

NEWS

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PASCAL Celebrates Anniversary of the SC Academic Virtual Library

Columbia, SC — South Carolina's 210,000 students and faculty can use a large and increasing store of knowledge in core academic subjects, health sciences, and business, thanks to a program funded over the past two years by the General Assembly. The SC Academic Virtual Library, or "Electronic Library," provides a treasure trove of research materials, including millions of articles in over 16,000 electronic full-text periodicals. Most of these periodicals are core academic research journals. Also in the works for the upcoming year is completion of a system that will make 12 million volumes -- almost every book in every academic library in South Carolina -- available to all students and faculty members in the state, usually within 24 hours, regardless of the size or location of their technical college, four year college, university, or medical school.

For the past two fiscal years, the legislature has provided \$2 million/year funding for the "Statewide Electronic Library" for higher education in the S.C. Commission on Higher Education budget. The vast expansion of resources is extremely cost-effective. "We bring in at least \$7 of value for every dollar we spend on electronic resources," notes Rick Moul, who coordinates the Virtual Library's programs. "For example, our first two major license agreements for electronic journals and research material will cost \$3.8 million over five years, but would cost South Carolina institutions \$30.8 million if licensed individually." Similarly, by making it easier and cheaper to borrow materials, the statewide catalog and delivery system will generate a 3-fold increase in use at a fraction of current transaction costs. "I think this program represents as well as any, the Governor's call to a wise use of state funds in a collaborative, shared fashion," says Mark Herring, Dean of Libraries at Winthrop University.

"We're providing research materials well beyond the financial reach of our individual academic libraries," observes Moul. "This is an important program," says Cynthia Davies, Director of Library Services at Piedmont Technical College. "Our students are now on more equal footing with counterparts at larger research universities and institutions in other states."

Mr. Moul is Executive Director of PASCAL (Partnership among South Carolina Academic Libraries), an organization that was created in 2001 by academic library directors to address information-access challenges at virtually all of South Carolina's public and independent institutions of higher education. The Academic Virtual Library is organized into several major programs. Millions of research articles are

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provided through *Collegiate DISCUS*, which builds on the State Library's DISCUS foundation of general resources, and provides access to thousands of core academic resources in electronic form to College students and faculty. Access to all books in SC academic libraries will be provided through *PASCAL Delivers*, a statewide academic library catalog of over 12 million volumes. This will be a single place to look for books, coupled with an overnight delivery of material to requestors. With a simple web-based request, books will arrive at a user's home library within two days or less. Full service to all colleges and universities will be phased in during in 2006. A third component of the Virtual library is *South Carolina Memory*, an evolving statewide digital library program emphasizing expanded access to cultural and historical resources for researchers, students at all levels and citizens through collaboration and digitization.

In addition to state funds, the Academic Virtual Library is supported through member library dues, and has been awarded several small federal grants through the State Library for digitization. In the past year PASCAL has doubled its receipts from member library dues so that they account for 7.5% of the total operating budget. However, state funds provide the key to sustainability. They are primarily used for database and electronic journal licensing fees, and ongoing costs such as delivery, hardware and software maintenance. "These are recurring annual expenses on which libraries have come to rely heavily," Davies notes. Establishing ongoing funding for the Virtual Academic Library is important in order to continue to meet the crucial challenge of providing the resources necessary to level the education and economic playing field in the global information economy for South Carolina's 210,000 college and university students.

About PASCAL

In 2001, South Carolina academic libraries formed PASCAL -- Partnership Among South Carolina Academic Libraries (pascalsc.org) -- to address information-access problems. Today, PASCAL is a consortium of well over 50 public and private academic libraries dedicated to improving information resources, access and services at each member institution's library. An important dimension of PASCAL's program is its cooperation with state government agencies. The SC Commission on Higher Education, the SC State Library, the Budget and Control Board's Division of the State CIO, and the Department of Archives and History are all partners with the member libraries. Another important partner is South Carolina Independent Colleges & Universities (SCICU), which promotes the cause of independent higher education in South Carolina. More information on PASCAL may be found at <http://pascalsc.org>.

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