

A National Library of Energy Science & Technology The Headquarters Perspective

Denise Diggin
Librarian
Visual Media and Library Services Group
Department of Energy

In the 21st Century, I see the Headquarters Library as an autonomous library - yet as part of something bigger.

A library functioning on its own, with its own budget, patron base, local goals and objectives and under the direction of its own Headquarters management.

But, although autonomous, I envision a library that is in an integral partnership with the other DOE libraries, working together to share ideas, support each other, and present a unified and united front on issues dealing with information access and delivery.

I envision our library as part of a nationally recognized consortium of libraries, collectively based in a virtual environment, that together form a National Library of Energy Science and Technology.

I believe that as such, our library will have enhanced recognition, and a voice that will be able to be projected beyond our individual environs and concerns.

I believe that as part of such a partnership, our library might have a stabler budget, as we prove through consortium purchasing and our individual and collective partnership endeavors, that each of our individual libraries are important; that they offer meaningful and desired services to patrons; and that the agency, and our individual sites would be the poorer without them.

From the Headquarters Library's perspective, several factors are the driving forces for establishment of National Library of Energy Science and Technology:

First, the significant budget reductions for resources and collections over the last few years.

Our library's funding has been substantially reduced; and we're certainly not the only DOE library facing cutbacks; we need to work collectively to ensure access to strong, viable energy collections.

Second, the escalating cost of scientific/technical information resources is also a factor;

There is a significant difference in the cost of an average subscription for an agricultural journal at \$67 a subscription vs. an energy-related one at over \$900/subscriptions. And electronic journals, available through negotiated "site licenses" can be expensive. We need to work collectively to acquire new information resources for our patrons at affordable prices.

Third, the high rate of inflation for energy-related information resources is eating away at our libraries' purchasing power. But if we worked together as a unified whole, we would be able to leverage expenditures for information resources and dramatically increase the number of titles available individually to each of us.

Fourth, reductions in library staffing are resulting in downscaling of operations. We need to work together to continue to give the highest caliber of service to our patrons.

Fifth, new technology allows comprehensive and instantaneous access to information resources in ways never perceived possible before.

We're all moving toward virtual libraries, as we bring up our home pages and "libraries without walls".

In October, 1996 the Headquarters Library introduced its [Shared Library Network](#) and [Library Home Page](#).

This had a significant impact on how information was delivered to our patrons. And as time has gone by, our patrons have embraced desktop access to resources and would rather use a resource from their desktop, than a paper copy in the library.

We need to use these technological advances to provide quick and easy access to DOE's information and to the subject relevant information resources that our patrons need to fulfill their missions for DOE.

Under a National Library umbrella, we could help each other solve problems, discover new horizons, and ensure that every DOE site, no matter how small or remote, could access our combined collections and a significantly wider array of information resources.

Sixth, reinvention/retooling of the way business is done in the information delivery marketplace is also a factor, (for example, how publishers, document delivery vendors, as well as libraries are changing the way they do business).

Publishers are moving toward complete electronic publication, eliminating paper copy; OSTI recently introduced their "[Information Bridge](#)" to provide the public with DOE technical reports in electronic format; document delivery vendors are looking for ways to keep their customer base; and libraries are looking for ways to keep their patrons.

Seventh, the perceived need on the part of clientele for expertise and assistance in dealing with "what's out there"; and in providing services and information in a economical and efficient way is also a driving factor.

We're finding that our customers will go anywhere where they perceive they can get a better deal. I think that with increased recognition of being part of a National Library and the increased consortium purchasing that might ensue, we'll be able to offer our customers increased access to information resources at reduced prices.

I envision that a National Library will be formed out of:

- ▶ the strong, viable, and shared collections of individual DOE libraries
- ▶ the local accessibility by individual DOE libraries to a wide range of electronic resources that is fostered through participation in a unified library concept;
- ▶ the strength of individual DOE libraries' staffs
- ▶ each individual DOE library's fulfillment of a NEED that is clearly perceived by local and non-local users alike
- ▶ and the provision of valuable and valued services by individual DOE libraries to customers

Samuel Johnson once said that "Knowledge is of two kinds. Either we know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can obtain information about it."

This is the essence of a library's role in the Department. Making information and resources available to patrons in cost-effective and efficient ways.

Libraries are under siege today.

People are asking, "Why do we need a library?"

"I can use my credit card, I can use the Internet."

A National Library can help stabilize the concept of, and need for a library. It can help stretch our budget dollars by using its collective strength to acquire better pricing for resources, and it can open doors for more resources for the libraries within the DOE family.

If we can show that we provide a valuable service and that this service is enhanced because it's based on a foundation that transcends our immediate environs, I think we will all benefit.

It has been said that the irony of the information age is that it has given new respectability to uninformed opinion.

Our libraries' staffs, trained to the expert level, know where and how to get verified information, and can help patrons separate fact from uninformed opinion.

A National Library will lend credence to our staffs' expertise in the energy area and, in turn, will be enhanced by the reputation of the staffs of our individual libraries.

A National Library will strengthen us individually by bringing us together collectively.

It will make the Department strong by collectively providing accessibility to a wider array of information resources needed to accomplish DOE's mission than could be provided individually; by disseminating more DOE information to the public in cost effective and efficient ways; by preserving the lessons and legacy of the past; and by validating the worth of DOE's current and future programs.

A National Library's recognition would be worldwide, and we could each provide a unique aspect of that worldwide reputation.