Breaking the K-12 Crust: The Realities of Digital Libraries for Education

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Presentation

WebWise, Washington, DC

2005

Title: Building digital libraries for K-12 education is not a simple matter of great content. The K-12 environment has special needs for the content it uses in the classroom. From conformance to state performance standards, to linkage to lesson plans, the K-12 classroom sometimes can seem like a fortress with high walls, preventing libraries and museums from entering. This presentation will explore the realities and successful strategies for breaking into formal K-12 education. This presentation will seek to answer the question of why great content is not enough.

Keywords: digital libraries, digital collections, education, museums, academic standards
Breaking the K-12 Crust

The Realities of Digital Libraries for Education
Agenda

• Lesson 1: Educators Seek Synthesis
  • 1.a. Educators Seek Language Arts
• Lesson 2: Students Seek Science
• Lesson 3: Digital Libraries Need Services
• Lesson 4: The K-12 Domain Provide a Differentiating Context
  • 4.a. The Domain is Highly Regulated
Origin of the Lessons

- Information Institute of Syracuse
- ERIC IT/AskERIC
- Education Digital Library
  - GEM, VRD
- NSDL
  - Virtual Reference Desk for the NSDL, Core Integration, Question Triage
- Digital Reference Education Initiative
  - IMLS
Lesson 1: Educators Seek Synthesis

- AskERIC Virtual Library
  - 1/3 of hits (~2 million/week, 8,250 unique users) in AskERIC were for Lesson Plans
- Became Gateway to Educational materials
  - Teachers “Cherry Pick”...Define Quality by Context
- Topic Most Important, Followed by Grade Level
Lesson 1a: Educators Seek Language Arts
Lesson 1a: Educators Seek Language Arts

AskERIC Subject Breakout
Lesson 1a: Educators Seek Language Arts

- Possible Reasons:
  - More Science on the Web
  - More Teacher Discretion, and Less Guidance in Language Arts Area
  - Less Synthesis of Online Language Arts Materials
Lesson 2: Students Seek Science

• Data Built on Two Digital Reference Services
  • KidsConnect, AASL/Microsoft
  • Virtual Reference Desk, Dept. of Education
• Following Data Represents a “Subject Line Analysis”
• First pass from incoming subject lines... body of the message used for disambiguation
Lesson 2: Students Seek Science

- Social Studies: 23%
- Science: 47%
- Health: 8%
- Language Arts: 3%
- Lib Ref: 6%
- Math: 2%
- Other: 4%
- Biography: 5%
- Vocational: 1%
Lesson 2: Students Seek Science

- Inventions: 13%
- Animals/Insects: 29%
- Science Fair: 4%
- Chemistry: 10%
- Health/Anatomy: 13%
- Earth Science: 11%
- Biomes: 1%
- Gen Biology: 6%
- Astronomy: 8%
- Botany: 4%
Lesson 3: Digital Libraries Need Services

- Define a Digital Library as a Series of Services, not a Set of Collections
- “Collection” (Organization and Curatorship) is a Service
- Access and Search are Services
- Reference is an Essential Digital Library Service (Dig_Ref, FAQ’s, Pathfinders)
- Curriculum Integration is a Service
- Everything a User Interacts with is a Service
- No Digital Library without a Digital Librarian
Lesson 4: K-12 is Different

- Structurally
  - 50 Different U.S. Education Systems, DOD Schools, Protectorates, Home Schooling, Private Schooling, GED, etc.

- Legally
  - CIPA, E-Rate Filtering Mandates, Privacy
  - Focus on Constant Information Delivery, and Periodic Information Acquisition

- 30 minute planning periods
- Continuing Education for Certification
Lesson 4.a: The Domain is Highly Regulated

- Academic Standards
- High-Stakes Testing
- Need for “Information Approval” and Conformance to Process
The Big Picture

• Rather than Being a Sponge that will readily soak up information from digital libraries, K-12 has a hard crust of bureaucracy, regulation and practice than must be both enticed to seek information, and greatly rewarded when it does so.