

# Community Involvement

## Community under the NSDL Umbrella

NSDL has a passion for providing excellent STEM resources for education. That same passion helps sustain ATEEC and eERL and the other libraries under the umbrella of NSDL. This passion comes across in the community workings of NSDL, which needs to continue to be fostered and developed. The spirit of community will provide the catalyst for sustaining NSDL's mission: to provide educational resources for science, technology, engineering and mathematics education. The NSDL mission is to both deepen and extend science literacy through access to materials and methods that reveal the nature of the physical universe and the intellectual means by which we discover and understand it.

“eERL plays a vital role in NSDL. Their active networking with community colleges and the workforce will be instrumental in growing NSDL.”

Rachael Bower  
Co-Director, Internet  
Scout Project

Being a library under the NSDL umbrella, eERL has seen opportunities for community involvement both in the NSDL community proper, as well as within its own project. Both types of relationships are encouraged and needed for the development of a healthy digital library. Let's look at both types of community, as part of NSDL and within the eERL project itself.

ATEEC has made an effort to ensure that eERL's core digital library staff is connected to the larger universe of people engaged in developing national, digital libraries. eERL was not only informed by these associations, these connections also allow the project to have direct input to and influence upon the creation of NSDL—an innovative, robust national system of interoperable digital libraries. eERL has participated in several ways in the NSDL community, including: EIESC, SSC, AMPC, Technology Standing Committee and WhiteBoard reports (show links to all):

### **Educational Impact and Evaluation Standing Committee (EIESC)** (<http://eduimpact.comm.nsd.org> )

Chris Neuhaus, Evaluator, and Christine Walker, Project Manager, have been committee members of EIESC since 2002. Chris Walker is currently the liaison for EIESC to the AMPC. She works with Anita Coleman and Laura Bartolo, who head up that committee, to ensure that the AMPC and EIESC communicate and can offer information on educational impact/evaluation at the annual meeting.

Chris Neuhaus, eERL's evaluator, conducted an extensive literature search for resources on educational impact and evaluation in 2002-3. He provided that information to EIESC to help with establishing the benchmarks for those areas. (See <http://www.uni.edu/neuhaus/digitalbibeval.html> )

### **Sustainability Standing Committee (SSC)** (<http://sustain.comm.nsd.org/> )

Christine Walker has served on the SSC since Fall 2004. She and her P.I., Dr. Ellen Kabat Lensch, coauthored a Whiteboard Report as part of a series of sustainability vignettes, entitled “Collaboration and Passion: ATEEC and Its Environmental Resources Library.” (See <http://content.nsd.org/wbr/Issue.php> )

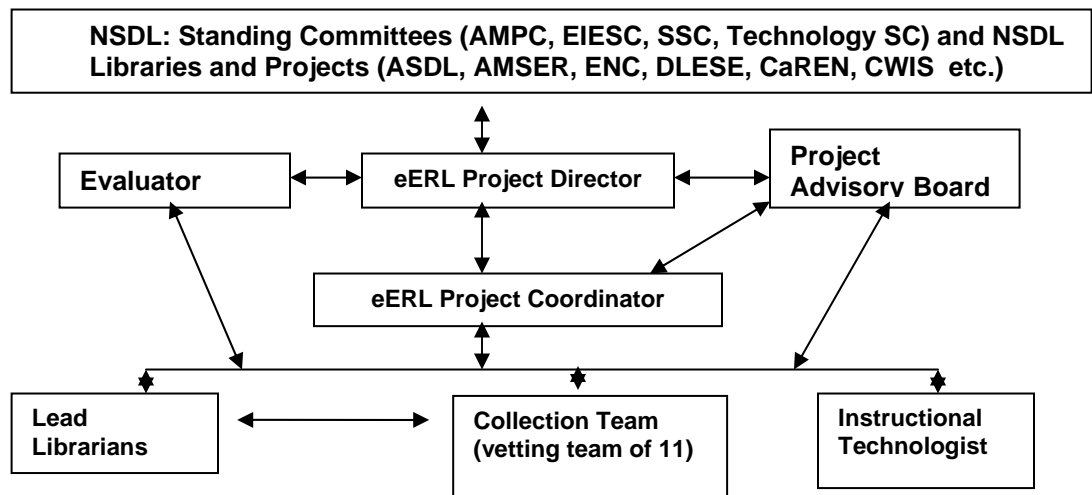
## Annual Meeting Planning Committee (AMPC)

Christine Walker has served on the AMPC for the past two years, this year as EIESC liaison.

## Technology Standing Committee

Chris Neuhaus served on this committee in 2002-2003.

**WhiteBoard Report** (see <http://content.nsd.org/wbr/Issue.php>)



The diagram above represents the dynamics of the eERL projects in terms of community involvement.

## Community for the Project Team

Creating a sense of community is obviously important for the project team itself, especially to reap the benefits of ongoing communication. The project team seemed to function very well in onsite meetings. In these meetings the discussions produced varying viewpoints which led to new ideas and refined processes. You can see the Lessons Learned section for more on this topic.

Communication is vital to the development and maintenance of a strong community. Multiple formats of communication are needed, from email to teleconferences and beyond. Since part of the challenge is where participants live (the geography), a workaround to compensate for the geography factor helps maintain the team's focus on and immersion in the process of creating and refining the digital library. The project manager needs to adapt and offer different ways to participate with communication happening consistently and often. Coordinating a project is similar to weaving a piece of material, which has the potential to become an elegant tapestry with texture and design.

From the Evaluator's standpoint especially, getting more and very regular feedback from all team members produces input for the formative evaluation integral to keeping the project on track and obtaining the best possible results. Onsite meetings can provide the best direct opportunities for this to occur, but teleconferencing is a more realistic tool to make sure feedback happens often. As eERL continues to develop, it will need to use this tool more than it did in this grant.