



2006-2007 Highlights

August 2007

Overview

The 2006-2007 project year saw major infrastructure gains for AMSER. Diverse collections were integrated and underlying systems were put in place to smooth these integrations; collection development policies and procedures were developed and refined, as was technical infrastructure that supports resource ingestion. User testing was conducted by CUDA and interface and feature changes and upgrades were made based on this and other user feedback. A train-the-trainer style workshop was conducted which served both as an outreach vehicle and a test-bed for qualitative evaluation. Outreach was a major component of the past year – the *AMSER Quarterly* (a quarterly newsletter) was published throughout the year and a variety of community and technical college conferences and meetings were attended by project staff. Many outreach activities and venues afforded opportunities to the collect feedback from a diverse set of community and technical college users and to recruit users to provide content expertise as well as strengthen and build partnerships with institutions and individuals. Based on user feedback from presentations, workshops, user testing, and one-on-one conversations with users, a new AMSER vocabulary is in the process of being developed – one that focuses on “Key Concepts” in applied math and science education.

Infrastructure

In the past year, as more collections were approached about partnering with AMSER and integrating their high-quality resources into the AMSER portal, infrastructure needed to be in place to help support integration and aggregation. Staff took advantage of the CWIS software’s workflow capabilities and Scout OAI harvesting and metadata manipulation tools to help speed and streamline the integration process and support the cataloging and collection development goals of the project.

Each partner collection is harvested and the resulting harvest is placed in a CWIS installation. Catalogers then examine the resource records and create an initial crosswalk between the new collection’s schema and vocabularies and AMSER’s schema and vocabularies. Changes are then made to the newly created CWIS installation and its resource records to align it with the AMSER collection as closely as possible. Content specialists and catalogers then begin to examine the new records and rapidly mark those suitable for AMSER.

As a result of user feedback (both through formal user testing and more informal feedback from e-mails and at workshops and presentations) a range of changes were made to the AMSER portal interface and some of the key features and services including but not limited to layout of login and login information, contrast and font size changes throughout the site, definitions and contextual information at key points on the portal, enhancements to the format of the AMSER bulletin service, creating fields in the folder feature which allow users to add notes to individual resources and to each folder itself along with a description field which allows users to put header notes at the top of each folder, and drag and drop features to allow users to move things within and between folders.

Partnerships

AMSER continued to focus on building partnerships with community and technical college faculty, librarians, and staff as well as associated projects and associations. An example of a key relationship cemented in the past year is collaboration with the ATERC Network. ATERC was formed by eleven of the Advanced Technological Education (ATE) Resource Centers who recognize the advantages of coming together to increase their effectiveness and maximize their impact. As part of their projects most have digital library components, used to disseminate a variety of materials, curricula, and pedagogical practices created by previously funded ATE centers and projects. AMSER and Scout have been strong and active partners in ATERC Network meetings and efforts to help support the goals of the ATERC group and connect them to the NSDL. Several of the ATERC Resource Centers have migrated their collection to the CWIS portal software created by Scout (the underlying technology for the AMSER portal). Scout attended an ATERC coalition meeting in Phoenix in the past year along with members of the NSDL CI to further encourage standardization of metadata schemas and vocabularies and generally work together to make any resource sharing as seamless as possible between ATERC and AMSER/NSDL. The past year has seen strong relationships built with many ATERC partners, with a particular focus on Bio-Link, NCSR, and MATEC Networks.

Outreach

Staff attended a variety of conferences and meetings in 2006-2007 including the National Science Digital Library (NSDL) Annual Meeting, the Advanced Technological Education (ATE) Annual Meeting, Innovations 2007, the American Association of Community Colleges Annual Meeting, NISOD, SAME-TEC, and the Annual Conference on Distance Teaching and Learning.

The AMSER team, with support from and in collaboration with the NSDL CI, conducted a three-hour training workshop on AMSER for faculty and staff in educational settings on March 5th during the Innovations 2007 conference in New Orleans. Workshop participants received a stipend and follow-up support in return for their further participation over the next year – conducting trainings on their own campuses or to other appropriate audiences.

Twenty-eight participants attended the training – with a wide range of backgrounds and fields of study (instructional designers, faculty from a variety of STEM disciplines and administrators from community and technical colleges). Participants have been doing trainings on their own campuses since the workshop – using AMSER training outreach materials, presentations, and evaluation materials.