

DIGITAL LIBRARIES AND THE CLASSROOM: TESTBEDS FOR TRANSFORMING TEACHING AND LEARNING

A new £ 6,000,000 / \$8,500,000 joint program

The United States National Science Foundation (NSF) and the United Kingdom Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) are establishing a joint program of activities in US and UK universities. Four exemplar projects of up to £1.5 million / US\$ 2.1 million each over three years will be funded to demonstrate how the education process for undergraduate students can be transformed using innovative applications of emerging information technologies and Internet resources.

The objective of this joint NSF/JISC program is to bring about a significant improvement in the learning and teaching process by fusing state of the art digital and Internet-based services, rapidly expanding global digital content of all forms and emerging applications in undergraduate education. We particularly wish to examine how integrating recent technical developments with digital content will improve the learning experience of students and provide new models for the classroom across a number of disciplines.

In creating the new courses, projects will be expected to examine many aspects of the whole learning process including:

- The innovative use of distributed, multi-media, multi-source electronic content and advanced network technologies and capabilities in education
- How the student experience can be enriched through the use of appropriate applications and access to electronic resources
- A better understanding of students' requirements for effective use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) and electronic information resources
- How teachers can be assisted in incorporating ICT, VLE and electronic information resources in their courses in appropriate ways, to provide balanced courses for students
- The institutional information infrastructure required to deliver the new courses, including the provision of suitable networks, resources, applications, and the development of strategies to manage all of these effectively
- The organizational changes that will be required to deliver the courses and support the staff and students involved, and how these can best be managed by the institutions

- The staff development needs of the teaching staff, the information service support teams and administrators and consideration of the reward mechanisms for staff engaged in innovative activities.
- Economic models for the development, delivery and long term support and development of ICT-based learning.

The NSF and the JISC successfully collaborated in funding digital library projects in 1999 - 2001. Information on these projects and other NSF Digital Libraries Initiative projects can be found at <http://www.dli2.nsf.gov> . We now wish to build on this work by funding four exemplar projects, where each project is a collaboration of at least one institution of higher education in the US and one in the UK. Projects will be expected to provide a five-year plan of activities, although funding will only be provided for the first three. This will ensure that the projects are embedded into the institutions and demonstrate that the innovations are sustainable. Significant financial and intellectual 'buy-in' by the institutions and faculties chosen will therefore be vital to achieving success; the objectives cannot be met without considerable change and investment in new learning and teaching processes, support services and physical infrastructure.

Institutions should consider opportunities to build on existing or planned strategic developments in their own organizations that would benefit from a broader, international approach. The benefits will include access to a wider base of technical expertise, or different organizational structures, management approaches and teaching methodologies. Creation of a larger, shared corpus of electronic content for student use from existing, dispersed digital resources is particularly welcome.

A call for proposals is expected to be published in early December, with a closing date in February 2002. Projects will be expected to start in summer 2002. This pre-announcement alerts the community to the imminent call and provides an early opportunity to explore possible partnerships with suitable organizations in the US and UK, in advance of the call being issued.

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