Building a Statewide K-12 Digital Library

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A majority of academic and public libraries have formed partnerships and established some of the most dynamic networks in the history of libraries in the United States (Carver, 1999; Okerson, 1996; Uball, 1994). This major achievement has been accomplished in several states because of the concerted efforts exerted by librarians, educators, and legislators to provide equity for all students (Olsen, 2001). Colleges, universities and public libraries recognize the potential of being able to deliver access to research information to all clients upon demand (Pearlmutter, 1999; Walters, 1998). Libraries in K-12 schools should be considered essential to the success of any school, given mandated state proficiency tests in many states. Students need resources, and libraries are the places for these resources. This paper proposes to describe the process that is being used to build a strong statewide digital library collection.

The strategy used to design the planning for a statewide K-12 digital library system relied on the research conducted for college and university networks developed in the states of California, Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina and Wisconsin, and the state models involving school libraries existing in the states of Alabama, Ohio, Delaware, and Texas. The concept of defining a digital library, why it is needed as well as why a state network is necessary is presented. The role of the collection development team, technology support team, the political support, as well as the negotiations with vendors to put this project into action is detailed.

This paper presents the challenges faced by a collection development team in the process of building a statewide digital network in the K-12 community, as well as the positive impact of team collaboration to the success of the project. The goal of this project is to provide equity to all students at the K-12 level so that when they reach the college and university level they will be able to utilize digitized images, audio and video in existing network collections.