
Proposal for a Comprehensive SUNY Digital Library

Information Resources for a World-Class University System

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Executive Summary

The SUNY Digital Library is a program to expand access to scholarly electronic content for every student, faculty and staff in the State University of New York. The Digital Library will use cooperative acquisition, licensing and creation of digital content to enhance teaching, learning and research within the University. The Digital Library will be a voluntary program that will combine campus resources with new state dollars to leverage funding with optimal cost effectiveness. Current governance and advisory structures will be enhanced to oversee the collaborative selection and development of content and associated cost allocations. Implementing a comprehensive Digital Library will provide the State University of New York with a component that is essential for its strategic positioning as a world-class university system.

Scholarly journals, books, data sets, video, audio—all of these sources now travel in a digital universe as well as in a competitive higher-education marketplace. A comprehensive Digital library will meet the information needs of today's—and tomorrow's—faculty and students by providing them with the access they need and expect, with maximum convenience. This Digital Library will also position SUNY among other public systems of higher education that already offer these resources.

A comprehensive Digital Library will open the door to the very best resources available—resources which cannot be found on the free Web.

SUNY libraries are currently compromised in the ability to meet the needs and expectations of their information consumers. SUNY libraries are also struggling to address competitive factors in the marketplace. If SUNY campuses continue to struggle individually, none will be able to provide exceptional resources. The result would be a disparity in the SUNY system. Such a disparity will undoubtedly affect student and faculty recruitment and retention, and will potentially interfere with SUNY's aspirations to be a leader in higher education.

A comprehensive Digital Library represents a System solution to these challenges, extending an opportunity to create new, cost-efficient avenues of collaboration among units. Properly implemented and funded, a comprehensive Digital Library will provide exceptional service to constituents and stakeholders alike. It will benefit New York State by ensuring a high-quality educational environment for its citizens and economy. It will help ensure SUNY's rise to the level of excellence expected of a world-class University system.

Proposal for a Comprehensive SUNY Digital Library

Information resources for a world-class University system

“More than any other traditional asset, the library is the means by which American universities will transform themselves into something entirely new.”

—William M. Plater, Former Executive Vice Chancellor and Dean of Faculties, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

Libraries are the lifeblood of academic communities. That fact remains true, even as today’s information environment evolves rapidly and competition from external information delivery systems increases. Academic libraries will continue to serve their constituencies well only as long as they are able to provide them with the resources they require in the ways they expect. Staying abreast of change is an unending challenge for SUNY and the campus libraries that are at the heart of its academic mission—a challenge that both our constituents and our competing information providers will not easily allow us to forget.

Proposal

In order to continue providing our constituents with the exceptional services they expect in today’s information economy and to ensure the State University of New York can rightfully claim its place as a world-class University system, the SUNYConnect Advisory Council (SAC) and the SUNY Council of Library Directors (SCLD) propose the establishment of a comprehensive Digital Library.

The comprehensive Digital Library will offer commercially available acquisitions as well as newly captured digital content made possible by the contributions of SUNY faculty and researchers. Collections and services will be tailored to the curricular and research needs of SUNY campuses.

Staying abreast of change is an unending challenge for SUNY and the campus libraries that are at the heart of its academic mission.

The comprehensive Digital Library will build upon the successful organization, many accomplishments, and solid governance established by the SUNYConnect library program.

The comprehensive Digital Library will provide comprehensive, up-to-date information resources in the most economical way possible.

The comprehensive Digital Library will serve as a vehicle to help attract and retain high-quality faculty and researchers, thus substantively building SUNY's credentials as a world-class university system.

The comprehensive Digital Library will enhance SUNY's educational environment by providing rapid access to the best scholarly information available—that is, to content that is simply not available on the free Web.

- A biologist investigating the movement of invasive species in New York State prepares his students for field studies with the latest scientific data.
- A professor teaching Islamic culture engages students with a media presentation of contemporary and historical images.
- A marketing class prepares a feasibility study for a local business using the most up-to-date geodemographic data.
- A medical resident working late accesses online data on traumatic brain injury to help treat a patient.

Challenges

At present, all of SUNY's 64 campuses are struggling individually to provide students and faculty with the digital resources they want and require. If this fractional struggle continues, only a few units will be able to provide adequate resources. Such a significant disparity in the SUNY system would have consequences beyond those related to campus-based service: it would inevitably affect SUNY's ability to recruit and retain students and faculty at the quality levels it desires.

SUNY now lags far behind other public university systems that have invested heavily in the creation of digital libraries; examples include the University of California, the Ohio Board of Regents and the Community, and the College Center for Library Automation (Florida Community College System).¹

This situation is depriving faculty, students, and staff of essential research and teaching resources, making SUNY less able to attract and retain exceptional faculty. SUNY must now act decisively to remedy the deficit if it is to remain competitive for the best faculty and students and create a truly world-class System.

SUNY campuses are struggling to provide students and faculty with the digital resources they want and require.

The challenge squarely before academic libraries in general and SUNY libraries in particular is to find ways to serve constituents effectively in today's—and tomorrow's—information environment. Our objective must be not simply to meet but to exceed the expectations of our constituents, whose perspectives are formed by commercial web services such as Google, Amazon and Facebook.

Leveraging a Tradition of Cooperation

To leverage the inherent potential of SUNY as a system and to attract the very best faculty and students, it is now necessary for us to rethink traditional delivery systems, organization structures, and budget practices. Today's environment demands that SUNY operate in new ways to balance issues of system-level funding, infrastructure and governance with needs for campus autonomy and diversity in teaching, learning and research. In short, it's time to cooperate in new ways.

Our objective must be not simply to meet but to exceed constituent expectations at every opportunity.

The good news is that SUNY Libraries and the Office of Library and Information Services have a successful history of cooperation and collaboration. They are well prepared to help bring about the needed transformations. They are ready to employ new organizational, advocacy, and funding models to move aggressively toward implementing the tightly integrated, system-wide solution of a comprehensive Digital Library.

It's a solution that will transform the University's ability to support campus curricula and research in a manner that is both cost effective and efficient.

Acquiring and Capturing Digital Content

Today digital resources are clear necessities for teaching and learning. Unlike physical materials, digital resources can be—and generally are—*acquired* by licensing rather than ownership. Licensing is an efficient means of procurement and is now a well established model.

The good news is that SUNY Libraries and the Office of Library and Information Services have a successful history of cooperation and collaboration.

Licensing allows us to acquire information resources through negotiation at the System level, providing significant cost savings in dollars and labor over campus-by-campus negotiation.

In addition to acquiring existing resources, the comprehensive Digital Library will allow campus libraries to *capture* new digital content. This is a significant opportunity: while our SUNY scholars are actively publishing, new forms of content creation now enable them to advance knowledge in innovative and entrepreneurial ways. The comprehensive Digital Library will provide a means to capture this unique SUNY content and make it available globally.

A System Poised to Advance

In the last ten years, SUNY's 64 libraries have succeeded in vastly reshaping the SUNY information universe for their users. SUNY now has a shared library management system that provides a single interface to SUNY's 18-million-volume collection.

Licensing allows us to acquire information resources through negotiation at the System level; this process is economical and very cost-effective.

In the world of digital content, SUNY has successfully leveraged the system's purchasing power, bringing an explosion of basic electronic resources in support of general education to every faculty member and student in SUNY. In 2006 alone, there were over five million articles downloaded from SUNY licensed resources.

Such successes are encouraging. They set the stage ideally for the development of a comprehensive Digital Library as the University's next important and necessary step on its way to world-class status. Our foundation is firmly in place. We have the organizational and governance structures to support digital content selection, and we have the necessary collaborative relationships with both the New York State Library and the New York State Higher Education Initiative (NYSHEI).

Outcomes that Make a Difference

The comprehensive SUNY Digital Library will be an indispensable portal to the rich information resources SUNY faculty and students require for exemplary teaching, learning, and research.

- **For students**, this means having an enhanced learning environment.
- **For faculty**, this means enhanced ability to deliver effective and innovative curricula and support for targeted research areas.
- **For researchers**, it means having access to the most comprehensive information resources available to their fields of study.
- **For the State of New York**, the comprehensive Digital Library will enhance the SUNYConnect program and be a vehicle to create a well-educated citizenry, helping to deliver the "innovation economy" necessary for successful enterprise.

The comprehensive Digital Library will also provide ongoing support of the SUNYConnect program, which funds digital content in support of General Education curricula.

Finally, in a larger context and not insignificantly, this initiative offers SUNY a transformative and pivotal opportunity, one capable of positioning the system to become a leader in the field of information services.

Next Step: Funding

The comprehensive Digital Library represents a significant investment in SUNY's future. Successful implementation will require new funding in the amount of \$9 million annually.²

The comprehensive Digital Library stands to become a transformative and pivotal element for SUNY, one capable of positioning the system to become a leader in the field of information services.

Notes

1. University of California: The California Digital Library is the University of California's 11th University library. It was established in 1997 by University of California President Emeritus Richard Atkinson to build the University's digital library, assist campus libraries with sharing their resources and holdings more effectively, and provide leadership in applying technology to the development of library collections and services. In addition to multiple other services provided by CDL, it currently offers a shared collection of digital content comprising more than 8,000 journal titles and 250 databases, as well as other materials. The shared digital collection represents a significant organizational innovation in collaborative collection development because the campus libraries act as a single entity. The shared collection drives down the costs associated with the acquisition of commercial electronic content. In 2007 the UC libraries leveraged 7.5 million dollars of centralized CDL funding for electronic resources.

Ohio Board of Regents: Ohio Link. The Ohio Library and Information Network, OhioLINK, is a consortium of Ohio's college and university libraries and the State Library of Ohio. Serving more than 600,000 students, faculty, and staff at 85 institutions, OhioLINK's membership includes 17 public universities, 23 community/technical colleges, 44 private colleges and the State Library of Ohio. OhioLINK offers more than 100 electronic research databases, including a variety of full-text resources. These databases cover many academic areas at varying levels of detail. OhioLink also contains the Electronic Journal Center (EJC), a collection of full-text research journals. The EJC contains more than 6,900 scholarly journal titles from 90+ publishers across a wide range of disciplines. More than 4.81 million articles are downloaded each year from the EJC, with a total of more than 21.9 million articles downloaded since its inception. Centralized funding for OhioLink electronic resources was 7.6 million in 2006.

CCLA: CCLA's mission is to provide service and leadership in statewide automated library and information resources to enhance the educational experience at Florida's community colleges. This mission is accomplished by providing access to shared information resources; ensuring effective use of technology through training, support, and consultation; researching and implementing suitable new technologies; and providing library advocacy for issues of concern to community college libraries. CCLA currently administers a state-level program of 3.9 million (2007-08) that provides electronic information resources for students at all 28 community colleges.

2. State University of New York libraries currently spend approximately \$18,000,000 a year on electronic resources. The SUNY Libraries are requesting new funding equivalent to 50% of the current electronic resources expenditures. These new funds will be utilized in combination with matching funds from the libraries for University-wide and Group Licensing of electronic resources. The combination of new funds, and campus commitment to match the new funding dollar for dollar, will allow all campuses to expand access to electronic resources while also ensuring that the University leverages its size to derive the maximum value possible for the money invested.

Additionally, this new funding will ensure the continuation of the SUNY Elsevier ScienceDirect contract, which is due to expire in December 2009. Without additional funding it is unlikely that the ScienceDirect contract can be extended beyond 2009.

Advantageous contracting terms established by the SUNYConnect Digital Library initiative may also be extended to other academic libraries in the state through partnerships with the New York State Higher Education (NYSHEI) and Nylink. Utilizing these partnerships will allow New York's investment in SUNY to benefit every higher education institution in the state.