

THE SUSTAINABILITY, PRESERVATION, AND ACCESSIBILITY OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNITIES BY UNIVERSITIES

A university is more than a learning center within a community. Many times, it remains the only lifeline, when all else has vanished. This is no more evident than in areas negatively impacted—and later abandoned—by the changing economic forces of our time. In response, Youngstown State University (through the William F. Maag, Jr. Library) has started to reach beyond its campus via Digital.Maag, an online tool that empowers its users while sustaining the local cultural heritage by providing access to various types of records.

Utilizing the DSpace digital repository open source software program (written by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology), the primary role of Digital.Maag is to serve as a long-term data resource repository for creators of digital documents. The replication of the University's organizational structure in Digital.Maag permits departmental collaboration in providing the best means of storage for multiple media in digital form for both resource and data management. A secondary aspect that YSU has explored is the "repurposing" of the DSpace software for other uses than as an institutional repository. Because DSpace allows many users to share the same back-end database, completely different front-end displays on the World Wide Web can be created. This empowers both the University and local communities to share and work together in achieving common goals.

Through DSpace, the culture and pedagogy of Youngstown State is slowly transforming, allowing the University to pursue several new digital concepts. This session will explore how YSU is using DSpace, through Digital.Maag, to not only make available its collections, but also how it is using DSpace to sustain cultural heritage in the local community. Specifically, we will touch upon several conference themes:

- Organizations and the strategic context of repositories;
- The achievement of interoperability across different domains in the face of cultural challenges; and
- The addressing of the values, functions, and individual purpose of multiple stakeholders.

We will deal with these themes within the context of three case studies:

- DSpace and its role for multiple stakeholders with different needs;
- RSpace: Student publishing and classroom pedagogies; and
- Using DSpace across organizational boundaries.

Case Study #1: DSpace and Its Role for Multiple Stakeholders with Different Needs

The first case study confronts the dilemma of numerous creators and formats within an institution.

Within the last several years, we have run into issues concerning the number of different file formats, creators, and locations for multi-media after they have been created. This quandary is especially true within our media department here at YSU, which has created thousands of photographs, but has never had a place to store permanent copies. Furthermore, there has always been the problem of locating a certain piece of media and identifying its creator. This raised several questions: What mechanism should be used to organize photographs? Should we just handle photos or should we address other multi-media issues as well? What standards should we have in place?

We resolved all of these problems simultaneously by creating a community in Digital.Maag called "University Media Archives," which stores all of YSU's official photo, audio, and video content, regardless of who creates it. Topologically, the archive is broken down into subjects, themes and physical locations. The community permits content creators a place to store their media objects (in accordance with specific standards) with a persistent URI. Through this community, both creators and users now have a permanent place for the storage and retrieval of relevant multi-media content, with the issues of sustainability and accessibility both being addressed.

Case Study #2: RSpace: Student Publishing and Classroom Pedagogies

The second case study looks at how DSpace can be used in the classroom environment. YSU has implemented the software to be used as an electronic reserve module that is interlinked to Maag Library's ILS (Integrated Library System). The repurposed software, called RSpace, is tied into MaagNET (the library's ILS) and vice versa through various URL links. Accordingly, RSpace serves as a vehicle for the retrieval of electronic materials by faculty and students. Additionally, some access limitations due to copyright restrictions have been easily implemented through the software. Though RSpace is a "dark" server, students and faculty may obtain access to copyrighted materials originating from off campus through proxy authentication.

Case Study #3: Using DSpace Across Organizational Boundaries

The final case study showcases the flexibility of DSpace in community outreach. Over the past several years, the YSU Center for Working Class Studies and the University Archives have been working together to form a sustainable digital archive for the greater Mahoning Valley. Called *Steel Valley Voices: An Ethnic Archive* (since the region is historically noted for the production of iron and steel as well as its ethnic diversity), the project has involved the creation of a digital repository for materials created by immigrants who made Youngstown and the surrounding area their home. The memories preserved within these materials are of interest not only to local families, but also to

scholars and students who want to understand the history of local immigration and migration, labor, language, and culture. The goal of Steel Valley Voices is to preserve these family histories and to make them available for examination in both archival (hard-copy) and online (electronic) formats.

With *Steel Valley Voices* constituting a separate and distinct entity within the Digital.Maag framework, the groundwork was laid by Youngstown State for the exploration of several new approaches that can be taken by colleges, universities, and institutional repositories. Local communities now can view YSU's institutional repository as something common to all of Youngstown, where before, such was believed to lie strictly within the realm of the academy. Furthermore, local communities now have a medium through which to share their materials without surrendering custody of them, thereby permitting universities to create rich primary source collections for the enhancement of classroom and other scholarly endeavors. Consequently, an environment of sustainability, accessibility, outreach and solidarity between all parties concerned is fomented.

Conclusion

By using DSpace, Youngstown State University is transforming itself, the overall learning environment, and the surrounding community at large. These existential changes will have a positive effect that will overcome the paradigmatic impediments that have arisen with the advent of new technologies. While the case studies presented above demonstrate how YSU has addressed the complexities of the current dilemma, in no way are they axiomatic. Rather, these represent steps in the continuous process of improvement regarding information preservation and access.