRARY

Frequently Asked Questions

What is NSDL?

NSDL is the National Science Digital Library, the National Science Foundation's (NSF) online portal to resources, services, tools, and partnerships for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, at all levels. NSDL provides collections of online resources (*digital library*); a network of distributed partners and contributors dedicated to supporting STEM professional best practices, outreach, and dissemination (*digital learning community*); and is a provider of tool development and platform services (*digital learning laboratory*) supporting the nation's STEM cyberinfrastructure needs.

NSDL also refers to the funding program of NSF: the *National STEM Distributed Learning* program, in the Division of Undergraduate Education (DUE), Directorate for Education and Human Resources (EHR), which funds the projects that comprise the National Science Digital Library.

What is a digital library?

A digital library is a coherent, organized collection of resources, usually accessible via the Internet. A digital library may appear to be a single entity, but often links to other libraries or information services in an effort to present a unified view of a topic or collection to the end user. Despite the strong connotation with printed resources that the term library carries, digital libraries contain far more than electronic versions of textual documents, and can include any type of information that is "born digital" or can be converted into an electronic format.

What kinds of materials can I find at NSDL?

Resources available through NSDL include images, video, audio, animations, interactive resources, visualizations, software, datasets, and text documents (e.g., lesson plans, journal articles). NSDL also provides search, browse, help, blogging, collaborative workspaces, collection creation and management services, news and information services, and online community forums for discussion and interaction.

Is there a cost for using NSDL?

Use of the NSDL.org website and related search and reference services are completely free, as are the majority of the resources discoverable through NSDL. Some providers who make their materials accessible through NSDL may require a login (no cost); a fee-based membership; or that users purchase the complete version of a resource.

Who operates NSDL?

With support of the NSF, NSDL's development, project management, and daily operations are a collaborative effort of the **NSDL Resource Center** and **NSDL Technical Network Services**, and other NSDL program-funded projects. The broad and distributed NSDL community of resource builders and contributors is composed of a diverse range of institutions including universities, museums, libraries, research labs, federal agencies, professional societies, and commercial content providers.

How is NSDL funded?

NSDL receives the majority of its funding through the generous support of the National Science Foundation. Individual NSDL collections and services also receive funding from a wide variety of public and private sources.

How big is the Library?

As of October 2010, NSDL contains 120 collections and over 132,000 records, in addition to other supporting user services and content, such as NSDL news and online exhibits. New resources are added to the Library every week.

How are the items in the Library selected?

NSDL relies on specialists in STEM disciplinary fields to select exemplary resources or collections of resources for

inclusion in NSDL. Reviews for quality and appropriateness are made by specialist(s) in appropriate fields of science, education, and educational research. The qualifications of specialists and their selection processes are documented by individual resource providers. Common mechanisms for selection include peer review boards, content creation committees, and user recommendations.

Quality guidelines for NSDL resources are contained within the NSDL Collection Policy and are adhered to in reviewing resources submitted to NSDL. These include criteria for quality, accuracy, reliability, and appropriateness. The NSDL Accessioning Board (NAB) reviews selected resources from collections submitted to NSDL for adherence to these quality guidelines, makes recommendations to collection developers for remediation of any issues, and approves collections for accessioning into NSDL.

About NSDL Pathways:

Pathways are NSDL projects that provide audience-specific NSDL resources and services to broad categories of users. Pathway audiences may be grouped by grade level, discipline, resource or data type, or some other designation. They are digital library portals developed and managed in partnership with organizations and institutions that have a history and expertise in serving their target audiences. Pathway partners select appropriate resources and user services, and act as reference librarians for their communities. They contribute metadata (descriptive information) about their resources to NSDL, making their resources searchable and discoverable via NSDL.org, as well as via their own portals. These partnerships enhance the educational character of NSDL, and demonstrate the value of NSDL in a wide variety of educational settings.

How do I contribute resources that I have developed into NSDL?

To suggest an existing resource or collection of resources for inclusion in NSDL, visit Participate in NSDL (http://nsdl.org/contribute/) where access to policy, detailed guidelines, and recommendations for contribution to NSDL can be found.

How is using NSDL different from doing a Google search?

NSDL collections and services are selected from high quality providers of scientific and technical materials that are accurate and suited to educational settings. NSDL's search results are drawn from this body of pre-selected materials. In contrast to a single term Google search that often produces results numbering in the millions which are likely not relevant to science education, NSDL allows for efficient discovery by only searching resources that are useful for science, mathematics, engineering, and technology teaching, learning, and research (STEM).

What age/grade level does NSDL serve?

NSDL has resources addressing learning at all levels including K-12, post-secondary, graduate study, professional education, and lifelong learning. The NSDL Science Literacy Maps service allows for search results aligned to science standard benchmarks, and the NSDL Google Search Gadget, added to browsers, are steps in making it easier for the user to locate resources designed for specific audiences.

What are the copyright policies governing the reuse of images, graphics, animations, and other resources available through NSDL?

Because NSDL aggregates materials developed by a wide range of content providers, each resource carries its own policy for reproduction and/or reuse of content. In many cases, the content authors anticipate "fair use" for educational purposes with proper attribution. However, it is always best to contact the author before reusing any text, animation, image, or other content. In some cases rights information can be found by clicking "more info" where it appears next to a resource in NSDL search results.

What is the NSDL Community site?

The **NSDL Community site** (http://nsdlnetwork.org) is an interactive site (built on a Drupal platform) providing news and information dissemination; community interaction; discussion forums; working groups and collaborative workspaces; NSDL Annual Meeting information; help and information for prospective proposers and newly-funded projects; developing and new initiatives; and serving as a community center for NSDL-funded projects as well as external partners collaborating with NSDL.