



DawgNet

Now Hoosiers can be "Inspired"

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What has 1,000 academic journals, over 1,700 periodicals, 1,000 health pamphlets, and a whopping four staff members? It's Indiana's new virtual library, "Inspire." With this device, people may be able to access all of the information their local library provides without ever having to leave their home.

Howard Trace, user support specialist of the program, calls Inspire an "Internet version of the Reader's Guide." However, instead of sifting through dusty stacks of thick green books, this system allows its users to locate 12 different databases -- 10 magazines and two encyclopedias -- with just a few clicks of the mouse.

Anyone in the state can enter the Inspire web page. However, a digital certificate is required for users on most national services who wish to access the databases. In order to obtain such a certificate, the user must request a password through the web page. Soon after that, instructions will arrive in the mail explaining how to request a digital certificate over the Internet. While Trace admits this process can be a little tricky, he and technical support specialist Charles Hauger are available for assistance via e-mail or phone.

Regardless of the complications, a large number of Indiana residents have already taken advantage of this service. According to Trace, there have been approximately 500 requests for digital certificates and more than 6.5 million pages of text downloaded by users.

"This is a great way to look things up if you have Internet access," Trace said.

Inspire is available to all Indiana residents who have access to personal computer equipment with an Internet connection and a Web browser. Its databases are provided by EBSCO information services and its funds by the Indiana State Library as well as several federal grants, such as the Lilly Endowment and a contribution from the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA).

Although Trace has only been a member of the Inspire team for a few months, the system has been available to the public since Jan. 15 of last year. The idea began its development in early 1997 with the help of only two staff members. Its completion time was lengthened by various contract negotiations.

Currently, Trace, Hauger and their co-workers are working to upgrade the system as well as set up a support system for users.

According to Trace, the upgrade is a good idea. Inspire staff members are receiving about 20 requests for passwords each day. Other possibilities for the program's growth include more staff members and even extending the systems boundaries outside of Indiana.

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