

# Federal Science **eLibrary**

## **Federal Science eLibrary: Access to the world's scientific information through an interdepartmental initiative**

*"In my view, if government researchers are to be competitive with university researchers, we must have access to collections of e-journals and e-indexes that are comparable to those offered by universities. Access to journals outside of our specialization is of particular value for generating new approaches and innovative methods of analysis."*

**Natural Resources Canada**

### **What it is**

The proposed Federal Science eLibrary aims to deliver seamless and equitable access to full-text electronic journals in science, technology and medicine (STM) to the desktops of all federal government researchers, policy analysts and decision makers.

The eLibrary initiative is headed by the six science-based departments/agencies that make up the Strategic Alliance of Federal Science and Technology Libraries:

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada;
- Environment Canada;
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada;
- Health Canada;
- National Research Council's Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information (NRC-CISTI);
- Natural Resources Canada.

Together, they are seeking new government funding to transform the current process used for acquiring access rights to electronic journals for all federal departments, thereby ensuring all employees have desktop access to the information they need to work efficiently and productively.

### **Why it's important**

The Government of Canada employs more than 24,000 STM professionals to support key activities in strategic research, environmental and health protection, sustainable economic development, regulatory activity, defense and emergency preparedness. To stay on top of the latest scientific developments, these professionals need broad and immediate access to STM electronic journals. The eLibrary will improve the government's ability to deliver science-based programs and services that contribute to the well-being of Canadians.

### **What are the challenges**

- Research is a multidisciplinary and collaborative process that transcends jurisdictional and departmental boundaries; however, the current information infrastructure that supports federal research and policy-making is not integrated across departments.
- Many federal libraries are inadequately funded to deliver seamless and equitable access to e-journals.
- Federal libraries negotiate and manage access rights to e-journals on a department-by-department basis, resulting in limited or no negotiation power when dealing with large publishers.

### **The Solution: A Federal Science eLibrary**

Canadian academic libraries have faced the same challenges and have achieved success using a collaborative approach; the eLibrary proposal follows a similar model. It



is an approach that is well aligned with the Government of Canada's shared-service model for providing seamless service delivery, as well as its focus on integrating S&T efforts across departments and disciplines.

New funding is required to:

- negotiate a government-wide site licence for desktop access to full-text e-journals, thereby creating greater leverage in negotiations with publishers for the best possible price, and eliminating the unnecessary duplication of systems and resources across departments;
- negotiate local loading rights, to ensure permanent access to licensed electronic articles;
- integrate seamless access across all departments, to eliminate existing inequalities; and
- improve systems on a continual basis, to ensure secure and reliable access.

An investment of *only* \$2,000 per federal STM professional over five years, would enable the eLibrary to purchase government-wide licences for content and to maintain the supporting infrastructure. With this funding in place, the eLibrary could offer seamless and equitable access to all federal employees within 12 to 18 months.

### **What have we achieved so far**

The Strategic Alliance produced a Feasibility Study in September 2003, a Business Case in June 2005, and, most recently, completed a pilot project that gave 500 researchers at three sites across Canada direct access to some 4 million journal articles locally loaded on servers at NRC-CISTI. The pilot proved the value and feasibility of a collaborative, horizontal approach to seamless access to e-journals at the desktop. At the same time, it demonstrated the value of an eLibrary service to researchers, who are now asking when it will be made available to them permanently.

### **What is still needed**

Sustained funding for existing library services *and* new funding of \$45 million over five years is needed to negotiate government-wide licences for content and to maintain the supporting infrastructure to ensure enduring and permanent access. With the necessary funding in place, the eLibrary could offer full and equitable access to all federal government employees within 12 to 18 months.

### **Moving forward**

A Federal Science eLibrary is in the best interests of all Canadians. With adequate information resources available conveniently and quickly, federal researchers and decision makers will be prepared to face new health, environmental and security threats. Policy analysts will be equipped with better information resources with which to define and evaluate policy. Federal STM professionals co-located in departments, and researchers collaborating with scientists in university or private sectors, will be equipped to participate fully in shared research activities.

This initiative is well developed and ready to go; the science-based departments support it; the infrastructure is in place; and a pilot project has demonstrated its feasibility and value to users. All that remains to make the Federal Science eLibrary a reality is the necessary funding.

*"Because the library does not have a huge budget or space to carry a lot of journals, access to electronic has cut the waiting time for articles which could be a week or more through interlibrary loans."*

**Institute of Ocean Sciences, B.C.**

July 2006

For more information: <http://safstl-asbstf.scitech.gc.ca>