Council of UA Research Libraries
U of A Education Portal Committee

Preliminary Report
March 1, 2007

Liaison: Carolyn Allen

Members: Elizabeth Chadbourn McKee, Co-Chair (UA Fayetteville), Paula Reaves, Secretary (UA Monticello), Heather Smith, Co-Chair (UAMS)

Resigned member: Leslie Watkins (UALR) (resigned January 11, 2007)

Charge:

The U of A Arkansas Educational Portal Task Force is charged with the mission of developing a shared Web site dedicated to providing information and tools to teachers K through 12 drawing from materials provided by various colleges, departments, and programs of the UA research universities.

- Identify programs and resources at each institution, wherever curriculum is developed
- Identify opportunities for partnerships with K-12 programs
- Determine how a portal should be established and monitored
- Develop a promotional plan

Report:

The U of A Education Portal is to be a “one-stop shopping” site for K-12 educators with information on curriculum, lesson plans, tutorials, projects as well as links other websites that might be useful for Arkansas teachers. Our goal is to make available to busy teachers a website that will allow them to search for support materials already available on the Internet.

During our first meeting, we discussed the overall project and tried to understand what the finished product should be. Elizabeth had done some preliminary searching of various portals that already exist and we were able to look at them to get an idea of what our task is.

After much discussion, it was determined that our first step was to search our institutions to find what teaching materials are already available online. We would also search the Arkansas Department of Education to see what is available. Each of us searched what was available and found that very little original material was available with just a rudimentary search. It was agreed that more searching was necessary. We also agreed that it would be easier to have actual websites to organize than to try and find websites to
force into our organization. We also agreed that we would probably have to go outside our institutions for additional websites.

We have come to the conclusion that we will need to include links from resources within Arkansas as well as outside Arkansas. We will remember that we are serving Arkansas teachers, but feel we cannot exclude these external resources if we are to have a quality portal.

Our short-term goal is to have a working framework of our portal available to teachers by Fall 2007.

Our long-term goals include advertising this portal, discussing the portal with Superintendents and Principals so they can champion the portal to teachers, and getting feedback from actual teachers as to what they need and would like to see available.

As a whole, we feel that this is a very large, time-consuming project with a long lasting commitment. We have been given the basic “idea” of the portal, but feel lost in the direction it needs to go. We are also a committee of three individuals and feel overwhelmed with this task.

Items for further discussion include:

- Organization of links within the portal
- Criteria for links to be included in portal
- Design of the portal – We agreed that we liked the idea of a very visual home page with clear navigation with minimal clutter.
- Development of the portal – This is a point of further discussion as we are not sure who would actually put our ideas into action. However, Carolyn has volunteered space on a web server at UA Fayetteville for this portal.

Problems we see:

- Keeping the portal current – Link checker software was discussed
  - Making sure all the links are not “broken”
  - Keeping up with changes to the pages we link to