SOLINET Digital Library Services

Vision

SOLINET Digital Library Services (DLS) will develop a new program with service components that will enable libraries to build, manage, and standardize digital collections. DLS will focus on training, consulting, and project management. Specifically, DLS will help libraries to develop funding strategies, project management skills, data conversion capabilities, and staff development for digital initiatives.

SOLINET DLS will coordinate access to regional collections by working with member libraries and providing a central index to those collections. DLS will position SOLINET to be a regional resource that provides leadership for building local collections for world-wide access.

DLS will leverage past DLS program experiences that will serve as part of the foundation for providing a SOLINET knowledge base about interoperability, standards, interface design, data conversion, DTD development, access, and indexing as well as other digital library fundamentals.

Program Description

Critical to meeting the Information Access goal of the recent Board approved SOLINET Long Range Strategic Plan (LRSP), SOLINET must develop service components to support that goal and it's associated strategies and objectives. Specifically, the LRSP goal for Information Access is to *"improve the availability of high quality information through programs focused on creation, management, and access in a changing library environment."*

The strategy for meeting this goal is to *"Develop programs to enable libraries to become more effective producers, consumers, and users of digital information."*

The LRSP calls for the implementation of the Digital Library Services over the next three years. In response to this goal, Digital Library Services proposes to establish service components to members in three key areas:

* Consulting
* Training
* Digital Library Toolkit and Central Services

Funding for Digital Library Services will be achieved through a combination of resources. Funding should include:
1) one-time grant monies for concept, project, or capability seeding that can be converted to a saleable deliverable,
2) library or corporate partnerships that will leverage existing SOLINET core competencies plus library available dollars,
3) the sale of a DLS publications like a directory of digital library vendor and service information,
4) consulting opportunities for DLS services, and,
5) DLS training initiatives.

Program Objectives
Overall
1) Develop a program funded through a combination of grant and self-sustaining revenues;.
2) Staff SOLINET DLS with adequate technical depth that will establish SOLINET as a reliable technical resource in the region.

3) Develop training resources at SOLINET that will build member capabilities to create and provide access to local digital collections.
4) Provide leadership for a range of libraries in the region (academic, public library, special) that will enable those libraries to understand their role among digital libraries. This will include developing "white papers", setting up a web site at SOLINET, and, in support of appropriate projects, promoting and coordinating the implementation of specific standards for collaborative projects.
5) Work with partners to expand the role of online cataloging of community information.
6) Develop SOLINET's capacity to provide central services for digitization support, access, and authentication, including:
    Providing central services that will maximize members' investments in digital library training and infrastructure (such as central metadata repositories or specifications for contracts);
    Providing regional consortial opportunities for improving the buying power for digital library products and services.
7) Coordinate internal SOLINET efforts in digital initiatives, including grant writing, cross-training of staff, and liaison with external advisory committees.
8) Develop a marketing campaign for SOLINET DLS activities as well as a PR guide for digital resources for libraries.

Member Needs

DLS staff designed and implemented a survey of members to get a better idea of perceived member needs in the area of digital libraries. Of the 79 respondents, more than half (62%), have had no digital library training and also have no plans for training in the coming year. Given the interest surrounding the topic, these numbers may seem low; however, almost 40% of respondents also indicated that they have no current budget for digital library efforts. Most have not been satisfied with the results of their past training, perhaps because many have not been able to implement the training in any meaningful way.

The comments made by survey respondents indicate that, except for ARL institutions, most libraries are just beginning to become involved in digital library technologies. There is a great need for basic information; however, rather than focus on introductory overviews, many respondents indicated a desire for hands-on implementation tools and techniques.

We asked about the importance of specific topics for their staff development, with the following results (with '1' being the highest possible importance and '3' being the lowest possible):

1. Access, User Interface, and Web Site Design   1.39
2. Authentication   1.5
3. Image Scanning   1.56
4. Archiving   1.58
5. Evaluation   1.6
6. Developing Funding for DL projects   1.66
7. Tool and Vendor Selection   1.68
8. Managing Digital Projects   1.71
9. Developing Digital Collections   1.71
10. Digital Production Processes   1.81
11. Content Analysis and Encoding   1.85
12. Electronic Commerce   2.18

With the exception of Electronic Commerce, each of the proposed topics was ranked above the midpoint in level of importance. For each of the categories, at least 60% of respondents thought that standard training would be the most appropriate delivery method for their staff (as opposed to customized training or consulting).