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# To Perpetuity ... And Beyond

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## Introduction

Good morning. I am delighted that LACUNY has organized this conference on Scholarly Publishing and Open Access. I think we owe a debt of gratitude to Kenneth Schlesinger, LACUNY President, and the two Institute Co-chairs, Scott White and Beth Evans.

It is rather daunting to stand before you following the presentations by Dr. Varmus and Dr. Blume. I think their talks provided us with a real sense of the complexities of the topic. As mentioned the program now turns to the topic of institutional repositories, but before getting into it, I'm wondering if anyone heard about the Time Traveler Convention held at MIT last week? The convention was organized so that time travelers from all eras could meet at a specific place at a specific time. The organizers reported that the event was a mixed success, saying, "Unfortunately, we had no confirmed time travelers visit us, yet many time travelers could have attended incognito to avoid endless questions about the future." [1]

When it comes to scholarly communication avoiding endless questions about the future is not an option. And doubtless institutional repositories will be a part of that future. I am going to build on Scott's introduction and talk about some of the basics of Institutional Repositories and then share some thoughts about implications and roles for CUNY in this context.

## What is an Institutional Repository?

Clifford Lynch has defined institutional repositories as "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." [2] The types of services or collections might include a range of objects from articles – either preprint or post print, to e-portfolios to datasets to multimedia presentations. An article in the July/August 2004 issue of Library Technology Reports identified five key components of institutional repositories:

- Digital content
- Community-driven & focused

- Institutionally supported
- Durable and permanent
- Accessible content[3]

Institutional repositories have become linked with the open access movement, but a distinction is that open access, according to Stevan Harnad “means immediate permanent, free online access to the full text of all refereed journal articles” which he estimates parenthetically to be (2.5 million articles a year, published in 24,000 refereed journals, across all disciplines, languages and nations).[4] This link between institutional repositories and open access is useful for entities such as SPARC (the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition) that is attempting to correct what it calls “market dysfunctions in the scholarly publishing system.”[5] I think it is important to bear in mind that an institutional repository need not exclusively contain published or even scholarly material.

## Metadata

It may be impossible to talk about Digital Repositories and avoid mentioning metadata. My understanding of this topic was enhanced by consulting Introduction to Metadata: pathways to digital information put out by the Getty Research Institute.[6] Anyway, a couple of comments about metadata from this source.

- Metadata, broadly defined is "data about data."
- Metadata is information that makes it possible to find, access, use, and manage information resources.
- In general all information resources, regardless of the physical or intellectual form they take, have three features - content, context, and structure - all of which can be reflected through metadata. Content relates to what the object contains or is about. This is what library metadata tends to be about & includes indexes, abstracts, cataloging records, authority records, etc.

*Context* indicates the who, what, why, where, how aspects associated with the object's creation. Archivists and museum curators deal with this a lot in terms of things like the provenance of a work of art.

*Structure* relates to the formal set of associations within or among individual information objects. A Book is an example of a structure – because you know it is a book you can anticipate certain things about it and how to use it.

Metadata then

- certifies the authenticity and degree of completeness of the content;
- establishes and documents the context of the content;
- identifies and exploits the structural relationships that exist between and within information objects;

- provides a range of intellectual access points for a range of users; and
- provides some of the information an information professional might have provided in a physical reference or research setting.

## **Institutional Repository Systems and Projects**

Next I would like to mention some of the different technological solutions used for Institutional Repositories, and some of the better known projects now underway. There are both open source and commercial models, and institutions use the usual combination of politics, economics, objectives and technological capacities to decide which to choose or to go their own route. A couple of examples of systems that support Institutional Repositories are:

- BE Press Repository Technology (Berkeley Electronic Press – used by California Digital Library’s eScholarship repository. This technology is now marketed by Proquest under the Digital Commons brand.
- E-Prints, developed at the University of Southampton.
- Dspace, developed by MIT and Hewlett Packard
- Fedora, developed by University of Virginia & Cornell. Now marketed by VTLs as the VITAL system.

The number of Institutional Repositories is proliferating, but some of the better ones are:

- Ohio State University Knowledge Bank
- California Digital Library eScholarship Repository
- University of Pennsylvania Scholarly Commons
- Cornell Dspace Digital Repository
- MIT Dspace
- University of Rochester UR Research

## **Barriers to Institutional Repositories**

In looking at the technologies and the projects underway it is evident that the main barriers to implementing an institutional repository are not technical. David Seaman, Executive Director of the Digital Library Federation mentions the following obstacles:

- Current academic measurement and reward systems are not in synch with open access
- There is a disparity of perceived need by discipline
- Institutional Repositories are not driven by groundswell of faculty demand[7]

The current state of content development on institutional repositories, while offering promise, reminds me of the Gertrude Steinism “there is no there there,” meaning, that actual content development in Institutional Repositories is only at an embryonic stage. There are very few disciplines where there is enough coherent content for the purposes of scholarly communication. One of the most developed institutional repositories is at the University of Rochester. They too, however, are concerned about low participation. They brought an anthropologist on to the Dspace team to study the work practices of faculty, and are redesigning the promotion of IR as a result of this work. They are making it easier for faculty to contribute and adding components that allow additional customization or personalization. In talking to faculty about the University of Rochester Institutional Repository they make the following points:

- The repository will make your own work more accessible to others on the web through Google searches
- You will maintain ownership of your own work and control who sees it
- It will be easier for you to give out links to your work rather than managing files and sending out e-mail attachments to your colleagues
- It will preserve your digital items far into the future and keep them safe
- You won't have to maintain a server
- You won't have to do anything complicated

Success of institutional repositories will hinge on faculty recognizing them as a useful tool and ongoing institutional support and commitment. Moreover, we will need to articulate how institutional repositories contribute to the value chain of scholarly communication. As identified by Roosendaal and Geurts, every system of scholarly communication must fulfill the following functions:

- Registration -- allowing claims of precedence for a scholarly finding
- Certification – establishes the validity of a registered scholarly claim
- Awareness – allows scholars to become aware of new findings
- Archiving – preserving the scholarship over time
- Rewarding – provides tangible or intangible benefits to those who participate in the system.[8]

As with open access and changes in modes of scholarly communication in general an aspect that can't be overstated is the need to align with reward structures at work in higher education. Institutional repositories must be developed within the existing frameworks of academic credentialing; promotion and tenure decisions; reputation of faculty; journal impact factors.

## IR & CUNY

I would like next to talk about institutional repositories and CUNY and share some ideas about where we might go and what we might have to do to get there. Mostly ideas, not solutions, observations, not conclusions, questions, not resolutions.

So what does all this mean for CUNY and our libraries? While we may talk about an integrated university there will probably always be the need to strike a balance between centralized and decentralized facets of our organization. When we talk about an institutional repository do we mean one for CUNY, or one for each campus? Our campuses vary in the ways in which they choose to or are able to support their teaching and research missions. There is also variability in funding levels across the libraries. These factors influence development directions and rates of development.

Might this suggest that within the CUNY context we should look for multi-campus solutions? Working collaboratively may have advantages, but may also impede early adopter campuses with process and governance constraints. Another aspect of governance has to do with the balance between administrative and faculty prerogatives. Can CUNY “require” that all faculty participate in an Institutional Repository?

This doesn't resonate for me, but even with a more voluntary approach there are policy issues to be considered. Who can put in what? Who can take out what? Who pays for all this? Is the content filtered to reflect only scholarly material, however that may be defined, or more free-form, better to enable new modalities of inquiry and communication? If the latter what's to prevent the devolution of the content into a blogger's delight of entropy and introspection?

As we move forward there are probably some working assumptions that we will need to make. Among these:

Participation will be voluntary;

- Collaboration will be necessary, perhaps even to the level of coordination;
- The solutions of today are not necessarily the solutions of tomorrow;

Librarians need to be involved.

As important as basic considerations of access and preservation, when we start to conceptualize the development of a CUNY institutional repository another significant asset that librarians bring to this is our reputation and the trust we have earned over the years on our campuses. As a group we are academic polyglots, able to speak as natives the languages of teachers, scholars, technologists and administrators. Nobody else can do this.

As far as action items

- Continue to raise campus awareness about open access, scholarly communication and institutional repositories.
- Continue to raise CUNY Central awareness about open access, scholarly communication and institutional repositories.
- Keep current with technological developments and projects at other institutions.
- I plan to work with the Council of Chief Librarians and can imagine a likely outcome being committee formation. I would like to see two intersecting groups: one to look at content development and marketing; one to focus on technological infrastructure issues.

We have lots to do and really no choice but to move forward. There is no turning back; the days of stability are gone and unrecoverable. But in thinking about the future, I am reminded of the words of Thomas Frey, Executive Director of the DaVinci Institute:

He who controls the weather, will control the world;

He who controls gravity, will control the universe;

He who controls time, will never be around.

Thank you for your time.

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8. [Hans E. Roosendaal](#) and [Peter A. Th. M. Geurts](#), "Forces and functions in scientific communication: an analysis of their interplay, [CRISP 97](#) Cooperative Research Information Systems in Physics, last viewed May 18, 2005, at<http://www.physik.uni-oldenburg.de/conferences/crisp97/roosendaal.html>.