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ABSTRACT

The project AXIS: Adult education eXpress Intercommunication Support was designed to provide systematic communication and coordination between Pennsylvania's Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education and professional service providers and adult basic and literacy education (ABLE) providers, including support for online and World Wide Web communications. The following were among the main project outcomes: (1) the bureau's Web site was redesigned, improved, expanded, maintained, and publicized; (2) a 1999-2000 edition of "The ABLE Provider Directory," a comprehensive listing of all programs and services funded by the bureau, was produced; (3) a 2000 edition of "The Pennsylvania ABLE Administrators Handbook" was edited and produced; (4) the statewide newsletters "What's the Buzz?" and "Focus Bulletin" were centrally produced; (5) technical assistance was provided for professional development activities, including print publications of Pennsylvania's six Professional Development Centers and publishing modules developed by the Training Development Project; and (6) other internal and external publications were published as needed by the bureau and bureau-funded programs and projects. Although AXIS is a "one-person" shop requiring a wide range of communication skills, it has demonstrated that a statewide ABLE communications hub serves a valuable function. AXIS has continued to reach its target audience in steadily increasing numbers. (MN)

AXIS

Final Report

1999-2000

AXIS: Adult education eXpress Intercommunication Support

An Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Workforce Investment Act, Title II

State Leadership Activity

Project #99-9008

July 1, 1999 – September 30, 2000

Tana Reiff, Project Leader

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Contents

3

Abstract

Project No.: #99-9008

Grant Recipient: Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13
1520 Commerce Drive, Lancaster, PA 17601
Phone: (717) 299-8912

Program Name: AXIS: Adult education eXpress Intercommunication Support

Grant Allocation: $113,457 (15 months)

Project Period: July 1, 1999 – September 30, 2000

Project Director: Tana Reiff

Project Purpose: AXIS proposed to provide systematic communication and coordination between the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education and professional service providers and adult basic and literacy education providers, including support for online and World Wide Web communications. Specifically to:

1. Redesign, improve, expand, maintain, and publicize the Web site for the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education.
2. Produce a 1999-2000 edition of *The ABLE Provider Directory*, a comprehensive listing of all programs and services funded by the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education.
3. Edit and produce *The Pennsylvania ABLE Administrators Handbook, 2000 Edition*.
4. Support awareness of EQUAL (Educational Quality for Adult Literacy), the statewide ABLE program-improvement initiative by producing a new 32-page brochure and two issues of a periodical, *EQUAL Update*.
5. Centrally produce the statewide adult education newsletters *What's the Buzz?* and *Focus Bulletin*.
6. Provide technical assistance for professional development activities, including print publications of the six Professional Development Centers, publishing modules developed by the Training Development Project.
7. Produce other internal and external publications as needed by the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education and Bureau-funded programs and projects.

Project Outcomes: All objectives were met except for #4 no brochure and only one issue of *EQUAL Update* was produced.

Impact: AXIS provided a variety of print and Web communications which helped to inform Pennsylvania's adult basic and literacy education community.

Products: "ABLEsite" (paadulted.org on the Web); *The ABLE Provider Directory, 1999-2000 Edition*; *The Pennsylvania ABLE Administrators Handbook, 2000 Edition*; *EQUAL Update*; *What's the Buzz?*; and *Focus Bulletin*; training module fliers; Bureau brochure; two years' Bureau annual reports

Products Available: AdvancE, 333 Market St., Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333
See ABLEsite at http://paadulted.org (www.pde.psu.edu/able)

Project Continuation: Recommended. Adult educators have come to rely on the products and services AXIS provides.

Conclusions: Although AXIS is a "one-person shop" requiring a wide range of communication skills, it has demonstrated that a statewide ABLE communications hub serves a valuable function and reaches its target audience in steadily increasing numbers.

4

Introduction

As outlined in its grant application narrative, AXIS (Adult education eXpress Intercommunication Support) directed and provided systematic communication and coordination between the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education and professional service providers and adult basic and literacy education providers. The project included support for online and World Wide Web communications.

This marked the fifth year of Project AXIS. Each year has broadened and deepened the project's activities through more and higher-quality communications projects aimed at a growing audience of adult basic and literacy education practitioners, administrators, and affiliates.

The project's seven primary objectives were to:

1. Redesign, improve, expand, maintain, and publicize the Web site for the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education.

2. Produce a 1999-2000 edition of *The ABLE Provider Directory*, a comprehensive listing of all programs and services funded by the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education.

3. Edit and produce *The Pennsylvania ABLE Administrators Handbook, 2000 Edition.*

4. Support awareness of EQUAL (Educational Quality for Adult Literacy), the statewide ABLE program-improvement initiative by producing an informative new 32-page brochure and two issues of a periodical, *EQUAL Update.*

5. Centrally produce the statewide adult education newsletters *What's the Buzz?* and *Focus Bulletin.*

6. Provide technical assistance for professional development activities, including print publications of the six Professional Development Centers, publishing modules developed by the Training Development Project.

7. Produce other internal and external publications as needed by the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education and Bureau-funded programs and projects.

All of the project's activities took place between July 1, 1999 and September 30, 2000.

Project leader and chief editor was Tana Reiff, working within Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 under the supervision of Sandra Strunk. Additional editorial services were subcontracted to Ellen McDevitt of Pittsburgh, who worked specifically on the *Administrators Handbook* component of the project. We worked closely with the Pennsylvania Department of Education webmaster, Ann Witmer, to whom all files were sent for uploading. The Intermediate Unit provided clerical support for data entry involved in the *Provider Directory* component and organizational administrative tasks such as purchasing.

This report would be of greatest interest to state-level administrators monitoring the activities of State Leadership Activities such as AXIS and to anyone in the field or elsewhere interested in the processes and results of this project. The Web site data analysis herein provides an interesting reflection of the ABLE community's informational needs.

The products of this project are available in limited supply from AdvancE, Pennsylvania's literacy resource center at the Department of Education, 333 Market St., Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333.

Procedures and Results

We will treat each objective as a separate subtopic of this report. Since Objective #1 regarding development and maintenance of the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education's official Web site consumed the largest amount of the project's time throughout the 15 months of this grant, and because the highest-quality impact data is available for this project component, we will treat it in greatest detail. Evaluation information is included in the review of each goal's activities rather than as a separate section.

## 1. "ABLEsite": the official Web site of the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

AXIS spent approximately half of its time developing and maintaining "ABLEsite," the official Web site of the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education. This year we completely redesigned the site. This involved a fresh look at the site's content needs, considerable expansion of the site, site restructuring, and a whole new design to accommodate these changes and the rapidly evolving requirements of the Web. Specific activities related to this goal were:

- Planned new site map, approved by Bureau.
- Designed new standard page template.
- Designed and created new navigation bar.
- Redesigned the ABLEsite logo.
- Created numerous other Web images.
- Gathered, edited, and formatted content for new pages.
- Added the following pages or sections: Breaking News, New on ABLEsite, Job Postings, Today's Special, Training Catalog, clickable Site Map, Administrators Handbook, Family Literacy program listings, and Spotlight (award winners and media coverage).
- Assembled approximately 150 page, image, and PDF files initially, growing to about 500 throughout the project year, ending with about 450 active files online.
- Registered a domain name: paadulted.org.
- Designed and ordered promotional pens.
- Launched the redesigned site in January 2000.
- Presented a concurrent session along with a Marketplace display and pen distribution at the PAACE Midwinter Conference in February to promote the new site.
- Maintained, administered, and developed the site continuously throughout the project year. This included monthly collection and formatting of Professional Development Center calendars and frequent news postings for the Bureau. Files were sent to the PDE Webmaster, who uploaded them to the server.
- Attended six days of intensive software training for Adobe Photoshop, Adobe GoLive, and general Web image design and preparation.
- Established a post-only listserv through the Penn State server to notify voluntary subscrib-

ers when new content is added to the site.

- Completed all legwork for an enhanced site; discontinued in light of upcoming PDE site redesign.

- Consulted with Roy Hoover at I.U. 13 regarding development of Web databases for ABLEsite but abandoned plans when it became clear that time requirements could not be met and when we became aware of PDE's site redesign plans that would eventually provide the database functionality.

- Outlined types of content appropriate for either ABLEsite or the ABLE Net Technology Web site (administered by Central Intermediate Unit 10 at Lock Haven), along with submission format requirements. This chart was approved verbatim by the Bureau, who then established an internal submission plan and appointed Jeff Bostic as Web liaison for both sites.

- Worked with Jeff Bostic to prepare, format, and post Bureau-sanctioned content to ABLEsite.

- Began serving on PDE Web Site Redesign Advisory Committee at the PDE webmaster's request.

Fig. 1. The new ABLEsite front page

7
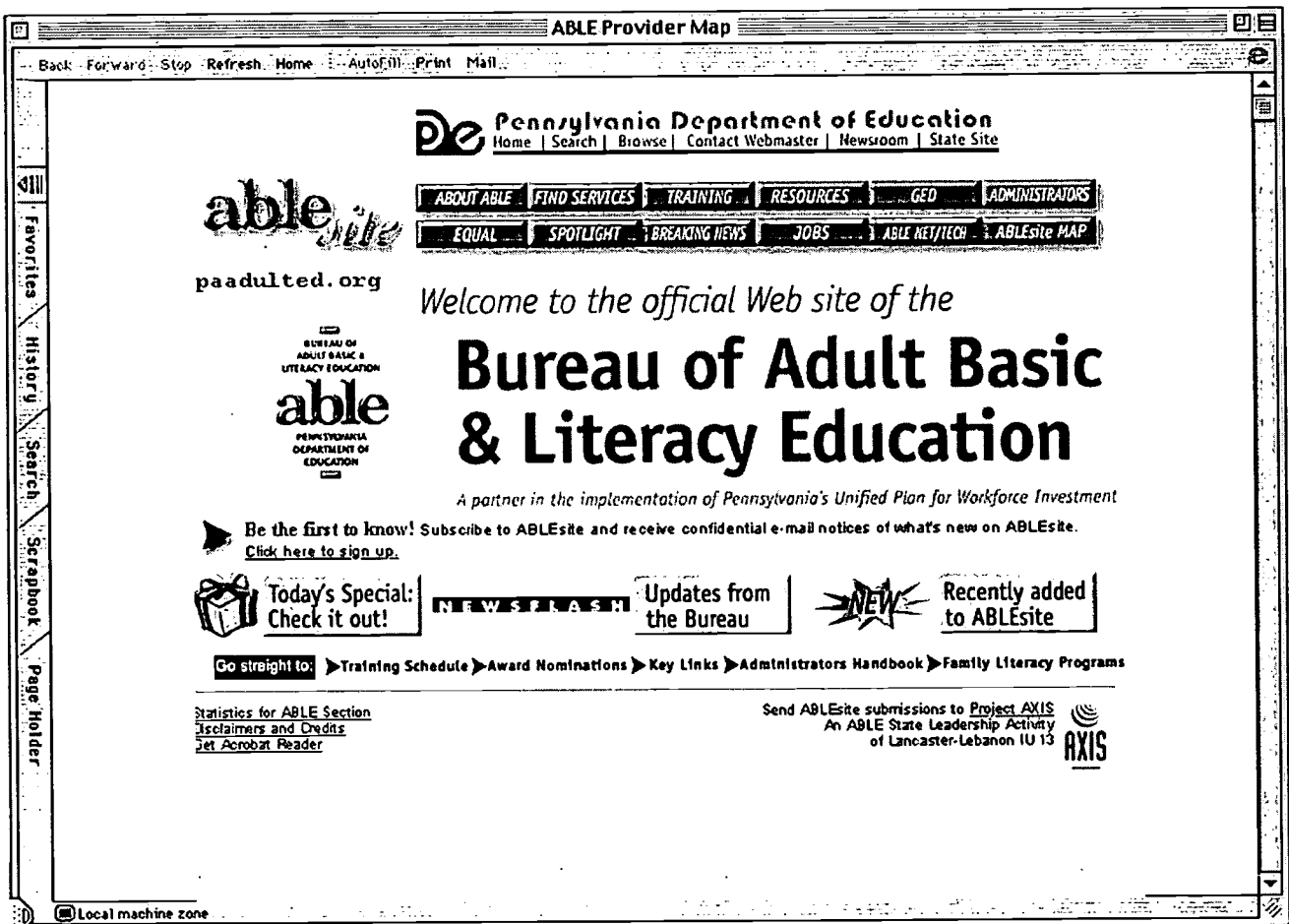
Tracking and Analyzing Usage

ABLEsite is a subsite of the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Web site, which resides on servers at Penn State University. As such, ABLEsite is included in site statistics gathered for the Department under contract with WebTrends. There was much to be learned from these statistics: not just how many times each page was accessed, or "hit," but also the usage of PDF (Portable Document Format) files created for and provided on ABLEsite. Many site management decisions have been and can be based on close analysis of this data.

'Hit' Analysis

The WebTrends statistics offered a treasure trove of data on how ABLEsite is used. We took a cursory look at the monthly "hit" data for the fifteen months of this contract to discover exactly which areas of the site are most heavily accessed and the level at which PDF files are being downloaded. Analyzing this data has been and will be very helpful in planning and structuring the site.

First we looked at total number of hits each month. WebTrends counts every file that receives a hit, including images, which skew the numbers to look artificially high. Over the long term, however, the monthly totals do indicate usage trends. ABLEsite enjoyed a dramatic increase in usage during the period tracked here: July 1999 through September 2000. Here are the total hits to ABLEsite for each month:

July 1999	9,531
August 1999	15,880
September 1999	17,762
October 1999	19,143
November 1999	21,553
December 1999	26,702
January 2000	31,514
February 2000	44,984
March 2000	53,357
April 2000	59,080
May 2000	66,756
June 2000	63,396
July 2000	60,385
August 2000	68,304
September 2000	70,830

Clearly, this was a key growth period for ABLEsite, which was originally launched in 1996. Based on these figures, the number of hits to ABLEsite increased 700% over this fifteen-month period. Note the significant rise in hits beginning at February 2000: the site redesign had been announced in January and promoted at the PAACE Midwinter Conference in early February. Also around this time, the Bureau began referring program administrators to ABLEsite for fund-

ing information in preparation for submitting new grant proposals. Another reason for the huge rise in the last year is simply that so many new files were added to the site. Even so, the ratio of hits to files rose considerably, from an average of 63 hits per file in July 1999 to 157 hits per file in September 2000, a 150% gain. A third reason for the gain may be that users gradually came to rely on ABLEsite to provide the information they need, making visits to ABLEsite a regular habit.

The following graph illustrates the hits gain from July 1999 through September 2000. With only a slight dip in mid-summer, the number of hits rose steadily over the period.

Fig. 2. Total monthly hits
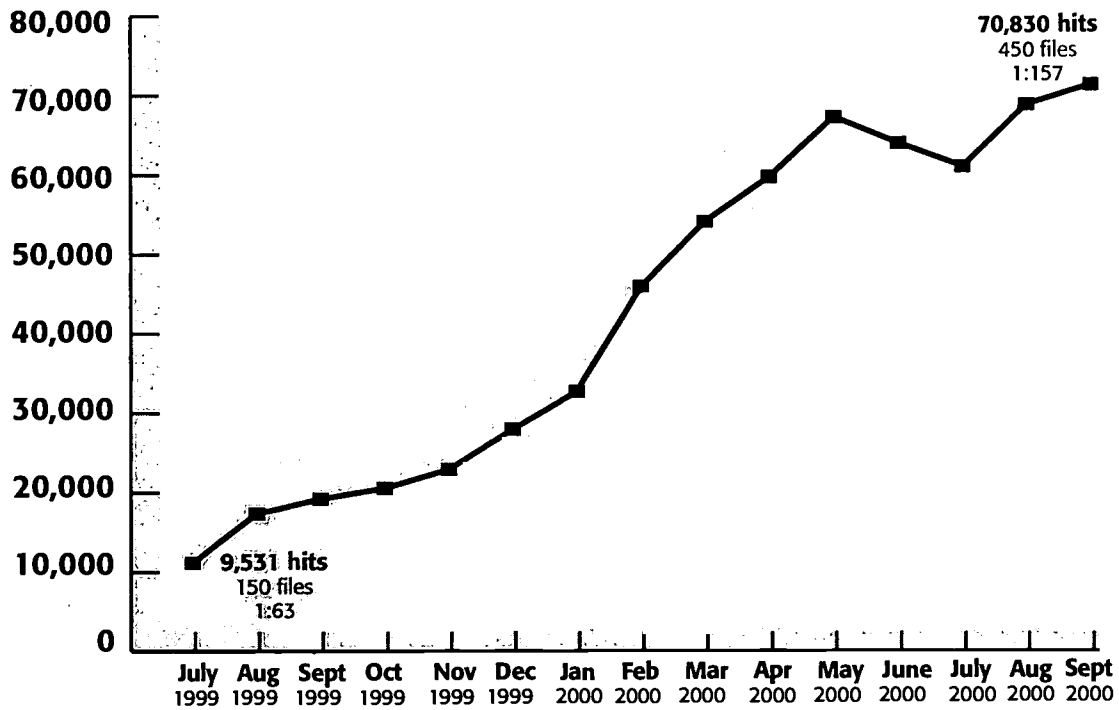
Most Frequently Used Pages

The charts below list the number of hits per page for the top ten most frequently accessed pages on ABLEsite from July 1999 through September 2000.

Rank	File Name*	Page Title	Hits
July 1999			
1.	ged.html*	GED in Pennsylvania: General Information	243
2.	gedctrs.html	GED Test Sites in Pennsylvania	113
3.	provmap.html*	ABLE Provider Map (Directory launch)	110
4.	pdcmap.html*	Professional Development System (launch)	66
5.	admin.html*	ABLE Administrators	60
6.	ablelinks.html*	Links to Key Resources	60
7.	pdcals.html	Schedule of Professional Development Events	59
8.	pdeforms.html	Application Guidelines and Forms	55
9.	formfields.html	PDE On-screen Forms	51
10.	provse.html	ABLE Providers in the Southeast Region	40

AXIS: Adult education eXpress Intercommunication Support • Final Report

8

August 1999

1.	ged.html*	GED in Pennsylvania: General Information	367
2.	jobs.html*	ABLE Job Openings in PA	265
3.	gedctrs.html	GED Test Sites in Pennsylvania	211
4.	provmap.html*	ABLE Provider Map (Directory launch)	145
5.	admin.html*	ABLE Administrators	115
6.	ablelinks.html*	Links to Key Resources	86
7.	pdcmap.html*	Professional Development System (launch)	77
8.	pdcals.html	Schedule of Professional Development Events	76
9.	pdeforms.html	Application Guidelines and Forms	70
10.	provse.html	ABLE Providers in the Southeast Region	70

September 1999

1.	ged.html*	GED in Pennsylvania: General Information	413
2.	jobs.html*	ABLE Job Openings in PA	285
3.	gedctrs.html	GED Test Sites in Pennsylvania	239
4.	provmap.html*	ABLE Provider Map (Directory launch)	172
5.	ablelinks.html*	Links to Key Resources	117
6.	provse.html	ABLE Providers in the Southeast Region	96
7.	pdcmap.html*	Professional Development System (launch)	86
8.	provsc.html	ABLE Providers in the South-Central Region	78
9.	admin.html*	ABLE Administrators	76
10.	pdcs.html*	ABLE Professional Development Centers in PA	75

October 1999

1.	ged.html*	GED in Pennsylvania: General Information	445
2.	jobs.html*	ABLE Job Openings in PA	242
3.	gedctrs.html	GED Test Sites in Pennsylvania	231
4.	provmap.html*	ABLE Provider Map (Directory launch)	163
5.	pdcmap.html*	Professional Development System (launch)	109
6.	ablelinks.html*	Links to Key Resources	93
7.	admin.html*	ABLE Administrators	81
8.	pdcals.html	Schedule of Professional Development Events	78
9.	faq.html*	Frequently Asked Questions	68
10.	provse.html	ABLE Providers in the Southeast Region	61

November 1999

1.	ged.html*	GED in Pennsylvania: General Information	449
2.	jobs.html*	ABLE Job Openings in PA	257
3.	gedctrs.html	GED Test Sites in Pennsylvania	187
4.	provmap.html*	ABLE Provider Map (Directory launch)	162
5.	pdcmap.html*	Professional Development System (launch)	102
6.	ablelinks.html*	Links to Key Resources	101
7.	admin.html*	ABLE Administrators	91
8.	pdcals.html	Schedule of Professional Development Events	78
9.	provse.html	ABLE Providers in the Southeast Region	70
10.	provcne.html	ABLE Providers in the Central-Northeast Region	67

10

December 1999

1.	ged.html*	GED in Pennsylvania: General Information	406
2.	provmap.html*	ABLE Provider Map (Directory launch)	317
3.	jobs.html*	ABLE Job Openings in PA	230
4.	gedctrs.html	GED Test Sites in Pennsylvania	194
5.	pubs.html*	ABLE Publications (archives launch)	126
6.	pdcmap.html*	Professional Development System (launch)	120
7.	ablelinks.html*	Links to Key Resources	118
8.	provse.html	ABLE Providers in the Southeast Region	109
9.	admin.html*	ABLE Administrators	107
10.	equal.html*	EQUAL Adult Education Program Improvement in PA	104

January 2000

1.	ged.html*	GED in Pennsylvania: General Information	482
2.	provmap.html*	ABLE Provider Map (Directory launch)	416
3.	jobs.html*	ABLE Job Openings in PA	380
4.	gedctrs.html	GED Test Sites in Pennsylvania	245
5.	news.html*	ABLE News	193
6.	provse.html	ABLE Providers in the Southeast Region	178
7.	admin.html*	ABLE Administrators	160
8.	guidelines.html	Funding & Application Guidelines	142
9.	pdcals.html	Schedule of Professional Development Events	108
10.	newable.html	What's New on ABLEsite	108

February 2000

1.	provmap.html*	ABLE Provider Map (Directory launch)	779
2.	ged.html*	GED in Pennsylvania: General Information	636
3.	jobs.html*	ABLE Job Openings in PA	521
4.	news.html*	ABLE News	441
5.	admin.html*	ABLE Administrators	365
6.	guidelines.html	Funding & Application Guidelines	342
7.	gedctrs.html	GED Test Sites in Pennsylvania	298
8.	newable.html	What's New on ABLEsite	240
9.	sitemap.html*	ABLEsite Map	227
10.	special.html	Today's Special for ABLE	207

March 2000

1.	jobs.html*	ABLE Job Openings in PA	983
2.	provmap.html*	ABLE Provider Map (Directory launch)	937
3.	ged.html*	GED in Pennsylvania: General Information	721
4.	admin.html*	ABLE Administrators	715
5.	gedctrs.html	GED Test Sites in Pennsylvania	344
6.	news.html*	ABLE News	334
7.	sitemap.html*	ABLEsite Map	292
8.	provsci.html	PA Adult State Correctional Institutions	273
9.	instr.html*	ABLE Professional Development in PA	251
10.	provse.html	ABLE Providers in the Southeast Region	243

April 2000

1.	jobs.html*	ABLE Job Openings in PA	1,064
2.	provmap.html*	ABLE Provider Map (Directory launch)	839
3.	admin.html*	ABLE Administrators	752
4.	ged.html*	GED in Pennsylvania: General Information	632
5.	news.html*	ABLE News	360
6.	provsci.html	PA Adult State Correctional Institutions	312
7.	gedctrs.html	GED Test Sites in Pennsylvania	299
8.	sitemap.html*	ABLEsite Map	278
9.	instr.html*	ABLE Professional Development in PA	249
10.	resources.html*	ABLE Resources Page	248

May 2000

1.	jobs.html*	ABLE Job Openings in PA	1,260
2.	provmap.html*	ABLE Provider Map (Directory launch)	823
3.	ged.html*	GED in Pennsylvania: General Information	747
4.	admin.html*	ABLE Administrators	487
5.	instr.html*	ABLE Professional Development in PA	451
6.	gedctrs.html	GED Test Sites in Pennsylvania	356
7.	news.html*	ABLE News	339
8.	sitemap.html*	ABLEsite Map	272
9.	resources.html*	ABLE Resources Page	269
10.	pdcals.html	Schedule of Professional Development Events	265

June 2000

1.	jobs.html*	ABLE Job Openings in PA	1,300
2.	provmap.html*	ABLE Provider Map (Directory launch)	876
3.	ged.html*	GED in Pennsylvania: General Information	699
4.	admin.html*	ABLE Administrators	601
5.	instr.html*	ABLE Professional Development in PA	524
6.	news.html*	ABLE News	341
7.	gedctrs.html	GED Test Sites in Pennsylvania	330
8.	provse.html	ABLE Providers in the Southeast Region	218
9.	resources.html*	ABLE Resources Page	210
10.	ableforms.html	ABLE Administrators: Data Reporting & Forms	209

July 2000

1.	jobs.html*	ABLE Job Openings in PA	1,241
2.	provmap.html*	ABLE Provider Map (Directory launch)	904
3.	ged.html*	GED in Pennsylvania: General Information	649
4.	admin.html*	ABLE Administrators	522
5.	instr.html*	ABLE Professional Development in PA	498
6.	gedctrs.html	GED Test Sites in Pennsylvania	330
7.	news.html*	ABLE News	315
8.	pdcals.html	Schedule of Professional Development Events	221
9.	ableforms.html	ABLE Administrators: Data Reporting & Forms	219
10.	about.html*	About ABLE in PA	216

12

1.	jobs.html*	ABLE Job Openings in PA	1,196
2.	provmap.html*	ABLE Provider Map (Directory launch)	1,073
3.	ged.html*	GED in Pennsylvania: General Information	824
4.	instr.html*	ABLE Professional Development in PA	620
5.	admin.html*	ABLE Administrators	447
6.	news.html*	ABLE News	423
7.	gedctrs.html	GED Test Sites in Pennsylvania	401
8.	provse.html	ABLE Providers in the Southeast Region	291
9.	pdcals.html	Schedule of Professional Development Events	290
10.	ableforms.html	ABLE Administrators: Data Reporting & Forms	282

September 2000

1.	jobs.html*	ABLE Job Openings in PA	961
2.	provmap.html*	ABLE Provider Map (Directory launch)	952
3.	ged.html*	GED in Pennsylvania: General Information	825
4.	instr.html*	ABLE Professional Development in PA	663
5.	news.html*	ABLE News	458
6.	admin.html*	ABLE Administrators	443
7.	gedctrs.html	GED Test Sites in Pennsylvania	359
8.	pdcals.html	Schedule of Professional Development Events	330
9.	resources.html*	ABLE Resources Page	286
10.	admhbk.html	ABLE Administrators Handbook	278

*main page of a section

Italics indicate page that was discontinued or replaced in new site design after January 2000.

The GED (and Test Centers), Jobs, and Provider Directory launch pages (provmap.html) were consistently the most frequently hit. The main administrators' page (admin.html) appeared on the "top ten" list every month.

The popularity of the GED pages may be attributable to access by the general public. Also, there is a direct link on PDE's front page leading to our GED page.

The popularity of the Jobs page is questionable; we suspect that some users expect more job information than merely the ABLE positions listed there. Still, a growing number of agencies have taken advantage of this free job posting and report a moderate level of response.

The high usage of the Provider Directory main page, which is a clickable map linking to regional agency listings, indicates that we are fulfilling a need — of not only the ABLE community but workforce development partner agencies and the general public as well — to locate information on available adult basic and literacy education services. AXIS also produces a print edition of the Provider Directory, which is a widely used desk reference. (See below for more about that product.)

PDF Download Activity

During this program year we produced and/or posted a large number of new PDF (Portable Document Format) files. These paper forms, policy guidance memos, program performance standards, announcements, newsletters, handbooks, and directories made available virtually every document produced by or for the Bureau for use by the field, representing a sizable body of information. Once it caught on, downloading of these PDF files accounted for a high percentage of ABLEsite activity and likely became an important reason for using the site at all.

The most frequently downloaded PDF files were, as a group, PDE official documents (forms, memos, standards, etc.). By the end of the program year we had added some 70 articles for the 2000 Administrators Handbook, as well as the Bureau's 1998-99 annual report, the Interagency Coordinating Committee's report *Blueprint for Change*, the Bureau's new brochure, more publications, and several awards nomination forms. All of these were downloaded in significant numbers, but the most frequently downloaded PDF files remained consistently the:

- Request for GED Transcript (file name: GEDform.pdf);

- Funding Guidelines for Workforce Development Title II, Act 143, and Family Literacy; and

- Indicators of Program Quality brochure

A monthly breakdown of the most frequently downloaded PDF files (only March 2000 through September 2000 due to best representation of available documents during that period) is as follows:

Rank	Description	Hits
March 2000		
1.	Funding Guidelines	548
2.	What's the Buzz? Jan. 2000 issue	331
3.	Request for GED Transcript	169
3.	Funding Guidelines for Literacy Corps	169
5.	Form: PDE 5040	153
6.	Indicators of Program Quality	136
April 2000		
1.	Funding Guidelines	498
2.	Section 223 Availability of Funds Announcement	293
3.	Request for GED Transcript	177
4.	Form: PDE 5040	136
5.	Indicators of Program Quality	130
May 2000		
1.	Funding Guidelines	289
2.	Spotlight article on education program at Lancaster Co. Prison	274
3.	Request for GED Transcript	177

June 2000

1. Spotlight article on education program at Lancaster Co. Prison 1,574
2. Funding Guidelines 297
3. Form: PDE 2030 199
4. Request for GED Transcript 169
5. Form: PDE 5040 141

July 2000

1. What's the Buzz? Jan. 2000 issue 594
2. Form: PDE 2030 347
3. Funding Guidelines 332
4. Form: PDE 5040 181
6. Indicators of Program Quality 134

August 2000

1. What's the Buzz? Jan. 2000 issue 584
2. Form: PDE 2030 333
3. Form: PDE 5040 298
4. Funding Guidelines 283
5. Request for GED Transcript 215
6. Indicators of Program Quality 168
7. Program Performance Standards 148

September 2000

1. Funding Guidelines 454
2. Program Performance Standards (two years' versions combined) 315
3. Form: PDE 2030 285
4. Request for GED Transcript 254
5. Indicators of Program Quality 212
6. Bureau's 1998-99 Annual Report 171
7. Administrators Handbook article on Reporting Requirements 148
8. Policy Guidance: Assessment 136
9. Learner Competencies Report 134

These figures do not account for possible access errors on the part of either users or the site itself.

We were curious about the consistently high number of hits to the Funding Guidelines and the seemingly irregular fluctuations from month to month and asked the Bureau to help explain this. They suggested that the figures are high in February (715) and March (548) "because people are consulting them to do grant applications. The last applications are due in the Bureau in mid- to late April so the hits remain relatively high that month. They consult the guidelines as needed up through August as they attempt to correct applications that were bounced and the need for application approval looms ahead. In September, agencies start to look at guidelines again as they ponder the need for budget revisions." What was harder to understand, however, was why users hit the guidelines link so heavily on ABLEsite when guidelines were available in full text on the egrant site, where they file their applications. We suggested that some people may prefer a hard copy and find a PDF easier to output than text on a Web page, or that they may have accessed the guidelines during a regular visit to ABLEsite. The high number of hits also is remarkable in that

fewer than 200 agencies submitted grant applications.

ABLEsite in PDE Context

Another interesting set of statistics to consider is ABLEsite's activity compared to other sections of the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Web site. Compliments received from other people in the Department who are involved with Web work indicate awareness of our efforts, and the numbers bear this out. A spot check of monthly WebTrends reports showed the following information about ABLEsite:

Month	No. of Visitor Sessions	Rank of this Section to Whole PDE
July 1999	1,812	#4
October 1999	3,917	#4
January 2000	2,853	#4
April 2000	7,284	#4
July 2000	7,725	#3
August 2000	8,144	#5
September 2000	7,947	#6

The top-ranked section has been eliminated from the rankings because that is always a directory containing only images used on the PDE site. The second-ranked directory was the home page of the general PDE site, so we eliminated that directory too. With those two sections eliminated, we ranked consistently around #4, with a slight drop in the last few months. (We would rise back up to #5 in the first month after the time period of this report.) Although our number of visitor sessions was rising, our ranking had dropped due to heavier traffic in other sections (e.g. the passage of Act 48 drew more visitors to the Certification section). It is notable, however, that ABLE ranked higher than any other education classifications taken as a whole section (K-12, Vocational Education, Special Education, etc.), and followed not surprisingly high-profile sections such as Teacher Certification, Standards, and Job Vacancies. These figures are offered not to denigrate any other sections of the PDE Web site, but to illustrate that ABLE has developed a significant Web presence in relation to other education classifications in the Commonwealth. This may also have helped to increase awareness and respect for the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education within the Department.

Feedback from Users

In April 2000 we presented ABLEsite in realtime to the quarterly PDC meeting at the Pennsylvania Department of Education's E-Center. This not only showed professional development staff what is available on ABLEsite but also provided us with valuable feedback. As a result, we added direct links to the front page leading to important sections of the site that were not section launch pages and were otherwise possibly hard to find. PDC staff commented on liking the colors used on ABLEsite and generally found navigation clear and easy, especially when using the sitemap, as we pointed out.

Throughout the year the PDE webmaster forwarded to us comments and corrections she received via the PDE site. We promptly responded to all of these communications and immediately acted to correct all reported errors.

Via e-mail we received the following two personal notes:

In response to a Spotlight feature on Outstanding Student Award winners:

I loged [sic] on to your site to read about Mrs Jackson and was very pleased. I feel that her success story is very important to be heard, because she is the reason I am able to see my children graduate from one level of education to another.

thank you, from one of her 12 children,

Myrtle E.

In response to compiling the online training catalog, from the Director of Tutors of Literacy in the Commonwealth who originally suggested producing such a catalog:

I really appreciate how you've created such a professional and easy to use website. Thank you for adding the catalog.

Amy Wilson

The Site in View

For a Web site of significant volume, maintained and produced by essentially one person, ABLEsite certainly holds its own. We were gratified by the trend clearly indicated by the statistics, that is that our audience was using the site with increasing frequency and for more purposes than ever before.

2. *The ABLE Provider Directory,* 1999-2000 Edition

AXIS compiled and produced the annual *ABLE Provider Directory* during the fall of 1999 for the 1999-2000 program year.

The process began by using last year's provider directory database to make some changes to the profile form template and to compare our database to the grant applications database supplied to us by the Bureau. We then printed out an individual'profile form for each agency and mailed them to the agencies with a cover letter from the Director of the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education requesting agencies to make changes to the form and return it to Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 by a designated date.

The following fields comprised the profile form. Those for which we had existing data were already filled in. The "Services" and "Availability" fields were actually boxes on the form indicating the various options and asking agencies to fill in the boxes relevant to their programs.

Agency Name:

Address:

City/State/Zip:

Contact:

Contact Person's Position:

Phone:

Fax:

TDD:

E-mail:

Website:

Services: Literacy ABE GED ESL Family Literacy Workplace

Other services of agency:

No. of students:

No. paid staff:

Availability: Day classes. Evening classes. Community based. School based.

Counties in which programs operate:

Description of program:

The majority of forms were returned. Amy Hartman at the I.U. entered data to produce a new database for 1999-2000. She then turned over the database to the editor for editing and organizing. We accepted late-arriving profile forms up to the last minute before the directory had to be finalized for the print version. We accepted updates from agencies throughout the year and modified the online version accordingly.

Two Editions

Two versions of the *Provider Directory* were produced: an online version posted to ABLEsite and a print version mailed to agencies and distributed at Midwinter Conference and to anyone requesting a copy.

The editor extracted data from the prepared database into text files and then formatted the text for both HTML (Web) files and the print version. The HTML files were arranged by region and posted to ABLEsite.

The launching page (see Fig. 3) for the online provider directory contained a clickable map linking to each of the six regions, as well as text links to listings for Family Literacy and Even Start programs, State Correctional Institutions, and Pennsylvania Literacy Corps grantees. This page (provmap.html) ranked consistently in the top four most frequently hit pages on ABLEsite, indicating heavy usage of the online directory. The online version was first uploaded in November 1999.

Based on a recommendation presented at a meeting with Bureau management early in the program year, the print version of the directory was arranged by region, and by county within each region. Many programs operate in more than one county, so organizing the listing in this manner was a formidable task. A centerfold map led users to the appropriate pages for the region in which they sought program listings and an index listed every occurrence of each program listing. Informal comments received indicated that some users found this way of organizing the directory confusing. This led to changes we made to the organization of the next year's directory.

The **Provider Directory**

Adult Basic & Literacy Education
Services in Pennsylvania

*Including Literacy, ABE, GED, ESL, Workplace,
Family Literacy/Even Start, State Correctional
Institutions, Pennsylvania Literacy Corps,
Professional Development Centers, GED Test
Centers, and more*

1999-2000

18
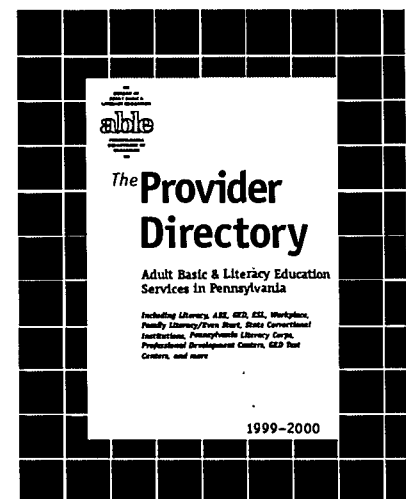
Fig. 3. Online Provider Directory Launch Page
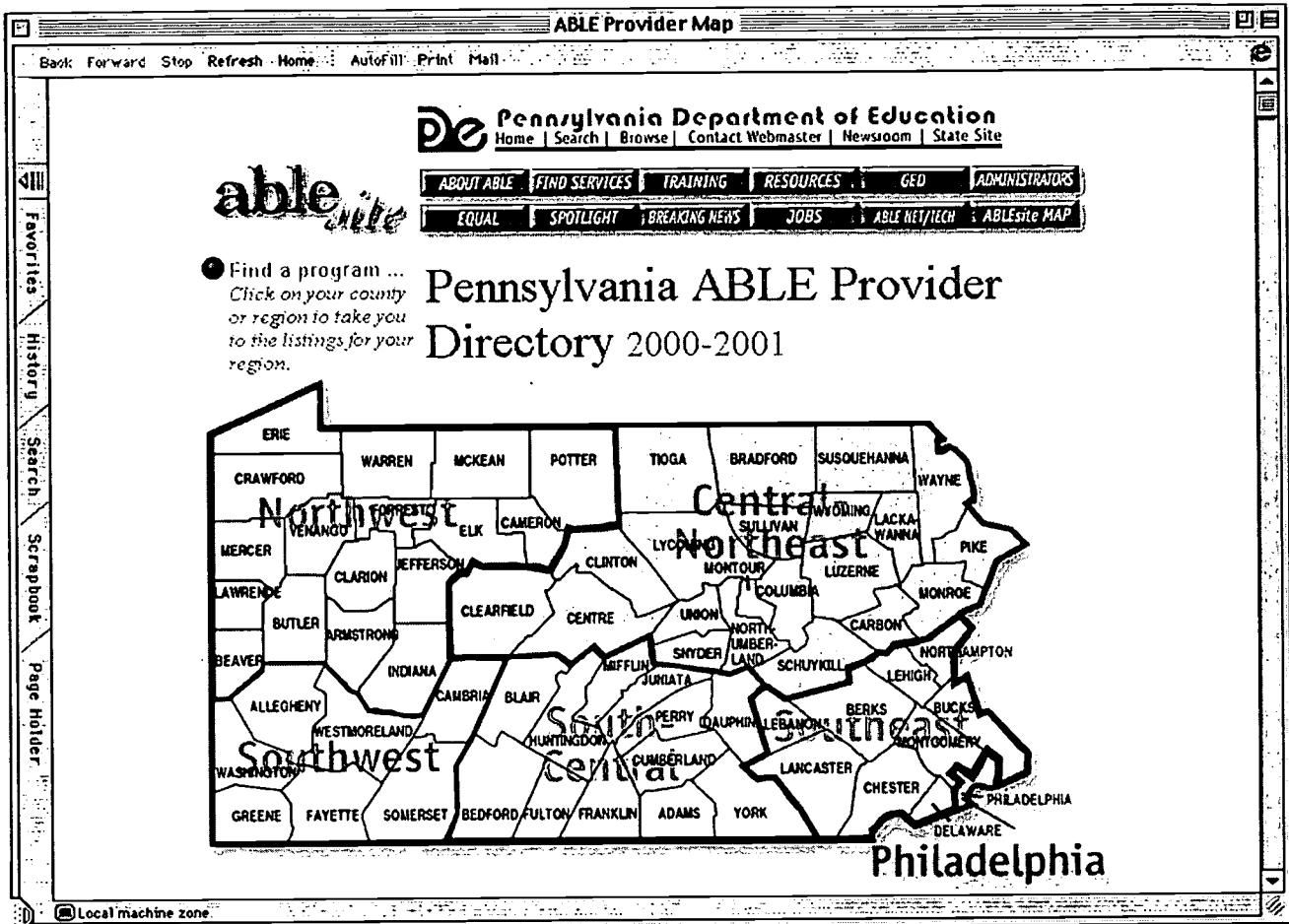
The 64-page directory was released just in time for Midwinter Conference at the beginning of February 2000, where conference attendees picked up hundreds of copies at the AdvancE Literacy Resource Center booth in the Marketplace. A copy is included with this report.

No formal evaluation instrument provided formal feedback on the directory; however, numerous informal comments indicate that most ABLE program administrators keep the directory within reach and refer to it often. Indeed, all but a handful of the 1,000 copies printed were left at the end of the program year.

3. The Pennsylvania ABLE Administrators Handbook, 2000 Edition

Another major AXIS project this year was the triennial production of a new edition of *The Pennsylvania ABLE Administrators Handbook*. The process used was much like that used for previous editions, with the important exception that this edition was not printed; articles were posted only online, as downloadable PDF files. Articles did not have to be specified for a certain word count and did not have to be made to fit into the constraints of a 64-page book. This was an experiment and for the most part a successful one.

The editorial board met once, in September 1999. Starting with an outline developed by the editor and distributed prior to the meeting, the group discussed the collection's structure, fine-

tuned topics to be covered, and suggested appropriate writers for each topic.

Another notable change in this year's handbook project was subcontracting the services of an associate editor, Ellen McDevitt of Pittsburgh. Ellen did the bulk of the writing assignments and preliminary editing before handing off articles to the editor for final editing and formatting—publishing, as it were.

Although the handbook was not printed, we did compile all the article PDFs, along with some referenced documents for which PDFs exist, and wrote them onto a CD-ROM. Other than external links to Internet sites, as many links as possible were modified for the CD so that users could access other documents and articles without having to go online. Production of the CDs was a more demanding and time-consuming task than anticipated but in response to publicity on ABLEsite and providing CDs for the new administrators training held by the Bureau in October 2000, approximately 100 copies have been distributed, as of this writing.

Handbook Contents

To give an overview of the breadth of this year's handbook project, here is the table of con-

Pennsylvania ABLE
Administrators
Handbook

tents, divided into sections and including authors.

Table of Contents

The Pennsylvania ABLE Administrators Handbook, 2000 Edition

Management and Leadership

Programming

Technology

Professional Development & State Leadership Activities

FOCUS Bulletins Highlight Promising Projects, Products, and Practices *by Sherry Royce*

Learning From Practice: A Hands-On Process to Improve Teaching and Learning

Practitioner Inquiry in Professional Development *by Sandy Harrill*

Pennsylvania's Adult Teacher Competency Study: What Makes a Good Teacher of Adults?

Outstanding Student Awards *by Sherry Royce*

APEX Awards Honor Exemplary Practitioners *by Sherry Royce*

Graduate Study in Adult Education *by Trenton R. Ferro*

Resources & Directories

Professional Resources for ABLE Educators *by Barbara Van Horn*

Developing ABLE Leadership: Web Sites of Interest *by Diane Inverso and Ellen McDevitt*

ABLEsite Offers Bureau Information on the Web *by Tana Reiff*

PAACE: Pennsylvania's Adult Education Professional Association *by Joan Y. Leopold*

GED Testing Centers in Pennsylvania*

GED Testing Centers in Pennsylvania* (online)

Glossary of Terms, Agencies, and Organizations

* Indicates official PDE content.

Administrators Handbook Downloads

While studying the ABLEsite hit statistics, we looked specifically at downloads of Administrators Handbook articles made available on ABLEsite as PDF files. Since articles were added as they were completed over the course of about ten months, we considered only at the last two months of this program year, August and September 2000, since in those months the collection was most complete.

During August, three were 2,511 downloads of 62 articles. Discarding the highest hit total (90) and the lowest (14), the average number of hits was 41.8 per article.

During September, there were 2,753 downloads of 65 articles. The average number of hits per article was 43.3.

Consider that these figures represent hits *per article, per month.* We were very pleased with this response.

The most frequently downloaded articles over both months were:

The Emergence of Family Literacy in Pennsylvania (file name: famlitah.pdf, formerly famlit.pdf)

Adult Basic and Literacy Education Activities in Pennsylvania (file name: activitiesah.pdf)

Glossary of Terms, Agencies, and Organizations (file name: glossaryah.pdf)

Managing a Community-Based Literacy Agency (file name: litagencymgtah.pdf)

The least frequently downloaded articles over both months were:

A Brief History of Adult and Literacy Education (file name: historyah.pdf)

ABLE Programs in Public Housing (file name: housauthah.pdf)

APEX Awards Honor Exemplary Practitioners (file name: apexah.pdf)

Learning From Practice: A Hands-On Process to Improve Teaching and Learning (file name: lfpah.pdf)

Of course, there were many variations in the number of hits to any particular article over a longer term, due to greater number of hits when an article is newly posted or perhaps when a group is using an article during just one particular month.

How We'd Do It Differently

We produced a new publication evaluation form and offered it only as a PDF but to date have received no responses.

Nevertheless, as stated, we consider the Administrators Handbook project a success overall, even in light of publishing it only electronically. The process, however, was somewhat trouble-some and inefficient in some ways. The editor and associate editor reviewed the process at the end of the year and identified the main problem areas and possible remedies:

Problem: Due to other priorities, after the writing assignments were made in the fall, the project remained on the editor's "back burner" until spring; the associate editor did what she could but also was busy with other, more pressing responsibilities during that time.

Remedy: Set firmer deadlines. Knowing that the finished product had no delivery date for printing made it too easy for everyone involved, editors and writers alike, to let things go.

Problem: Many of the assigned writers, chosen because they were considered experts in certain topics, were also the busiest adult education professionals in the state. Most of them ignored our suggested timeframe and had to be reminded, some of them several times, that we needed their articles. The handbook was not a high priority for them.

Remedy: For the upcoming Staff Handbook, seek out practitioners in the field who 1) had valuable experiences to share with colleagues rather than speak as an expert on a given topic and 2) would view a writing assignment as a good opportunity rather than an added burden.
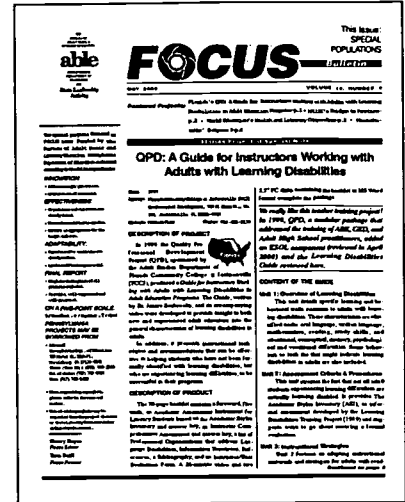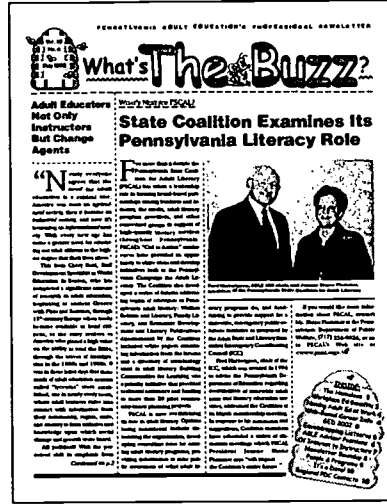
4. *EQUAL Update*

5. *What's the Buzz?* and *Focus Bulletin*

Goals #4 and #5 are combined because both involve production of print publications.

Support for EQUAL was not as extensive as anticipated because that statewide program improvement initiative handled most of its own communications, including beginning develop-ment of its own Web site.

AXIS did, however, produce one issue of *EQUAL Update*, a two-sided summary of EQUAL activities. It was inserted into the March 2000 issue of *What's the Buzz?* and simultaneously mailed
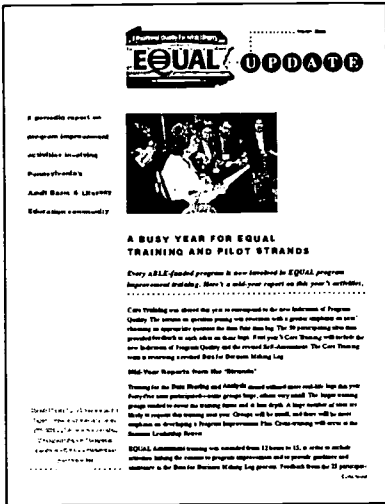
to directors of every ABLE-funded agencies. *EQUAL Update* was produced from copy furnished by EQUAL or culled from EQUAL reports, with photographs provided by AXIS. The reason there was one issue instead of two was that it was premature to report any of the year's activity before we did in March, and then it was too soon to prepare another issue for May release.

Production of *What's the Buzz?* involved working closely with the editor, Dave Fluke, who was working under a separate State Leadership Activity grant. Dave provided us with copy promptly for the five issues that were released in September, November, February, March, and May. We immediately got to work editing copy and fitting it into the allotted space, designing and laying out the issue, and modifying or touching up art and photographs. We then produced a draft PDF file and sent it to the editorial board for review. After making changes, we prepared all the files for the printer and handled all print liaisoning, including approving bluelines before each press run.

Tana Reiff was billed as Associate Editor in connection with these AXIS tasks, and she also served on the editorial board, which met twice during the year.

Production of *Focus Bulletin* followed a similar procedure in that copy was supplied by the editor, in this case Sherry Royce, who also was working under a separate State Leadership Activity grant. For *Focus*, however, the editor provided a rough PageMaker layout to show where she wanted copy placed, and we adhered to that rather than designing the publication from scratch. Upon the editor's approval of our draft, we sent the publication to a different printer, and except for reviewing a faxed proof, had no other dealings with the printing or distribution of *Focus Bulletin*. This publication was produced five issues, in January, February, March, April, and May.

Publication Downloads

We made every issue of *What's the Buzz?*, *Focus Bulletin*, and *EQUAL Update* into PDF files that were added to the Resources section of ABLEsite. We considered this to be a way of archiving back issues, and indeed there have been a considerable number of downloads of the PDFs, indicating an interest in looking up topics from back issues.

Prior to December 1999, the number of downloads of both publications was insignificant. As a quick average, we used figures from only December 1999 and September 2000 to observe typical numbers of downloads.

For individual issues of *What's the Buzz?* the number of downloads in December 1999 ranged

from 17 to 24 for an average of 19.18 downloads per issue. September 2000 downloads ranged from 31 to 90, for an average of 41.25 downloads per issue. From December 1999 to September 2000, the average number of downloads per issue more than doubled—104%. In September 2000 the lowest number of downloads was for the oldest issue, while the highest number of downloads was for the most recent issue. Otherwise, there was no date correlation to download figures.

For *Focus Bulletin* the December 1999 range was narrow: only 17 to 19, for an average of 17.6 downloads per issue. In September 1999 that range jumped from a low of 31 to a high of 46, for an average of 35.1 downloads per issue. From December 1999 to September 2000 the average number of *Focus* downloads per month virtually doubled. We detected no significant date correlation to download figures.

For *EQUAL Update*, the December 1999 downloads ranged from 21 to 30 per issue for an average of 23.37. In September 2000 the range was from 31 to 35 for an average of 31.6. Average number of downloads per issue rose 27% from December 1999 to September 2000.

All other impact data reporting is the responsibility of the *What's the Buzz?* and *Focus* projects, which conduct their own reader evaluations.

6. Technical assistance for professional development print publications

AXIS provided incidental communication support of the six Professional Development Centers and the APEX practitioner awards program during this program year:

- Updated fliers publicizing the modules developed by the Training Development Project.

- Produced individual "report cards" for the Professional Development Centers after reviewing their print publications.

- Presented ABLEsite to the quarterly PDC meeting (see the Goal #1: ABLEsite section of this report).

- Provided image files on request to PDCs and offered informal technical support by telephone or e-mail to help them produce their print publications.

- Consulted with other state initiatives, such as PA-WIN, on development of their Web sites; provided ABLE images for those sites.

- Designed and produced a two-sided publication profiling the three 1999 APEX award winners. It was inserted into the September 1999 issue of *What's the Buzz?* and used as a publicity piece. Prepared a similar online presentation of 2000 APEX winners for ABLEsite.
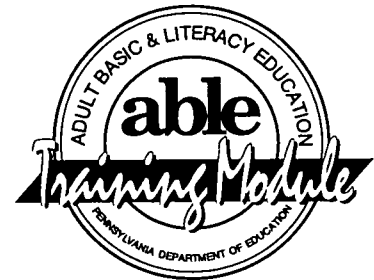
7. Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education publications

The four main activities under this goal were to:

- Complete production of the Bureau brochure begun last year.

- Produce a series of PDF files of *Blueprint for Change*, the annual report of the Adult Basic and Literacy Interagency Coordinating Council, in cooperation with the designer,

Graphics&Design in State College, PA; sequenced and posted the files to ABLEsite.

- Complete production of the Bureau's 1997-98 annual report, begun last year.

- Produce from beginning to completion the Bureau's 1998-99 annual report.

The Bureau brochure project was a culmination of the Bureau's longstanding desire to have a four-color information brochure to give to people or partner agencies inquiring about ABLE activities. A copy is enclosed with this report. One thousand copies were printed, contracting Waveline Direct, a four-color printer in Mechanicsburg, for the first time.
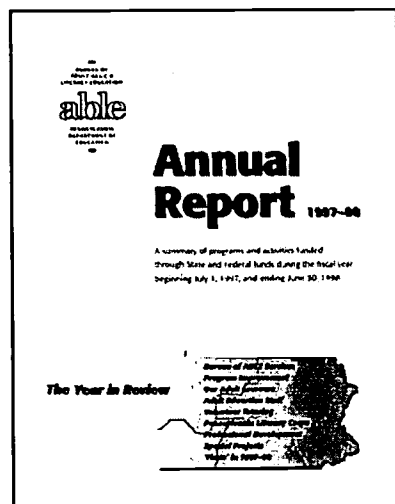
Providing an online version of *Blueprint for Change* grew out of the Bureau director's desire to disseminate this important document on adult literacy in Pennsylvania as widely as possible. Because of the complexity of the original files, the graphic designer encountered considerable difficulties in producing the first PDFs, but once they were done, AXIS did additional

Bureau of ABLE brochure

Blueprint for Change

work on the files, reducing them further and adding a table of contents and links on pages so that users could jump from one section of the report to another. The first PDF, 01frontmatter.pdf, received around 50 hits per month, but the other ten files received 1 or 0 hits. We did not discover until analyzing hits for this report that none of the links in the first PDF work unless the other PDFs are pre-loaded, and users cannot do that without entering individual file names, which they do not know. So the online *Blueprint for Change* has been useless and a lot of work was wasted. (Our own tests had originally worked because we already have all the PDFs on our hard disk.) We will work on a remedy.
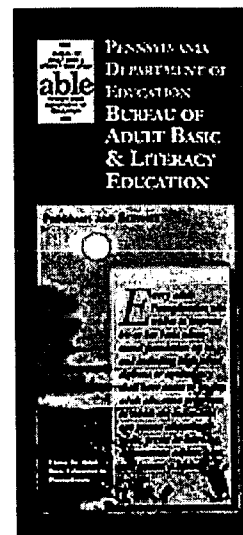
For both of the annual reports produced during this year, our primary contact at the Bureau was Ella Morin. She was invaluable in providing information and statistical data that only the Bureau possesses. She not only wrote much of the copy for the annual reports but meticulously reviewed drafts and liaisoned with the Bureau Director in revising them and with the PDE Press Office to obtain final approval.

Bureau of Adult Basic & Literacy Education
Annual Report 1998-99

Work on the Bureau's 1997-98 annual report had begun back in

Bureau of ABLE 1997-98 Annual Report

January 1999. During the 1999-2000 program year we pulled together all the copy and illustrations, designed the 32-page publication, and had it printed in two colors.
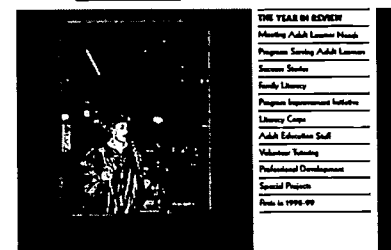
Various aspects of work on the Bureau's 1998-99 annual report began in January and February 2000. This edition contained a special feature on Family Literacy, since this program area had undergone major expansion during 1998-99. Copy was culled and

Bureau of ABLE 1998-99 Annual Report

abridged from Penn State's evaluation report of these programs. This annual report also contained numerous graphs, illustrations, and photographs. Also, it was the Bureau's first four-color annual report and, at 32 pages, the largest four-color print piece we had ever designed and produced. Our work encompassed every aspect of the publication: content editing, copy editing, some writing, photography, photo retouching, graphing and graph design, page design and layout, printer liaisoning, and project coordination. Once again, Waveline Direct was contracted for four-color printing services.

We consider this annual report a major product of our 1999-2000 program year. A copy is attached.

Besides printing 1,000 copies, a PDF file of the 1999-2000 annual report was created and made available on ABLEsite. In its first full month of release, September 2000, that file was downloaded 171 times.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Some conclusions and recommendations specific to each goal have been included in each of the preceding sections of this report.

As a general conclusion, the fifteen-month 1999-2000 program year was a very productive time for AXIS. We continuously expanded our capabilities through training and through the experience of producing a number of challenging projects, interacting with many people throughout the state, and exercising an extraordinarily broad set of skills. These skills included writing, content editing, copy editing, graphic design, typography, photography, photo retouching, image creation and modification, layout, press preparation, Web design, HTML authoring, Web image creation and optimization, and all the customer service and project coordination required to bring our products to fruition, along with ongoing Website maintenance and administration. We would like to note that in virtually any other professional communications operation, print and Web work would be considered at least two different specialties, as would copy and design, each with its own substantial skills requirements. Within specialties, a design group would divide tasks into various realms: planning, copy, design, image work, etc. It is difficult for one person to handle all of these tasks, but this is how AXIS has evolved over the past five years. Corners have to be cut, not only to save time and money but because one individual cannot possibly execute every task to its highest possible level of quality. While in many ways it makes a great deal of sense to centralize the statewide communications files and operations, the capabilities of this project are certainly stretched, which is sometimes frustrating. Nevertheless, with all due apologies for any shortcomings of our products, we think AXIS was responsive to the Bureau's statewide communications needs and believe that our efforts at least met, if not exceeded, the goals they were aimed at fulfilling. One thing is very clear: that a statewide ABLE communications hub serves a valuable function and has shown that it increasingly reaches the audience it seeks to inform.■

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