



NSDL Collection Policy

February 15, 2010

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1.0 Mission of the NSDL

The National Science Digital Library (NSDL) was created by the National Science Foundation to provide organized and discoverable access to high quality resources, tools, and services that support excellence in teaching and learning at all levels of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. As a national network of learning environments, resources, and partnerships, NSDL serves a vital role in STEM educational cyberlearning for the nation.

Through its collections, tools, services, projects, and partnerships the NSDL strives to have a demonstrable impact on teacher practice and student learning. Partnerships involving academic, business, government, and other organizations coupled with sustainable technologies and practices are critical to NSDL's long term availability and relevance to the STEM community.

2.0 Communities Served

The NSDL embodies long-standing library traditions of service, access, and privacy that foster a spirit of inquiry and the accessibility of science to all. The NSDL collections are intended to serve the needs of a broad range of users: pre-K-to-12 teachers and students; faculty and students at colleges, universities, and technical schools; self-learners; and those who teach and learn in informal educational settings such as museums, science centers, and public libraries. We provide resources of interest to the

general public, as well as material relevant to educational researchers, administrators, librarians, and policymakers.

3.0 Policy Coverage

This policy applies to resources, collections, and metadata describing them, which are accessioned and discoverable through NSDL.org and/or services that deliver those NSDL.org collections to other sources. For additional information see the NSDL Terms of Use.

4.0 Collection Scope

4.1 Subject matter. The NSDL collects resources designed for teaching, learning, and conducting research relevant to STEM education. The NSDL also includes interdisciplinary resources relevant to STEM education, such as public policy, law, health, and economics and other social sciences.

4.2 Quality and type of the materials. Collection developers should refer to NSDL's Resource Quality Guidelines for assistance in identification and selection of resources most likely to meet the needs of educators and learners. These quality guidelines provide a target of excellence for resources and collections accessioned into the NSDL.

The resources that comprise the NSDL Collection vary greatly in magnitude, depth, educational level, level of review, and type of resource. In addition to ensuring high resource quality, the goal of the NSDL Collection is to emphasize resource types like:

- ***instructional materials***, such as classroom activities, laboratory experiments, demonstrations, models, case studies, courses, simulations, tutorials, curricula, modules, field trip suggestions, problem sets, teacher guides, lesson plans, interactives, animations, videos, maps
- ***pedagogical resources***, including teaching techniques, online professional development courses, educational research
- ***assessment materials***, such as exams, quizzes, questionnaires, self-assessments, answer keys, rubrics, portfolios
- ***reference materials that support teaching and learning***, such as appropriate bibliographies, abstracts, policies, indices, glossaries
- ***datasets that support teaching and learning***, including visual, factual, and numeric information; remotely sensed and observed data; trials, databases
- ***tools and products***, such as open source software or applications for interacting, accessing, manipulating, or viewing resources and data

4.3 Impacts on teaching and learning. The NSDL collects resources that can make an important or significant contribution to teaching and learning. This includes the content, skills, or understandings that are likely to be important to STEM educators and learners. For example, NSDL resources should focus on

- learning called for in U.S. national or state educational standards
- mastering of foundational skills needed for advancement in a discipline or career
- understanding of a concept central to a STEM discipline
- learning on a topic of societal importance
- understanding of linkages and interactions among or within STEM disciplines, or between STEM and other disciplines

4.4 Access. No fees are charged for searching the NSDL. To ensure wide accessibility and use, the NSDL favors resources that are free or available at low cost and are linked directly from metadata provided to the NSDL. However, some resources require registration, a log-in, or a subscription fee. The NSDL embraces the principle of open access and favors such resources in collection development activities.

Most NSDL resources are readily accessible online. However, we appreciate that in the teaching and learning of STEM content, it is often necessary to work with such real-world objects as rock samples, fossil specimens, museum collections, equipment, and other materials. Therefore, we consider it appropriate to include information about physical objects and about obtaining science-related materials and equipment.

4.5 Providers of content. The providers of the NSDL resources include:

- the NSDL organization including NSDL Pathways and projects
- professional organizations, universities, government agencies, and other grant-funded projects with educationally-focused STEM collections and resources
- reputable and reliable organizations or individuals worldwide
- education and outreach efforts of NSF-funded research projects

4.6 Geographic coverage and languages. All geographic areas are included in the scope of the collection. The majority of the resources are in English.

5.0 Selection

Responsibility for the development and curation of the NSDL Collection is shared by NSDL Pathways and the Collection Development Team (CDT). Pathways and the CDT identify, select, and/or create resources that fall within the scope of their collections. In addition, Pathways provide digital library services to their particular clientele and share metadata about their resources with the NSDL. The CDT identifies and selects resources and collections that are within the NSDL scope but fall outside the scope of individual Pathways or their collection processes. All collections are subject to review and approval by the NSDL Accessioning Board (NAB) prior to accessioning and deaccessioning.

The NSDL welcomes user suggestions for adding individual resources or resource collections. Users who wish to suggest individual resources are invited to fill out the [Recommend a Resource](#) form to provide basic descriptive information about the suggested resource. Sponsors of collections interested in being included in NSDL are

invited to review the information found on the [Contribute Resources or Collections](#) page of NSDL.org and to [contact the NSDL](#) about their interest in submitting a collection.

6.0 Accessioning

Accessioning refers to the process by which new resources or collections are accepted and integrated for discovery through NSDL.org and/or services that deliver those NSDL.org collections to other sources.

To be eligible for inclusion in NSDL, all resources and collections must meet the following criteria:

- fulfill the NSDL's mission
- be within the NSDL Collection Scope
- adhere to the NSDL Resource Quality Guidelines that are appropriate to the nature of the resources
- abide by the NSDL Terms of Use
- have appropriate metadata according to NSDL Metadata Documentation
- comply with the NSDL Resource and Collection Technical Requirements

In order to ensure that the overall size of the collection does not negatively impact user experience in discovering relevant resources, some large collections may be accessioned as a single resource in the NSDL. Some NSDL collection builders provide stewardship for resources and services for user communities or disciplines broader than NSDL's collection scope. These collections are considered out of scope.

Specific procedures for contributing resources and collections are described in the [Contribute Resources or Collections](#) document. Procedures for contributing resources and/or collections to the Pathways libraries that partner with NSDL are provided by the individual Pathways libraries.

7.0 Deaccessioning

Deaccessioning, or weeding, is the process of removing materials from a library, or, within a digital library, rendering them no longer discoverable. Deaccessioning of resources and collections is occasionally necessary for the maintenance of a useful and reliable repository.

If a resource or collection changes over time and then fails to meet the above accessioning criteria as determined by the NAB and/or the CDT, it may be deaccessioned. Collections with resources that fail to meet the accessioning criteria may be deaccessioned. In addition, the following criteria may result in deaccessioning:

- there has been an official finding of plagiarism or copyright violation concerning the resource.

- the person or organization that contributed the resources or collections has requested their removal from the NSDL.

Users who discover resources that are nonfunctioning (e.g., broken links) or deemed to be inappropriate for inclusion in the NSDL are encouraged to [contact the NSDL](#) with such notification.

8.0 Responsibilities

8.1 The NSDL Accessioning Board (NAB)¹

The NSDL Accessioning Board (NAB) reviews and approves all collections prior to accessioning and deaccessioning according to the requirements of this policy. The NAB is responsible for ensuring that collections meet the criteria as prescribed.

The NAB is comprised of up to five (5) representative members of the NSDL and STEM education community who do not have explicit conflict of interest in NSDL collection review activities. The NSDL Community creates a slate of nominees for this board. Final membership of the NAB is confirmed by the NSDL Pathways. The NAB meets when necessary.

8.2 The NSDL Collection Development Team (CDT)

The NSDL Collection Development Team (CDT) identifies, selects, and/or creates resources and collections that are within scope of the NSDL but fall outside the scope of individual Pathways. Additionally, the CDT is responsible for supporting the NAB in its deliberations and implementing its recommendations. The CDT is comprised of NSDL staff who are responsible for managing, maintaining and supporting NSDL.org collections.

Maintenance of this Document

This document has been developed and is maintained in accordance with NSDL's *Policy on Developing and Approving NSDL Policies (PC-1)*. The document will be reviewed and revised as necessary to reflect changes in the capabilities, practices, and procedures of the NSDL.

¹ Procedures for the NAB are described in the Contribute a Resource or Collection document at <http://nsdl.org/collection/>.