# Workshop on Quality of the DLESE Broad Collection

*Framing of the Questions*

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DLESE differs from most bricks and mortar libraries, and most digital libraries, in that it allows resources in its collection to be selected and contributed by people who are not employees of the library, and indeed have no formal connection to the library. DLESE's mechanism of Community Cataloging is important to the library's philosophical foundation as a library built by the community for the community. However, this open door has lead to fears that "trash" would find its way into the DLESE collection, and DLESE's reputation would suffer, and potential users would go elsewhere. Since the founding days of DLESE, at the Coolfont meeting of August 1999, the DLESE Community has grappled with how open the door to the Broad Collection should be. Almost four years later, the issues are unresolved and the fears remain.

I see two main issues that need to be addressed: (1) Criteria for the Broad Collection, and (2) Procedures for implementing the criteria.

## Criteria:

The existing criteria for including resources in the DLESE Broad Collection are: (1) The resource is relevant to Earth System Education, and (2) The resource works (i.e. it has no conspicuous bugs). At the time when a resource is cataloged for the DLESE Broad Collection, the cataloger is asked to state that the resource meets the two existing selection criteria. Since the cataloger could well be the resource creator, this isn't a very strong safety-net as far as keeping out problematic resources. In fact, the DPC staff does an informal check for resources they find troubling at the time they do the metadata QC, but this step has no official standing and is steered by only the judgment of the staff person on duty rather than by criteria and procedures that have been vetted by the DLESE Community.

Other criteria that have been discussed at various meetings include:

• No commercial message

• No intrusive advertising

• No blatant religious message

• No blatant political message

• No blatant errors of fact

• Educational effectiveness

The Quality Workshop will have to take a stance on which of these, or other, criteria should be used to either exclude or annotate resources in the DLESE Broad Collection.

***Procedures:***

Resources can enter the DLESE Broad Collection as either individual resources or as an item within a themed collection. Individual resources can be gathered and cataloged either by members of the community (including the resource creator) or as part of a funded DLESE resource gathering effort. These two pathways require different procedures for implementing the criteria for entrance to the collection,

*Procedures for implementing criteria for resources submitted to the library individually:*

With respect to procedures for implementing the criteria, I think there are two questions to be answered:

(1) Do we want (a) screening by the community or (b) screening by paid staff?

(2) If a resource is found to be problematic with respect to one or more criteria, do we want to: (a) exclude it from the Broad Collection, or (b) include it in the Collection but provide an annotation to call potential users' attention to the issue?

An example of screening by the community would be the "holding tank" model originally proposed by John Snow at the fall 2000 Steering Committee meeting. An example of screening by paid staff would be a formalized version of what Chris DiLeonardo has been doing, informally, while gathering for our NSDL Collections grant.

An "annotation" would show up on the resource's return in the Discovery System as an icon or label saying something like "contains advertising." Behind the scenes would be the same annotation service technology that will be showing the "read review" labels in the Discovery System. On the issue of annotate vs exclude, NSDL is moving towards a policy favoring option (2b), annotate. Until recently, most conversations about improving quality of DLESE Broad Collection implicitly assumed option (2a), exclusion threshold. I think it may be easier to build consensus around option (2b), the annotation option.

These two procedural questions are independent of each other. Thus one can envision a 2 x 2 matrix defining the possible procedures:

|  | Screening by paid staff | Screening by community |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Problematic resources excluded from library | 1 | 2 |
| Problematic resources annotated in Discovery System | 3 | 4 |

Conceivably, the workshop could recommend that different criteria could fall into different squares of the procedures-possibilities matrix.  For example, not meeting relevance to ESE could cause the resource to  be excluded, while presence of advertising could cause the resource to be annotated.

*Procedures for implementing criteria for resources within Themed Collections:*

DLESE's Interim Collections Accession Policy (http://www.dlese.org/documents/policy/collections_accession.html) requires that any collection wishing to be formally accessioning *in toto* into DLESE must submit extensive documentation including " A clear statement of selection criteria, including resource review and metadata quality assurance mechanisms."  This process has just happened for the first time this month (June 2003).  Twelve collections have submitted  documentation seeking to be accessioned into DLESE.

The Collections Committee, advised by the DPC Technical Staff, is charged by the Interim Collection Accession Policy with reviewing the documentation for collections wishing to be accessioned.  The  Policy requires them to " Favor those collections which are best aligned with the DLESE Collections Policy and Scope Statement"  as one of six factors to take into account.  The Collections Policy & Scope Statement, of course, specifies DLESE's selection criteria for both the Broad and Reviewed Collections.  But the Interim Collections Accession Policy does not explicitly state that individual resources in collections submitted for accessioning must meet those criteria.

Thus DLESE has less control over the quality and relevance of resources submitted via the collections accession process.  The workshop will need to address whether the checks and balances in place for monitoring what comes into DLESE via the Collections Accession process are sufficient, especially if we recommend additional selection criteria above  and beyond the two that are now in place.