INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORIES:

WHY GO THERE?

by Julie Bobay

Judging by the number of recent journal articles and conferences about them, institutional repositories are a hot topic in libraries today. Their appeal for librarians is easy to understand. In theory, their goals are in perfect alignment with librarians' core values; they have the potential to provide users around the world with quick and easy access to information that has been hidden in file cabinets, private computers, and systems that are restricted to subscribers.

Broadly speaking, institutional repositories are open-access software systems that allow institutions (usually through university libraries) to make the scholarship of their researchers openly available and preserved over the long term. These software systems provide low-barrier tools that allow authors to SELF-SELECT and SELF-ARCHIVE their scholarship into an open-access repository. Materials placed into these repositories are highly visible in the electronic world and are seen by users of search engines like Google as well as by specialized search systems like OAIster. Most large and many medium-sized academic libraries in Indiana have implemented some version of an institutional repository for a wide variety of reasons that correspond to needs on their campuses.

DEFINITIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORIES

The original vision for institutional repositories, heralded by the first institutional repository software, EPrints, was to support a world-wide network of interoperable open-access collections of journal articles that had been formally published elsewhere. The vision was of a world-wide, cross-searchable network of collections of high quality, open access journal articles; these rich collections would support increased scholarship as well as encourage scholarly publishers to change their business models.

In the seven years since Eprints was released, several other institutional repository systems have been developed and released: DSpace, another open source system, and hosted solutions like BePress's Digital Commons and ExLibris' DigiTool. These systems were developed with a larger view of institutional repositories beyond peer-reviewed published journal articles. The most widely-cited definition of this expanded view came from Clifford Lynch (2003):

> ...a university-based institutional repository is a set of services that a university offers to the members of its community for the management and dissemination of digital materials created by the institution and its community members.

For large academic libraries, where most of the implementations have occurred, institutional repositories are becoming more than repositories of peer-reviewed journal articles. In many cases, libraries are taking advantage of the increasing functionality and flexibility of these systems to provide access to a wide range of content and for a wide variety of purposes. In addition to encouraging faculty to deposit their peer-reviewed published journal articles in them, academic libraries are using these systems to provide access to:

- semi-published "gray literature" like conference papers and lectures
- dissertations
- monographs
- small datasets
- university administrative records (such as IUPUI's e-Archives)
- publishing platforms for journals and journal-like peer-reviewed publications
- repositories for backfiles of published materials; in fact, back issues of *Indiana Libraries* is available at IUPUI's IDEA Digital Archive
- platforms for full-blown digital library collections of library holdings. As one respondent noted in the recent MIRACLE survey of institutional repositories (Markey, Rieh, St. Jean, Kim, & Yakel, 2007): "At this small institution, it is imperative that I use an approach that addresses both scholarly communication and the institution's digital archival material."

Some academic libraries are banding together to create a large shared collections like the Texas Digital

Library, and some are partnering with other libraries to provide access to materials that did not originate from the institution at all, such as KSPACe, a partnership between Kansas State Historical Library and Kansas State University to develop a digital repository of Kansas state government publications.

What does this mean for users?

The phrase "institutional repository" has come to mean any implementation of an institutional repository software system. This, combined with the increasing functionality of institutional repository systems themselves, has blurred the lines between "institutional repository," "digital library," and even "publishing." Unfortunately for effective communication, these developments have made it increasingly difficult to understand what any individual really means when s/he says "institutional repository."

While admittedly creating a communication problem, however, this environment is actually quite rich with opportunities for libraries to make important materials easily available on the Web, and this is great news for users around the world. A growing body of easily-discoverable, important content is being "published" (i.e., made public) by libraries everywhere. Some commercial publishers are changing their business models to be more sustainable. And researchers are using these services as new channels for making their work public, both to colleagues in their disciplines as well as to the public at large.

IUSCHOLARWORKS AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY – BLOOMINGTON

IU-Bloomington implemented DSpace, branded as "IUScholarWorks" in 2006. It was, and still is, envisioned as an open-access repository of materials produced by scholars on the IU-Bloomington and regional campuses. It currently has 1700 items in it, including peer-reviewed journal articles, student journals, journal supplements, dissertations, working papers, monographs, and technical reports. We see it as a first step in providing a richer range of publishing options for IU researchers in the age of the Internet.

Our experience with this project has been similar to that of other academic libraries. After 18 months, our 1700-item collection is described as "not bad" by an institutional repository veteran, reflecting the fact that no institution has seen a huge up-take by their faculty to self-archive their own work. At IUB and elsewhere, scholars are generally supportive of the idea and, while many are slow to deposit their materials into IUScholarWorks, individual faculty and departments are becoming increasingly active. Like many libraries, the IUB Libraries are taking responsibility for not only encouraging faculty to deposit their materials, but also for submitting and managing those materials on their behalf and to help them with copyright issues, which lie at the very heart of the enterprise. We are developing partnerships with other university offices, such as the Graduate School and the Dean of Faculties, to help encourage researchers to deposit their scholarly materials.

After talking with dozens of faculty and department chairs, we have discovered unmet needs that could be categorized as "publishing": datasets, journal supplements, journals, conference proceedings, dissertations, new forms of scholarship, etc. In the rich technological environment of a large academic institution, we are exploring the use of IUScholarWorks for some of these and are searching for technical solutions for others elsewhere.

I'm interested in learning more – what should I do?

In the words of the copyright lawyers, "It depends." While the institutional repository experience to date has been almost entirely in large academic libraries, the open-source and commercial software systems present opportunities for all types of libraries that have content which would be valuable contributions to the openly-accessible body of information out there and that need to be preserved.

Some things you can do:

- Add OAIster to your searching routine when answering reference questions
- Do a little background reading, starting with the MIRACLE project's "Our Favorites for Getting Started"
- Evaluate software options (Reiger, 2007). Pick software that meets your needs – if you need to manage a curated collection of images with thumbnails and specialized metadata, institutional repository software might not be the best choice. If you need to publish journals as well as create digital repositories, BePress's Digital Commons has that functionality built in. If you don't have adequate technical support to sustain a local implementation of open-source software, investigate a hosted option or find a partner who shares your interest and can contribute those resources.
- Make a plan and define your purpose, but be flexible! Leave the door open for growth and evolution. Do not try to pre-determine all policies; when you talk with your users, you might discover other needs that this software could meet. There are even new service companies who offer their consulting expertise to help you plan, such as Care Affiliates.

REFERENCES

Lynch, C. (2003 February). Institutional repositories: Essential infrastructure for scholarship in the digital age. *ARL Bimonthly Report*, 226. Retrieved September 10, 2007, from http://www.arl.org/resources/pubs/br/br226/br226ir.shtml

Markey, K., Rieh, S.Y., St. Jean, B., Kim, J., & Yakel, E. (2007). *Census of institutional repositories in the United States: MIRACLE Project research findings*. Retrieved September 10, 2007, from http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub140/contents.html

Rieger, O. (2007). Select for success: Key principles in assessing repository models. *DLib Magazine 13(7/8)*. Retrieved September 10, 2007, from http://www.dlib.org/dlib/july07/rieger/07rieger.html

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

Berkeley Electronic Press: Digital Commons. Retrieved September 10, 2007, from http://www.bepress.com/ir/

Care Affiliates. *Are you sure you have a plan for success in offering repository services?* Retrieved September 10, 2007, from http://www.care-affiliates.com/care-mailing2.html

DigiTool. Retrieved September 10, 2007, from http://www.exlibrisgroup.com/digitool.htm

DSpace. Retrieved September 10, 2007, from http://www.dspace.org/

EPrints for Digital Repositories. Retrieved September 10, 2007, from http://www.eprints.org/

IDEA: IUPUI Digital Archive. Retrieved September 10, 2007, from https://idea.iupui.edu/dspace/

IUPUI University eArchives. Retrieved September 10, 2007, from https://archives.iupui.edu/dspace/handle/2450/1

IUScholarWorks. Retrieved September 10, 2007, from https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/

KSPACe: Kansas State Publications Archival Collection. Retrieved September 10, 2007, from http://www.kspace.org/

Markey, K. et al. (2007) *Miracle Project: Our favorites for getting started*. Retrieved September 10, 2007, from http://miracle.si.umich.edu/bibliography/favorites.html

OAIster: Find the Pearls. Retrieved September 10, 2007, from http://www.oaister.org/

Texas Digital Library. Retrieved September 10, 2007, from http://www.tdl.org/

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julie Bobay has been a librarian at Indiana University-Bloomington for more than twenty years, holding various positions in instruction, public services, Web development, and electronic services. She is currently project leader for the IUScholarWorks initiative. She has a Masters Degree in Library Science as well as a Masters Degree in Public Administration from Indiana University.