

Using STEP Central

STEPcentral.net

STEP Central is an electronic forum for the STEP community. Version 1.0 just launched this summer, so this is very much a work-in-progress. It is being designed to assist the STEP community in the sharing of ideas, resources, and data, so that STEP projects can build on each other's successes and experiences. In addition, it provides resources useful to the broader higher education community (researchers & practitioners) and to educational policy-makers.

The site includes six "sections" among its core features:

- **Projects** -- Starting with a list of projects that can be sorted and filtered in various ways, this section provides access to individual pages for each STEP project, including those that have expired (Fig. 1b).
- **Library** -- Includes access to references for relevant books, journal articles, proceedings, presentations and various on-line resources, organized into ~15 overlapping "collections." There are some materials currently in the library, but its usefulness will depend on posts from registered users.
- **Discussions** -- Allows users to create and/or contribute to public or private discussions (essentially virtual breakout sessions) on STEP-related topics.
- **Members** -- Allows users to access profiles of registered members of the web site. The list of members can be sorted and filtered in various ways. Members can edit their profiles, including privacy settings.
- **Institutions** -- Includes a list of institutions involved in STEP projects. Ultimately, the goal is to provide information about these institutions (e.g., about other STEM education initiatives).
- **News/Events/Conferences** -- Provides information regarding upcoming events and conferences, as well as other STEP-related news.

In addition, the site includes some social networking features. Registered users can keep track of their "favorite" projects, people, discussions, etc., can share comments on any library item or post, and can "vote" on the usefulness of particular resources.

1. Logging In

You are already registered for STEPcentral.net. Your user name and temporary password can be found in the email invitation you received from STEP Central earlier in the summer. Please follow the link within the email and then login to the member homepage.

Completing Your Profile

Once logged in, members should complete their user profile by clicking "edit" under their name. Members should fill out as many fields as they can and view their member profiles for consistency.

Changing Your Password

Once logged in, users should edit their member profile to change their password.

2. Editing/ Completing Project Information

NOTE: You must have "moderator" status on a project in order to edit it. All project PI's are given this status by default; we have also given this status to others attending this meeting. Anyone "moderator" can designate others to be moderators.

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Edit your project information, filling in as many "recommended" fields as possible and double-checking that all text is properly formatted.

Creating, Editing, and Deleting Project Members

Controls for managing project members can be found underneath the project title on a moderator's homepage or account page. Users should add all people associated directly with the project. This will create users for the site and send them a welcome letter with login information informing them that they have been added to STEP Central. If you are trying to add a user that already exists on the site you will see suggestions that match the first and last name of the person you are trying to add to your project, simply clicking on one of these names will add the user to the project once the page is saved. You also have the option to make any member you add as a "moderator" to be able to manage project information and project members. You can also remove members from this page. Note that removing a member from a project will NOT delete them from the site.

3. Find Some Comparable Projects

Click on the "Projects" tab to go to a list of all STEP projects, including projects that have now expired. Use the search and sort features on this page to find projects from similar institutions that are using similar strategies for increasing STEM graduates.

4. Adding a Post to the Project Group

Members should add a couple of resources (e.g., journal articles, books, videos, links) to their project group, also checking appropriate topic categories so that it is included in the desired library collections.

5. Adding a Post to the Library

Any time a post is created you will have a collection of Library categories on the last page to choose from. Selecting any of these will automatically add your post to that Library group. You can select as many as apply. You can also add posts directly to the desired Library collection by navigating to that collection's page and click "Add Post".

NOTE: We recognize that the forms for library entries are cumbersome and contain some irrelevant fields. We will be working on improving that. In the meantime, if a field is required that doesn't seem to fit for the entry you are making, just enter "N/A".

Figure 1. (Next page) Six examples screenshots from STEPCentral.net. (a) The home page; (b) An example account page; (c) The project list page. In this case, the map was used to filter by region; (d) An example of a project profile page; (e) An example of a library collection (materials from the last STEP Grantees Meeting); (f) An example post in the STEP Grantees Meeting collection. This post contains a video, title and abstract of one of the plenary talks.

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a



b



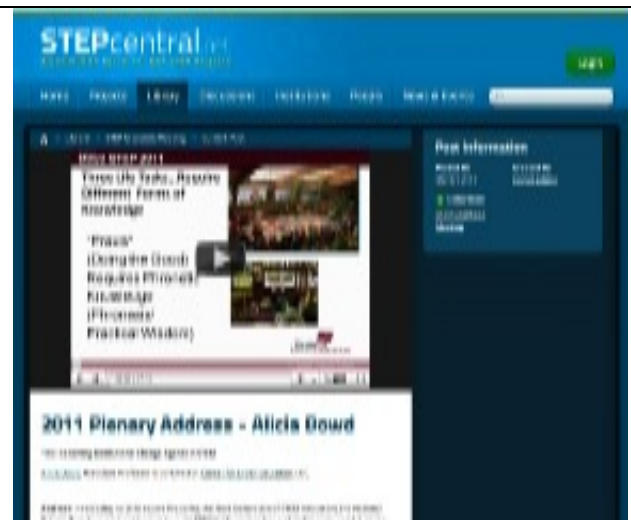
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