



**Developing a National Science Digital Library
(NSDL)
LibQUAL+™ Protocol:**

***Defining and Measuring Electronic Quality (e-QUAL)
for Digital Libraries***



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The Association of Research Libraries (ARL), Texas A&M University Libraries and the University of Texas are collaborating on a joint project for assessing service quality in digital libraries. A proposal for funding the project, titled “Developing a National Science Digital Library (NSDL) LibQUAL+™ Protocol,” was approved in September 2001 by the National Science Foundation (NSF). Under the grant, ARL and Texas A&M will receive \$245,737 over a three-year period to adapt the LibQUAL+™ instrument for use in the Science, Math, Engineering and Technology Education Digital Library community.

In 2001-2002, 108 ARL libraries spent almost \$171 million on electronic resources. Libraries seek efficient and effective ways of delivering the highest quality of service using these electronic resources. The ability to assess the service quality of digital libraries will allow libraries to improve the retrieval of relevant information, promote learner preparation for an information-rich society, and promote scholarship and lifelong learning.

The project to develop a National Science Digital Library user-based assessment protocol is an outgrowth of the LibQUAL+™ project. LibQUAL+™ is a suite of services, born out of a research and development project undertaken by ARL and Texas A&M to measure library service quality across institutions. The current LibQUAL+™ instrument is a web-based survey of library users’ perceptions of service quality across three dimensions: Affect of Service, Information Control, and Library as Place; it identifies gaps between desired, perceived, and minimum expectations of service. The survey results can be used in making local managerial decisions as well as in identifying best practices in library service.

The goals of the NSDL Digital Library Assessment project include: (a) define the dimensions of digital library service quality from the users' perspectives; (b) develop a tool for measuring user perceptions and expectations of digital library service quality across NSDL digital library contexts; (c) identify digital library best practices that permit generalizations across operations and development platforms; (d) enhance student learning by effectively managing student perceptions and expectations of digital library services; (e) establish a digital library assessment program within the larger library service quality assessment program at the Association of Research Libraries; and (f) institutionalize continuous digital library product and process evaluation efforts directed towards positive and timely management outcomes.