

Current Strategies for Increasing Usage

April, 2006

Improving the user experience at nsdl.org

Providing an easy way for educational audiences to find useful resources is one of our most core functions. If users don't have a positive experience with NSDL, they won't return and they won't tell colleagues about us.

- Creation of audience sections for K-12 teachers, College and University Faculty, Digital Library Builders, and First-Time Users completed
- Second round of improvements to existing audience sections by September 30.
- Additional audience sections to be added in FY 07 including informal education and researchers
- Improvements underway on search engine and display of search results
- Prototypes have been created for a downloadable NSDL toolbar w/ search capabilities

Leveraging our network of partners

As part of a viral strategy, we are leveraging our relationships with Pathways and other project partners and reaching out to other NSF-funded groups, as well as organizations beyond the current NSDL network.

- We are working with Pathways to deliver a series of user workshops designed to train trainers through the Pathways' existing networks of professional societies and other partners
- We are better coordinating our CI outreach efforts with Pathways. New opportunities are discussed during monthly conference calls.
- NSDL will begin delivering web seminars as part of NSTA's online professional development programs. Seminars will feature a range of NSDL projects. The series will launch on May 16 and then run monthly beginning in September.
- An early version of Expert Voices was piloted at the NSTA conference this month. The primary EV model of team discussion between scientists, teachers, and media specialists will function as an important opportunity for the engagement of Pathways and external partners.
- Currently in partnership discussions with NSF Research Centers Education Network (NRCEN), and the EPIC supercomputing/cyberinfrastructure group.
- IMLS-funded partnership with the New York Hall of Science, the American Association of Science and Technology Centers, and IEEE is focusing on digital resource support for volunteer coordinators at museums and science centers.

NSDL as a professional development provider

Digital libraries are a new enough technology for most teachers and faculty that NSDL must serve as a professional development provider to support effective use of digital resources in education.

- Nine Pathways workshops will be delivered between July 2006 and January 2007
- Online workshop offerings include the NSTA web seminar series and by-request sessions for individual school districts. Example sessions are archived at the Outreach section of nsdl.org
- NSF-funded grant with Utah State University and the State University of New York at Cortland will train cadres of teachers on the use of NSDL and related tools

Improving our visibility to large search engines such as Google

- Providing a site map and distinct harvest pages for each record in the MR
- Clicking on NDSL resources in Google will bring users through NDSL-branded pages

Webmetrics and Evaluation

Understanding our current usage levels and how NDSL is implemented in educational settings to better inform future planning

- Omniture study underway to characterize web use statistics for nsdl.org and 8 partner sites
- Gathering case studies and use stories from partner projects and users

Susan Van Gundy
Outreach Director