GKR: Collaborative Repository Services

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Successful Collaborations in Good Times and Bad
ASCLA - ALA Annual Conference
June 23, 2012
The GKR is a comprehensive statewide repository, funded by a 3-year IMLS National Leadership Grant from 2009-2012.

Leads are Georgia Institute of Technology and University of Georgia.

My office is at Georgia Tech, and I report to a PI there, but I work with all of the GKR partners.

This image is from one of the GKR partner repositories.
During the 3-year grant period, the GKR has the following goals:

1. A statewide survey and focus groups, to find out the University System of Georgia faculty’s use and knowledge of institutional repositories (IRs)
2. The GKR metadata repository and collection mapping tool, which allows users to search and browse across the 10 IRs that are harvested through this project.
3. An IR hosting service, where four independent DSpace instances are hosted on Georgia Tech Library servers and maintained by Georgia Tech Library IT staff, but whose content is managed by staff at the partner site.
4. IR related services which help reduce barriers to recruiting scholarly content: rights assistance, digitization, content submission, digital preservation
5. Statewide and consortial repositories symposium and workshop, which we will offer at Georgia Tech in August.
These are the institutions whose IRs are being harvested into the central site.

4 research universities:
Georgia State University
University of Georgia
Georgia Tech
Georgia Health Sciences University

2 regional universities:
Georgia Southern University
Valdosta State University

2 state universities:
Kennesaw State University
Albany State University

2 state colleges:
College of Coastal Georgia
Georgia Gwinnett College
These are the institutions whose IRs are being hosted at Georgia Tech.

Albany State University – 4 year state college, HBCU
College of Coastal Georgia – until recently a 2 year state college, offering some 4-year programs since 2010
Georgia Gwinnett College – 4 year state college, one of the fastest growing in the USG
Georgia Health Sciences University – research university specializing in healthcare research
GKR expertise

All 10 partners have contributed in some way, by serving on committees, participating in the symposium and workshop, sending projects through the digitization and content submission services, etc.

These are the GKR partners which brought particular expertise to the project.

Georgia Tech
In 2004, when the GKR concept first came to be, Georgia Tech had just started its SMARTech repository, which was (and still is) run on the DSpace platform.
Georgia Tech was also a founding member of the MetaArchive Cooperative, a digital preservation service.
And Georgia Tech staff in scholarly communication and digital curation services also bring substantial experience dealing with copyright issues.

UGA
Brad Baxter, a programmer for GALILEO based at UGA, developed the open source collection mapping tool, which is an integral part of the GKR central metadata repository.
UGA is also home to the Digital Library of Georgia, which has both the equipment and the expertise to run the grant-funded digitization service for the GKR.
They also have extensive experience dealing with copyright issues.

VSU
Valdosta State University has operated Georgia’s only ALA-accredited library school since 2007. Part of the GKR content submission service is an MLIS student internship, where a small group of VSU students work with GKR partners to submit content and metadata into their repositories, as part of a summer internship. Last year seven VSU students submitted 450 records and completed several related projects as well.
Not all of the GKR partners have been USG institutions or contributed to the shared metadata repository.

The USG faculty-wide survey was designed by Jennifer Campbell-Meier when she was on the faculty at North Georgia College and State University. Jennifer is currently an SLIS professor at University of Alabama, and the results of the survey will further her research there.

Two statewide library organizations have played a major role in supporting the GKR:
1. The Regents Academic Committee on Libraries (RACL), which is an organization of academic libraries from the 35 colleges and universities in the university system.
2. GALILEO (which stands for Georgia Libraries Learning Online), the state’s virtual library.

Our partner for digital preservation is the MetaArchive Cooperative, a Private LOCKSS Network.

Chain Bridge Group, a consulting firm, helped us draft part of our sustainability plan.
The idea for the GKR precedes my involvement with the project – by quite a lot. The GKR concept has been around since the first repositories in Georgia were being designed. The initial minds behind the GKR were from Georgia Tech, UGA and the Medical College of Georgia (now GHSU).

In 2004, the GKR idea received the blessing of RACL, and a steering committee was formed.

2004-2005, a metadata committee was formed and began working on what are now the GKR metadata guidelines.

In 2005 the Technical Committee was formed, and began creating the GKR’s technical specifications

In 2007, a conceptual model of the GKR was produced, and in November of that year, a GKR stakeholders meeting was called. The IR-related services (digitization, etc.) were first outlined based on feedback from this meeting.

In 2008, a test version of the open source repository collection mapping tool developed. Also, the first IMLS grant application was rejected. A second attempt was made the following year.

September 2009: IMLS grant awarded
Remember 2009?

This was a great year to get grant funding.

However, as we would find out, it was not a great year to begin planning for sustainability. Money was not our only difficulty, but we have had to be creative in imagining how we might financially sustain the GKR in light of the economy since 2009.
So, this session is about good times and bad. I will start first with the “bad times.”

During the grant period, the university system has undergone a series of budget cuts. While individual library budgets may not have been cut as drastically, these cuts have definitely trickled down, and most libraries in RACL have had to cut databases.

FY2009: USG’s budget cut by 6%
FY2010: USG’s budget cut by 8%
FY2011: USG’s budget cut by 10%
FY2012: GALILEO’s budget cut by $52K

Money has definitely been a theme in GKR meetings, along with other aspects such as technology, content, evaluation, etc. It’s the one we least like to discuss, of course. But it can’t be ignored. Any ideas for sustainability that we considered would have to pass the money test.

Our hope is that we will come out at the end of the grant with not just a working technological and organizational model that other states and consortia can repeat, but one that is also efficient and low-cost for everyone.
I mentioned that money was not our only obstacle. We had several major personnel changes as well.

Our original principal investigator, Tyler Walters, left Georgia Tech early last year to become Dean of Libraries at Virginia Tech. He had already passed the GKR torch on to Julie Speer by this time, but it was difficult to lose the original writer of the grant narrative and one of our biggest champions.

One of the grant-funded positions was a dedicated DSpace developer, Keith Gilbertson, who set up our four hosted DSpace instances and began the work to implement the central metadata repository. He left the project last October. Since then we have had to ask other developers at GT to contribute small percentages of time, here and there, to finish the metadata repository.

Julie, our second PI, also left Georgia Tech earlier this year. Like Tyler, Julie had been involved in the GKR since before the grant, and she had worked on the metadata guidelines, helped design the workflow for the digitization service, and set up the MetaArchive contract, among many other things.

Our current PI and co-PI from Georgia Tech were both new to the GKR when they started in February. They've had quite a learning curve but have contributed some great ideas, especially toward sustainability planning.
And then we worried…

With the financial obstacles and personnel changes, we did have our moments of worry. What would happen to the GKR in October 2012, at the end of the grant? We’ve been asking this question for almost as long as I’ve been on the project.

Our best idea for sustaining the GKR beyond the grant was by offering fee-based services that would allow Georgia Tech to continue operating the GKR on a cost recovery basis. However, after hiring a consultant to look at our costs, we realized that not only would we not be cheaper than a commercial vendor, we would probably have a hard time finding paying customers.

With so many Georgia institutions underfunded, even though many RACL members were interested in starting an IR, this was not a higher priority than other critical library functions. And with its own library budget under tougher scrutiny, Georgia Tech could not afford to carry this service on their behalf.

We also considered expanding our services out to the region, and even called a meeting with some institutions from ASERL. Most ASERL members are either operating their own IR or making plans to do so, and most people we talked to were not interested in having Georgia Tech host DSpace for them.

Even within the state of Georgia, outside of the university system, we have not had a lot of interest so far.
However, there is some good news on the horizon.

First, the FY2013 economy is looking better. There are still cuts, but much smaller cuts than we have seen in the past. GALILEO has requested some funds for GKR in its budget request, and we hear that the university system chancellor’s office is hoping to give GALILEO more support in the coming years.

GKR will meet its deliverables and should receive a no-cost grant extension. We have been particularly frugal and will be under spent in September. Some of this is on purpose – for example, we have not made as many overnight trips as we originally planned, and we have not had a need to hire any graduate assistants as we originally budgeted for. Some of it was unforeseen – for example, savings due to staff resignations.

We were able to use some funds originally budgeted for a graduate assistant, to hire a consultant to do a cost analysis and business plan. We will use some travel funds to supplement the symposium and workshop budget. The rest will go toward a no-cost grant extension, which if approved by IMLS will start in October.

Our sustainability options look promising. I can’t say much, because the steering committee has not had a chance to discuss our plans, but we think we may have found a low-cost solution through a vendor partner that may even allow other institutions not currently participating to join the GKR.
This is the main point I hope to make today. The GKR is and will be successful because of the personal investment that so many people have made, and the dedication they have shown in the project.

If you can think back to the timeline:

2004: steering committee formed
2005: metadata guidelines developed
2005: technical committee begins work
2007-2008: GKR conceptual model produced

All of this occurred before the grant was awarded. Of course this made my job a lot easier – not having to deal with too many decisions – but because so many people decided to meet, and people kept coming to the meetings, they eventually had a viable model ready to take to IMLS, and IMLS thought it met the criteria of a national leadership grant. I can’t say enough about the people who have made the GKR happen over the last 8 years.
We’ve had great partners.

First of all, RACL. RACL has been around since 1968. It is an advisory committee for the board of regents of the university system. The GKR concept was first introduced to this group, and several RACL members are on the GKR steering committee. RACL members have a long history of working together to exchange information, coordinate on library operations, and create statewide library services, including GALILEO. RACL supported the GKR because it was a consortial model that other states could replicate.

Next, GALILEO. GALILEO grew out of a RACL IT advisory committee, formed in 1989 and officially launched in 1995. Among its accomplishments are:
- The GALILEO shared database service
- The GALILEO Interconnected Libraries (GIL) ILS
- The PINES online library catalog
- The New Georgia Encyclopedia
- The Digital Library of Georgia

Merryl Penson, GALILEO’s executive director, has said “The GKR continues this pattern of library cooperation, leveraging the working relationships that GALILEO has fostered among Georgia’s college and university libraries to extend the benefits of Institutional Repositories across the university system.”

Finally, IMLS has been a terrific partner. IMLS program officers worked with Georgia Tech before and after the grant, offering feedback and suggestions, and supporting the GKR as we asked for additional funds or reallocation of funds to test ideas or make improvements.
The GKR has also had several champions, some of whom I’ve mentioned:

Tyler Walters
Julie Speer
Merryl Penson

And some others I have to mention as well:

Toby Graham, deputy university librarian at UGA and head of the DLG, is a co-PI on the GKR grant and one of our most helpful and dedicated supporters. Toby also has a lot of experience with grants.

Catherine Murray-Rust, VP for Learning Excellence and Dean of Libraries at Georgia Tech has been instrumental in creating our sustainability plan, with the assistance of associate deans Kathy Tomajko and Jeff Carrico – PI and Co-PI on the GKR.

The GKR steering committee has not only advised but also advocated for us. I have a few quotes to share from some of them.
“[GKR] provides a timely and extraordinarily valuable service, not only to the individual universities within the USC, but to the State of Georgia by making available the resources of its university libraries to the public.”

– David King, Interim Director, Greenblatt Library, Georgia Health Sciences University
“The GALILEO Knowledge Repository will be a remarkable portal into the diverse scholarship of the University System of Georgia... The collaborative nature of the project, based on the GALILEO and GIL models, brings first class repository services even to USG campuses with more limited IT support.”

– Bede Mitchell, Dean of the Zach S. Henderson Library, Georgia Southern University
“The GKR takes repositories one step better by creating a statewide metadata repository that allows federated searching and browsing of all existing Georgia repositories.”

– David Evans, Assistant Vice President for Library Services, Sturgis Library, Kennesaw State University
Expertise

I’ve already mentioned the expertise that certain partners brought to the project – development, digitization, digital preservation, content submission, and so on. We’ve also called on people to help with other aspects of the project:

Metadata specialists from several GKR partner sites.

Librarians with experience in outreach and evaluation, running focus groups, usability testing.

People with event planning experience.

We have a great Technical writer, Valeria Baker, who will be documenting the project and producing a guide for the symposium and workshop.

The Georgia Tech Office of Sponsored Programs have helped us dot our i’s and cross our t’s as far as grant reporting, and the GT library’s accounting staff have helped us with our fiscal reporting. When you consider that we had cost-share agreements with six other institutions, this was no small task.
Technology
We have had the benefit of some pretty good technology.

We used DSpace for the four hosted sites, and we have built the central metadata repository on DSpace as well. This required us to bend DSpace to our will – we even had to break DSpace to make the mapped collections work – and it has served its purpose.

We have realized some cost savings in travel by holding a lot of virtual meetings and conducting virtual training using Wimba software.

We have also used software called Meeting Wizard to schedule meetings for all five GKR committees, and other events.
For our in-person meetings and events, we have found several great spaces:

Macon State College has no IR and is not on the GKR steering committee, but they are a traditional meeting site for other statewide groups such as RACL. They have graciously hosted several meetings of the steering committee, both providing meeting technology and arranging for catering.

(Catering – it seems like a little thing but it has a big impact!)

The university system OIIT office, where the GALILEO offices are located – on the outskirts of Athens – has been another convenient meeting space for the technical committee. No one likes to drive to Atlanta, and half of the committee is in Athens.

Georgia Tech Library has recently added a new building – the Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons – which will be the location of our symposium and workshop this summer. It has two auditoriums, several classrooms with the latest technology, a roof garden, and its own resident event planner. All of this will allow us to keep costs low for the symposium and workshop.
Flexibility
One last thing I'll mention: Flexibility

In addition to working with a great group of partners who have a history of collaboration, leveraging the expertise of several institutions, and having the support of local and national organizations, we could not have gotten to where we are without being able to adapt to changing conditions.

For example:
• One institution, originally set up in the grant as a GKR hosted site, decided to host their own IR. But we were able to find an additional partner, whose IR we are now hosting.
• 4 out of 5 committees have changed chairs
• The statewide Faculty survey – originally a pre-grant activity – did not actually launch until April 2012.
• The Metadata repository had more technological hurdles than expected due to DSpace itself, in addition to losing its dedicated developer.
• We’ve had to try out and reject several sustainability ideas.

All in all, the GKR was built on a solid foundation of Georgia institutions working together and trusting each other, through good times and bad.
Thank you!

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