Good Morning. It is a pleasure to see you all here for this workshop—Cooperative Curation: Georgia’s Approach to Statewide Repository Services. I hope that you learned a lot at yesterday’s symposium, which, like this meeting was funded through the Institute of Museum and Library Services grant to the GALILEO Knowledge Repository.

I would like like begin by thanking our partner institutions, the University System of Georgia’s GALILEO, and staff and faculty from Georgia Tech who have worked hard to make this meeting a success. I also hope that you have enjoyed your time in this extraordinary building, including the mild chaos of movie making.

You will be either relieved or annoyed to know that I do not have slides this morning. I have been traveling almost all summer, including several weeks with Georgia Tech Study Abroad—with 50 undergraduates on a bus in Europe and out of the world of good Internet connections, formal meetings and reports. I arrived home yesterday evening from a location the northeast where cell phones do not work properly. I will add some notes to whatever is posted online for this meeting.

My remarks will not be a keynote in the proper sense of the term. They are intended to be thought provoking, and perhaps even a little irritating, from the standpoint of an administrator.

And because workshops are supposed to be interactive, I would like to allow some time at the end of my remarks for comments and questions for me or others in the room. Perhaps you even have subjects you want to bring up from yesterday, or maybe you want to disagree with me, which is fine.

Today, you will spend the day immersed in the technology and operations of institutional repositories, individual and collaborative. You will hear in details about the GALILEO Knowledge Repository project and the Georgia experience. There are sessions on governance and sustainability, digitization, outreach and evaluation, preservation, and metadata. Most of you have considerable knowledge, skills, and experience in this area or a desire to learn more from those who have gone before.

For my part, I want to start us off today with some thoughts about the issues of impact, strategy, and sustainability. I will approach the subject of repositories from a managerial/administrative perspective. My focus will be on the same questions many faculty members ask, Why are you doing this? What value does it have? Is it more important than other services the library needs to offer? In other words, why are you investing time and energy into repository services?
First, let’s talk about impact.

In preparation for this presentation, I reread several articles about impact including Joan Giesecke’s paper written in 2010 called Institutional Repositories: Keys for Success, in which she reviews the history of IRs and wonders—are institutional repositories a solution looking for a problem?

She highlights the journal articles on faculty participation and observes that almost all of the research about institutional repositories published to date documents, at best, lukewarm interest from the faculty.

For example, in a 2008 paper, Jingfeng Xia concluded that faculty members are unenthusiastic about depositing their papers even though they know about how to self-archive. Brian Quinn wrote in 2010 about how to overcome the psychology of resistance to IRs. It is all rather depressing to read.

The truth is that we don’t actually know much about the impact of institutional repositories on the scholarly lives of students and faculty.

To an outside observer, it would seem that we have more faith than data to prove repositories are providing value. The evidence-- the number and variety of repositories continues to grow. On the Ranking Web of World Repositories there were 1435 in April 2012. As of this week, on the Registry of Open Access Repositories (amusingly called ROAR) at the University of Southampton in the UK, there are 1877.

We also know how big they are, what subjects they cover, how often they are used, but we don’t know conclusively if any of them has made research breakthroughs possible, or changed students learning outcomes. The contents of an open repository may have made a major difference, but we don’t know for sure. What we do know is that members of the faculty are not rushing to participate.

To be fair, we don’t know the actual impact of the scholarly content we provide in paper or electronic form from commercial services, either. But faculty members still publish in traditional commercial journals and scholarly society publications with high impact factors because their professional advancement is tied to it.

Another often cited impact of repositories is that they are changing scholarly publishing in fundamental ways. We are told that repositories are helping end the monopolies of commercial publishers and provide scholars with more widely accessible content that is less costly to institutions and individuals.

As I prepared for this presentation, I re-read another classic paper about institutional repositories, Raym Crow’s The Case for Institutional Repositories: A
SPARC Position Paper, written ten years ago. He calls IRs "a strategic response to systemic problems in the existing scholarly journal system."

There ARE positive reports, such as Joan Gieseke’s description of the factors involved in the success of the University of Nebraska Library’s efforts to provide new avenues for distributing scholarship that has too small a market to be published commercially, but has lasting value in scholarly communities. There are many examples of excellent digital special collections repositories that support scholarly activity.

There is no doubt that these collections are valuable for the few, but we have not seen any major shift attributable to repositories in the relentless annual price increases for journals, and we have yet to have access to vast collections of freely available content. There are, however, signs that this is changing with such large scale repository efforts as the Digital Public Library of America, and new scholarly journal publishing models such as PLOS One.

Let’s talk about strategy

In academic libraries and universities, we constantly talk about change. We talk about too much change, not enough change, change that is too fast, change that is too slow. Whether we want things to change or not, whether we influence events or not, we know everything changes and ends. This includes the traditional library in which many of us have made our careers.

One of the benefits of working in a university setting is that the focus is on the future, not the past. The important questions for the deans and directors, presidents and provosts: What is the cutting edge in research? How are disciplines merging and separating? Who will be our students and faculty next year, or five years from now?

In this environment, the challenge for those of us in libraries is great. Libraries are organizations heavily invested in the preservation of the past record of scholarship and deeply embedded in the existing system of scholarly communication. As a consequence, we are perceived as looking backward, when everyone else in the academy is charging forward in research and learning. We have not been especially successful in shifting the thinking of most faculty away from libraries as they were back when they did their doctoral work.

A couple years ago I worked on an Association of Research Libraries project to create scenarios about the future of research that would help research librarians think about their strategic directions. The idea was that if we had some notions about where research is going, we would be better prepared for the future. As it turned out, the most interesting part of the project was observing the resistance on the part of many library and university leaders to the whole idea of describing the future. Many just could not see the value of such an exercise—why do this? I ask you
-- Have we not heard this same comment from faculty about depositing their materials in a repository?

For those of us who administer, manage, and fund repositories, it is not clear, even after more than a decade of effort, if repositories really are a strategic response or a solution looking for a problem. The reality is they are neither AND they are both.

Which brings me to the question of sustainability, which is much on our minds as we finish the IMLS funding for the GKR project.

As just about everyone in this room can attest, establishing an institutional repository, or a federation of repositories, carries a significant cost. There are expenses for staff, technology, services, and preservation. High level technical staff are difficult to attract to libraries and hard to keep.

The costs for supporting a repository that appear in various studies range from $150,000 per year to twice that. How repositories are funded varies by institution, but generally and simplistically after the initial grants are over, the host institution or consortia has to come up with the money by including the costs in the regular budget and/or charging for services. Vendors are beginning to offer technology services that take advantage of economies of scale that libraries, even well-funded ones, cannot match.

For me as an administrator, the most informative and useful parts of the GKR grant and the IMLS funded publishing project grant in which Tech participated with the University of Utah and Purdue University were the cost studies conducted by Raym Crow. As someone with extensive experience in publishing and the open access movement, Raym is adept at working out the costs of a program so that the issue of sustainability can be faced squarely.

So often in libraries, we do not understand the actual cost of programs, and have only a hazy, or perhaps optimistic notion of impact and value. Unlike many other kinds of business, in the world of libraries and repositories those who bear the cost are not those who directly benefit from the services. The library pays the bills and the faculty or the institution realizes the value. Raym's work with GKR showed us just how much it costs to support the effort and what kinds of funding it will take to sustain and perhaps grow it.

So, from an administrative/managerial perspective the reasons to support a repository are not all that obvious. Despite limited impact on changing scholarly publishing (at least the commercial sector), faculty resistance, and fairly high ongoing cost, we as a community seem committed to creating and sustaining repositories, at least for the foreseeable future.

But, again, why do this?
I have been asked this question by more than one provost and more than a few faculty members over the past few years. My response in the Georgia Tech context is that I choose to allocate precious staff and faculty time and energy, as well as GT funds, because GT’s SMARTech and the GALILEO Knowledge Repository have the potential to be strategic in a broader sense than Raym Crow described in 2002.

Earlier in this presentation, I said that we in libraries focus on the past while we operate in academic institutions that are all about the future of research and learning. We have found it difficult to change the faculty and administrative view of us from a group of people who manage a big box filled with books to an active service organization that adds value to the academic enterprise.

Today, we must change our relationship with the faculty and administration if we are to remain vital and fulfill our mission, which is the provision of content and related services. One promising strategy to change our role on campus is to become involved in scholarly publishing at the institutional or consortial level. In this scenario, we not only purchase content, but also we help create it and make it accessible. This is especially important for content that has little or no commercial market, but is nonetheless valuable to scholars and students.

Establishing and supporting an IR helps bring new faculty and staff into the organization, builds skills, pushes or draws us all toward the future. In fact, some of the most successful strategies for encouraging faculty participation have come from institutions, such as the University of Nebraska, the University of Utah, and Purdue University, where the programs have been managed as a publishing venture with a heavy emphasis on acquisition of content and services. The marketing slogan at Nebraska says it all—“Participation is a two-step process. Step one: send us your vita. Step two: there is no step two.”

Another key reason for supporting and expanding a repository, single institution or consortial, is the potential repositories have to build the larger institution or system’s reputation. The reality is that academic institutions compete for the best faculty, the best students, and the most research dollars. There is a growing interest in faculty profile systems that build both individual and institutional brand. Faculty members and universities want and need to get their research out to the larger world, to showcase student learning, and build research contacts at home and abroad. If we in libraries can position our repositories, either individual or shared, as a central part of this strategic direction, we will not only meet our mission, but also change the role of the library and its relationship with faculty and students on campus.

As an administrator, my responsibility is to continue to support the collections and services that today’s faculty and students need, and at the same time I have to anticipate the future. This last part is considerably less scientific and predictable that I would prefer. Unlike those who resist scenario building or as one faculty member put it “guessing pointlessly about the future”, I have to place bets on
strategic directions, and simultaneously try to influence the outcome of those bets. And I have to manage to stay within the library's budget, which seems to always be lurching from crisis to crisis.

By supporting institutional repositories,

I am betting that:

Repositories, such as the GKR, have the potential to help create a new fruitful relationship between the library and the faculty to enhance research and learning.

I am betting that:

Repositories such as GKR have the potential to create a new alliance between the library and institution and/or the university system to strengthen institutional competitiveness.

I am betting that:

Repositories such as GKR have the potential to promote scholarship to a wider world and influence the broken system of scholarly publishing.

But this is still mostly unrealized potential. The challenge is to sustain and build repositories long enough to see some positive, measureable, and best of all, dramatic impact. And not fall into the trap of hoping for the best and failing to take a hard look at what Raym Crow calls the value proposition.

To help ensure a positive outcome, we need to do less wishful thinking and more strategic action about how repositories are managed and marketed. We know that if we build it, they will not necessarily come. We need to think more like marketing professionals or economists. What value does it add? Who benefits? What do the various partners want and need? How can we supply it?

Our task, and surely the reason we are all here today is to make repositories, single institution and collaborative, fulfill their potential and justify the precious resources, human and financial that we invest in them.

Your comments?