ICON (Innovation Curriculum Online Network):
The National Digital Library for Technological Literacy

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ABSTRACT

The International Technology Education (ITEA), in partnership with the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse (ENC) and funded by the National Science Foundation has created a comprehensive digital library collection for K-12 technological literacy in an accessible virtual environment. ICON, or the Innovation Curriculum Online Network, is a central source for information dealing with technology and innovation.

ICON serves as a national electronic roadmap to connect users, such as teachers, professors, students, museum staff, and parents with information about our human built and innovated world. Users may use the digital library to access resources ranked according to technological literacy content and pedagogy, interact with quality instructional resources, and to enhance online search capabilities relevant to the needs of the user population. The focused digital library contains online resources including websites, electronic files, information about professional organizations, government agencies, public and private foundations, and commercial enterprises. Identification and selection of these resources are in alignment with national standards, grade and age level appropriateness, sound instructional and disciplinary content, and current availability of and access to materials.

ENC has built a robust electronic infrastructure to support: the development of relevant and appropriate metadata (in conjunction with other synergistic NSDL projects); the processing of records and abstracts; the development of value-added user interfaces; and the maintenance of computer services for optimum and continuous digital library operations. An advisory board is providing annual input into digital library development and identification of quality digital resources. Formal evaluation of the ICON project is being conducted by Horizon Research.

Field testing of the collection and its services is being undertaken with diverse groups of users to evaluate ease of navigation and discovery of content-rich, pedagogically sound resources.

A variety of methods of sustainability for the collection are being explored including public and/or private sponsorship and subscriber support. ICON was officially launched March 2003 (www.icontechlit.org) and presented in a special interest session on March 13, 2003 at the ITEA Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. Currently, ICON has established tools for simple search, advance search, and browse by technology concepts. The technology concepts are classified and based from the National Standards for Technological Literacy initially driven by the Technology for All Americans Project (http://www.iteawww.org/TAA[Listing.htm]).

Continuous user feedback will be monitored through a “contact us” link established to receive not only communications on problems with the digital library but to allow user questions and site evaluations. Users may also “Suggest a Resource” to ICON to be considered for inclusion in the collection.