

What is Amser?

AMSER (the Applied Math and Science Education Repository) is a digital library – an online portal of educational resources and services built specifically for use by those in community and technical colleges, but free for anyone to use. AMSER links users to authoritative online applied math and science resources and offers tools to help incorporate these resources into teaching and learning environments. The resources in AMSER come from a variety of sources: collection developers, content specialists, and educators in the field. New resources are added daily, and resource suggestions are always welcome. If you have created a resource you would like to see added to AMSER, or know of a valuable online resource you use in your classroom, please feel free to e-mail us about it at resources@amser.org

To help organize and make use of resources, AMSER offers several tools including:

Bulletins – alert you to new resources of interest via e-mail.

Folders – help you organize and store information about resources, for use in teaching or research.

Recommendations – provide you with suggestions about new resources, based on feedback you and others have given on other resources.

In order to gain access to these tools users must first log in to the AMSER portal. Logging in is free and any infor-



mation that users provide is only used at AMSER – it is never passed along to any other project or entity. For more information about logging in see *Why Log In* on page 2.

AMSER is funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and is being created by a team of project partners led by Internet Scout. It is part of the larger NSF *National Science Digital Library* project.

What is a digital library?

A digital library is a coherent, organized collection of resources, often focused on a specific subject (chemistry, math, geology, etc.) and is usually accessible via the Internet. A digital library may appear to be a single entity, but often links to other libraries or information services in an effort to present a unified view of a topic or collection to the user. This means that within a digital library such as AMSER the user can find different types of resources. After a keyword search they may find very specific learning objects or curriculum tools, or they may find a link to another website (determined by AMSER to be reliable) dedicated to the searched subject. Despite the strong connotation of printed resources that the term

The resources in AMSER come from a variety of sources: collection developers, content specialists, and educators in the field. New resources are added to AMSER every day.

“library” carries, digital libraries usually contain far more than electronic versions of text documents, and can include any type of information that is “born digital” or can be converted into an electronic format. So the learning objects you will find on AMSER are designed to be viewed, and used, in an electronic environment.

How is using AMSER different from doing a Google™ search?

AMSER resources are selected from high quality providers of scientific, mathematic, and technical materials that are accurate and appropriate for educational settings. AMSER’s search results are drawn only from a body of pre-selected materials that have been added based on content, value, and reliability. In contrast to a single

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Why Log In?

Although you can use AMSER without logging in, to get the most benefit from AMSER you need to create a user name and password for yourself so you can log in to the site and take full advantage of all the portal's features. Once you have created a user name and password you will have access to a variety of special features available on AMSER. Features available in AMSER once you have logged in include: bulletins, user ratings, user comments, saved searches, a folder system, and recommendations.

Bulletins

The bulletin system is like your own private e-mail service that sends you updates on resources recently added to AMSER that might be useful to you. To sign up for this service you simply click on the bulletins marker on the home page. Then you just click on the subjects that interest you and choose how often you would like to be notified of new resources in the subjects you have chosen.

Rating Resources

When you rate resources in AMSER you provide valuable feedback about the resource to the rest of the user community. There are two ways to rate a resource in AMSER. Resources may be rated directly from the front page if the record you wish to rate is there; resources may also be rated when you are searching or browsing for resources you are interested in. After finding a

record and exploring the resource or material that it describes, display the full record and you will find the ratings section at the bottom of the screen. After rating the resource you must click the rate button to save the rating. You must be logged into AMSER in order to rank resources. Only the cumulative rating and number of responses are



shown to other users. However, on the Full Record screen you will be able to see what you rated a selected resource. You can also change your rating on a specific resource should the resource or your opinion change.

Adding Comments

In addition to rating a resource, users can also add comments about any resource in the AMSER Portal database. These comments provide other users with information about the resource, allowing users to communicate easily about a selected

resource. To add a comment, first find the resource record about which you would like to comment by searching or browsing. Once you find the appropriate resource's Full Record screen, you will find the comments section at the bottom of that page.

Recommendations

The AMSER recommendation option tries to provide meaningful suggestions for resources that you may find interesting and useful. These suggestions are based on the ratings you've given to resources, using the ratings system mentioned above. If you have not rated any resources, the system will not be able to provide any recommendations.

Saved Searches

Saving searches is another benefit that logging in provides. This feature allows you to save searches that you create on the Advanced Search page. In addition to the ability to re-run your searches while you are logged in, this feature allows you to have new resources that match your searches e-mailed to you on a frequency basis you specify, with a max of once a day. To create a saved search, click Advanced Search on the navigation bar. Towards the bottom of the Advanced Search screen, you will see a button labeled "Save" directly next to the "Search" button. Once you have entered a search that you wish to save, click this button. This will

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About NSDL

The National Science Digital Library (NSDL) was created by the National Science Foundation to provide organized access to high quality resources and tools that support innovations in teaching and learning at all levels of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education. Begun in 1999, NSDL has been a collaborative effort between more than 200 national projects. For more information about this NSF program, please go to: <http://nsdl.org>

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term Google™ search which will often produce search results numbering in the millions, the majority of which are likely not relevant to applied math and science education, AMSER allows for more efficient discovery by only searching resources that have already been determined useful for teaching, learning, and researching applied science and mathematics topics.



AMSER tools and resources support learning in classrooms, labs, and in the workplace

What Can I Find in AMSER?

The resources in AMSER include hand-selected items that the AMSER staff has chosen from some of our trusted partners in the digital library field. We have partnered with many of these digital libraries in order to bring materials from their fine collections into AMSER. Once the AMSER staff has identified one of these collections, we coordinate with them and import their resource records into the AMSER portal. In addition, the staff combs the Internet in order to find resources that are not already part of a collection and add them to AMSER. Users will only have to search the AMSER site to find the best of the web for their specific subject area. Because the staff of AMSER is constantly working to add new resources, AMSER is always growing. Each week, new resources are added to our expanding collection allowing users to find new and helpful resources every time they visit.

Internet Scout and AMSER Project Partners

The **Internet Scout** research team creates and delivers practical Web-based information and software solutions for educators, librarians and researchers. Through stand-alone and collaborative projects, Scout focuses on joining concepts from both Library and Computer Science with the latest in Internet technology to create tools and publication services for finding, filtering, and presenting online information and metadata.

<http://scout.wisc.edu>

MERLOT (Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching) is an international cooperative dedicated to aggregating and making high quality online resources freely accessible to improve learning and teaching within higher education.

<http://www.merlot.org>

The **NSF Advanced Technological Education** (ATE) Projects promote improvement in technological education at the undergraduate and secondary school levels by supporting curriculum development, internships and field experiences for faculty, teachers, and students, and other activities with an emphasis on two-year colleges.

<http://nsf.gov/ehr/rec/atelinks.jsp>



The **American Association of Community Colleges** (AACC) was founded in 1920 and is the leading proponent and national voice for community colleges, with membership representing close to 95% of all accredited U.S. two-year community, junior, and technical colleges and their eleven million students.

<http://www.aacc.nche.edu>

The **American Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges** (AMATYC) was formed in 1974 and is the only organization exclusively devoted to providing a national forum for the improvement of the instruction of mathematics in the first two years of college, with more than 100 member institutions throughout the United States and Canada.

<http://www.amatyc.org>

Calling All Trainers

Do you have an interest in training? Do you love working with digital materials in the classroom? Would you like to learn more about how AMSER and other digital libraries can enrich teaching and learning environments? AMSER will be offering a hands-on workshop in the coming months – and we'll be offering support to help bring community and technical faculty and staff together for train-the-trainer sessions on AMSER. If you're interested please contact Chanda at outreach@amser.org and please check the AMSER web site for more information.

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take you to a page on which you may name your new search and choose how often you wish to receive e-mails with resources matching your search.

Folders

When you are logged into AMSER you gain access to your own set of Folders. These folders allow you to organize



Materials in AMSER support the study of a wide range of vocational and technical topics

and save resource records. Once you are logged in on the home page you will have the option to begin creating folders in the column to the right under the large heading "My Folders". You will notice that below each resource record is an icon marked "add to folder". By clicking on this icon you add the resource record to the active folder on the folder menu. You can delete items by clicking on the remove icon. You can add multiple folders to aid in the organization of the resources you have found making the foldering system an ideal tool for organizing and storing the resources you discover in AMSER.

Give us Feedback

The AMSER team is very interested in making the portal the best possible tool it can be. If there are features or tools you would like to see added please let us know. Send us an e-mail at: feedback@amser.org

Calendar of AMSER Events

Where in the world is AMSER?

We'll be at various conferences and meetings this year and we'd love to talk to you about what you're doing with digital resources and how we can make AMSER more useful to you and your students. Here's where we'll be and when:

October NSDL Annual Meeting http://nsdl.org October 18-20, 2006 Washington, D.C. ATE PI Meeting http://www.aacc.nche.edu October 18-20, 2006 Washington, D.C.	November ACTE http://www.acteonline.org Nov 30 - Dec 2, 2006 Atlanta, Georgia	March League for Innovation http://league.org March 4-7, 2007 New Orleans, Louisiana
April AACC http://www.aacc.nche.edu April 14-17, 2007 Tampa, Florida	May NISOD http://www.nisod.org May 20-23, 2007 Austin, Texas	June ALA http://ala.org June 21-27, 2007 Washington, D.C.

Contact Information

Have a question? Want to share information about how you're using AMSER or other digital materials in your classroom? Please contact us!

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