

ICONnect: [icon]

A technology initiative of the American Association of School Librarians, a division of the American Library Association

Introduction

Every day, in schools throughout the US, library media specialists help millions of K-12 students to find and use information for school and personal needs. Technology plays an increasingly more important role in every aspect of information seeking and use and library media specialists are constantly exploring new ways of using technology to help students.

The Internet provides school library media specialists, teachers and students with the opportunity to access a massive amount of curriculum resources. However, the "Information Superhighway" is difficult for the novice to navigate and without training and support, users can end up frustrated and discouraged. In order to meet the Internet training needs of school library media specialists, teachers and students, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) developed its technology initiative, ICONnect.

With more than 8,000 members, AASL is the largest professional association serving school library media specialists. AASL is a division of the American Library Association (ALA) and is governed by a member-elected board and executive committee; with a professional staff of seven managing the day-to-day operations. Members meet twice each year at the ALA Midwinter and Annual Conferences and every two or three years at AASL National Conference. These conferences provide members with opportunities to participate in professional development activities designed especially for them. ICONnect will provide professional development opportunities for all AASL members and the greater community of library media specialists, not just those who are able to attend conferences, and will demonstrate the value of AASL membership.

Summary

ICONnect, a technology initiative of the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), a division of the American Library Association, is designed to connect students, library media specialists and teachers to learning using the Internet. ICONnect resources will:

- help students to develop the information and visual literacy skills that they need to be productive citizens.
- provide library media specialists and teachers with training to effectively navigate the Internet and to develop and use effective electronic resources with teachers and students.

The initiative has five components:

- Gopher and Home Page
- Internet Curriculum Advisors
- On-line Courses
- Mini-Grants
- KidsConnect, an on-line question-answering service for students

To promote AASL/ALA membership through ICONnect, two components, the mini-grants and the Internet Curriculum Advisors, will be available to AASL members, only.

ICONnect Components

Gopher and Home Page

The Gopher and Home Page provide ICONnect participants with gateways to information about technology and education. AASL membership and publications will be promoted on the Home Page. The Gopher and Home Page are currently available on the Internet. The address for the ICONnect Gopher is: [ericir.syr.edu 7070](http://ericir.syr.edu/7070). The address for the ICONnect Home Page is: <http://ericir.syr.edu/ICONN/ihome.html>.

On-line Courses

During the three years of the ICONnect initiative, a variety of on-line courses will be offered. The courses will be designed for different levels of ability in using the Internet and will focus on integrating Internet resources into the curriculum.

The first course will focus on Internet basics and is designed for school library media specialists who have basic knowledge of e-mail and a connection to the Internet for e-mail. There will be at least nine sessions which will cover basic tools for using the Internet, including e-mail, listservs, gopher, telnet, WWW, ftp and newsgroups. Curriculum threads will be woven into each of these areas. The curriculum areas that the courses will focus on are weather, Russian studies, endangered species and government. These broad areas will offer examples of how the Internet can be used in collaborative curriculum projects.

The course, which will be offered via a special listserv, will debut in mid-September and will be offered every four months after that. A computer with Internet e-mail access is all participants need.

Internet Curriculum Advisors

ICONnect Internet Curriculum Advisors will help their fellow AASL members move beyond the basics of Internet use and on to the task of integrating Internet resources into the school curriculum. Only AASL members will be eligible to

request an Internet Curriculum Advisors.

Curriculum Advisors will apply to the ICONnect Committee and be approved based on the content of their application. The application questions explore their experience using the Internet; asks what curriculum areas and grade levels they have expertise in and ask applicants to make a minor time commitment to the project. Approved applicants will be assigned an advisee and the two will develop a unique relationship; probably communicating primarily by e-mail.

KidsConnect

KidsConnect is a question-answering, help and referral service for students on the Internet. The goal of the service is to help students access and use the information available on the Internet effectively and efficiently. Library media specialists from throughout the country will collaborate on KidsConnect to provide direct assistance to any student who needs help. Through e-mail, students will contact a library media specialist for guidance and instruction and receive an answer within 48 hours.

The service will address the needs of students using the power of the Internet in two ways:

1. To put students in touch with library media professionals
2. As a source of information for students.

KidsConnect will be managed by ASKEric at Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, under the direction of Dr. Michael Eisenberg. School library media specialists will volunteer to participate in the distributed network of question-answerers.

Library media specialists are uniquely qualified to provide students with this type of assistance. Their training and experience provide them with the ability to assist the student to develop his or her questions and work through the research process, using the Internet as an information resource.

Mini-Grants

Mini-grants of up to \$500 will be awarded to library media specialists and classroom teachers who work together to develop curriculum-related projects that use the Internet as an information resource.

The mini-grant program will be managed following AASL's already existing awards process. A task force of the AASL/ICONnect Committee will review the applications and determine the grantees. The school library media specialist applying for a mini-grant must be a member of AASL and the mini-grant project must use Internet resources in the curriculum. The mini-grant program will be

introduced in September 1995 and the deadline for submitting a mini-grant proposal will be December 31, 1995.