

The Michigan Library Association supports the Michigan eLibrary (MeL).

The benefits of the Michigan eLibrary (MeL)

Through MeL, the Library of Michigan makes a core set of electronic resources available to every resident in the state of Michigan, both through all types of libraries as well as through remote patron access. The remote patron authentication process is unique: any resident may gain access to the commercial resources by entering his or her state identification number or drivers license.

MeL Internet Collection contains more than 30,000 resources chosen by librarians on a variety of subjects. In the Fall 2003, the MeL Internet Collection was converted to a database to enhance searching capability. Search results are guaranteed to include highly authoritative and reliable information. A search done on “asthma” in MeL brings up 23 results that include the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology and the American Lung Association. A search on “asthma” in Google brought back 5,460,000 results, an overwhelming number to evaluate and review!

Details about the Michigan eLibrary

The Michigan eLibrary is funded by the Library of Michigan with funding from the State of Michigan and a Library Services and Technology Act grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The primary goal of the Michigan eLibrary is to provide a core set of electronic resources to all Michigan residents so they can access the information they want at any time, in any place, and in the format that best suits their needs.

In October 2003, MeL is comprised of:

- MeL Internet resources
- MeL databases
- MeL subscription to LearnATest (a set of practice tests geared to students and job-seekers)
- MeL ebook collection

The Library of Michigan, in collaboration with librarians across the state, plans to add the following components to MeL in the future:

- a statewide union catalog (which includes patron-initiated interlibrary loan and delivery)

- a portal to search for information across all components of MeL
- access to digital collections about Michigan or created by Michigan institutions

Current MeL Resources

The **MeL Internet Collection** originated in 1992 when a group of librarians began compiling a set of authoritative Internet sites and arranged them according to subject areas. Today the Library of Michigan continues to contract with a group of librarians to maintain the MeL Internet resource collection. Currently, this group of librarians — called MeL Selectors — add approximately 100 sites per month and update or delete approximately 30. This collection of MeL Internet resources may be accessed by anyone; its use is not limited to Michigan residents.

The **MeL databases** include subscription databases as well as a database for which there is no charge. The subscription databases are available to all residents of the state of Michigan via the Internet. Residents may access these databases through a library or from home or work using a valid Michigan driver's license or ID. Database topics run the gamut from business, health and technology to genealogy, children's interests and legal resources. The Library of Michigan spends \$3.6 million per year on these subscriptions so that all Michigan residents may have access. The current subscription runs three years and expires Sept. 30, 2006.

The **Michigan Authors and Illustrators** database offers comprehensive information on authors and illustrators born in Michigan, living in Michigan, or who have written books about or set in Michigan. The information is based on a book published by the Michigan Association for Media in Education. Through an LSTA grant awarded by the Library of Michigan, the information from the printed publication was converted into this online database.

The Library of Michigan contracts with the Michigan Library Consortium (MLC) to provide support and training for librarians on MeL's commercial databases. MLC has established a network of "train the trainers" and has librarians across the state who, on a contractual basis, provide hands-on instruction to librarians anywhere in the state of Michigan.

Future MeL Resources

MeL Cat includes a statewide union catalog, portal and authentication system. When MeL Cat is implemented, a statewide union catalog will allow residents to search for, locate and request – through interlibrary loan – materials from any Michigan public library. Prior to MeL Cat, all interlibrary loan requests had to be initiated by library staff. A delivery system has been formed and will ensure 2 day delivery of library material.

The portal element of the MeL Cat project will allow individuals to search more than one electronic resource at a time. Currently, a user must repeat a search in each resource if s/he wants to look in multiple resources. The portal will allow a single search to be executed concurrently (and seamlessly to the user) in multiple MeL resources.

Authentication in the MeL Cat project will allow for greater flexibility. A resident will only be asked for authentication when it is necessary. For instance, if a user were to use the portal to search for information on asthma and found sufficient information in the MeL Internet resources, s/he would not be required to enter authentication information. If, however, the user wanted to get into the commercial databases or borrow a book, s/he would be asked for authentication.

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