Integrating Scholarly Repository Services
into Consortial Organizations and Statewide University Systems

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Proposal:

In 2003, Clifford A. Lynch published his influential essay — Institutional Repositories: Essential Infrastructure for Scholarship in the Digital Age, arguing that, through institutional repositories (IRs), universities hold the potential to permanently change the landscape of scholarly communication. Lynch’s paper was a response to MIT’s launch of its DSpace repository and SPARC’s position paper advocating IR development, both in 2002. These events suggested the promise of IRs to increase the visibility of scholarship, provide stewardship of the least permanent element of an institution’s intellectual output, and demonstrate institutional effectiveness. They would promote collaboration, provide a valuable resource for the public, create an outlet for digital scholarship, and promote sharing of learning objects to enhance teaching. By the end of 2009, 229 IRs have been established in the U.S., and scores of thinkers have generated papers and presentations about them. Organizations such as the Association of Research Libraries and the Association of College and Research Libraries support IRs as part of their efforts to reform scholarly communication and achieve open access to publicly funded research.

Despite this surge in interest and their potential benefits, IRs have yet to create the far-reaching changes to scholarly communication that Lynch’s paper envisions, particularly in the U.S. Hindered by a lack of resources and expertise, only three percent of colleges and universities in the U.S. host an IR. Among public institutions, access to IRs tracks closely with library funding: seventy-eight percent of IRs are hosted by universities with ARL membership. Yet ARL institutions represent only three percent of public post-secondary schools and ten percent of four-year institutions. A majority of respondents to the 2007 IR census by Karen Markey, et al. had no plans for establishing an IR, although they reported a sleeping beast of demand at their institutions. Masters and baccalaureate institutions in particular, cite insufficient resources and expertise to launch and maintain a repository. Only one public historically black college or university in the U.S. has an IR, and the potential of digital repository services for two-year colleges is virtually unexplored.

The IR disparity holds true for the thirty-five institutions in the University System of Georgia (USG), where only Georgia Tech (GT), Georgia State University (GSU), University of Georgia (UGA), Valdosta State University (VSU), and Kennesaw State University (KSU) have IRs or e-theses and dissertations (ETD) sites. Lack of resources, rather than of interest, is the cause for the disparity. In November 2007, USG representatives participated in a statewide stakeholder meeting to discuss the prospect of repositories at their campuses. They indicated high interest in a system-wide IR service, with 100% rating central hosting and meta-searching services as highly important.

Collaboration is the key to addressing the financial and technical barriers confronting IR adoption. Institutions already have banded together to generate efficiencies to digitize library holdings, preserve digital information, achieve consortial pricing on licensed content, catalog materials, and host integrated library systems. The few groups that have worked to build collaborative IR programs also have had significant results. With Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) support, the Texas Digital
Library has built a substantial repository of ETDs from five universities. The California eScholarship repository holds more than 26,000 papers from the University of California’s ten campuses, with 7.5 million downloads since inception. The Ohio Digital Resource Commons is developing centrally hosted repositories for universities and colleges in the state. NITLE offers a paid service to regional institutions for inclusion in a single, multi-institution repository. These programs are exceptional, however, in that most states in the U.S. lack collaborative strategies for promoting open access to scholarly information.

The current disparity of access to IR services serves the U.S. poorly. While the largest universities may produce the highest volume of research, each institution has its unique scholarly contribution. The State of Georgia is an appropriate test case for addressing the disparity problem, based on the heterogeneous nature of its public university system. The University System of Georgia encompasses thirty-five institutions, including four research universities, fifteen state and regional universities, seven four-year colleges, nine two-year colleges, and a stand-alone research center. Among these institutions are a medical university, three historically black universities, an agricultural college, and an oceanography institute. The GALILEO Knowledge Repository (GKR), a new statewide scholarly repository service in the State of Georgia, will explore services for a pilot group of these institutions that is not yet served by IR programs.

In 2009, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) awarded the Georgia Institute of Technology a 3-year grant of $857,000 to initiate the GKR statewide repository service in Georgia. The GKR’s merit lies in its replicable practices and technology solutions. The GKR service will provide: 1) hosting of independent DSpace instances for GKR participating institutions; 2) a repository of harvested metadata from existing and hosted DSpace sites along with a single search site using open source software; 3) IR-related services that include guidance and training on metadata and content submission and rights management, digital preservation, and content digitization; and 4) a new, open source repository collection mapping tool to create a common discipline-based taxonomy across repositories with dissimilar academic and research vocabularies. With this open source tool, the GKR addresses a central challenge for statewide repositories -- joining content from partner institutions into a common system, which users can both browse and search centrally. The GKR mapping tool allows partners to map entire repository collections to discipline-based collections in the central repository using just a Web browser. The resulting mapping data will be used when ingesting partners' metadata to bring together their disparate content under a common taxonomy. The GKR service also will develop and implement a symposium on statewide and consortial repositories for other states and consortia considering the establishment of IR services. The GKR program will be presented and examined in this proposed session for the 5th International Conference of Open Repositories, July 2010, to be held in Madrid, Spain.

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