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Beth Evans
Brooklyn College

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Institutional Repositories (IR) in Higher Education – A Panel Discussion

Moderator: Theresa McManus, Chief Librarian, Bronx Community College
Panelists: Curtis Kendrick, University Librarian, City University of New York;
John Townsend, Executive Director, New York State Higher Education Initiative (NYSHEI); Kate Wittenberg, Director, Electronic Publishing Initiative at Columbia (EPIC)

Theresa McManus, the moderator, introduced the panel and opened with her own concerns about IRs. She finds herself caught between faculty advocating for mandating e-print repositories, priorities in a context of budget reductions, and faculty who view repositories sometimes with trepidation and doubt in regard to them being mandated to put materials in them.

Curtis Kendrick was the first speaker. He quotes Clifford Lynch's definition of 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" (*ARL Bimonthly Report* 226) 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. Additionally, all material in an IR may not be scholarly. Kendrick cites an article in the July/August 2004 issue of *Library Technology Reports* which identified five key characteristics of an institutional repository. IR's include digital content, are community-driven and focused, are institutionally supported, are durable and are permanent and accessible.

Kendrick spoke about metadata being critical to an institutional repository because it 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.

The main barriers to implementing an institutional repository are not technical. Kendrick notes the major obstacles, according to David Seaman, Executive Director of the Digital Library Federation, are an academic measurement and reward systems that does not acknowledge open access publication, disparity and sparseness of content across different disciplines and little faculty demand for Institutional Repositories.

The University of Rochester, home to one of the biggest Institutional Repositories, has had low faculty participation. An anthropologist on the UR Dspace team determined that changes in promotion to faculty were needed. It is now easier for faculty to contribute and customize or personalize their own content. Rochester encourages faculty to realize that the repository increases access through Google searches, allows for controlled access, is a technologically less burdensome approach than using e-mail or maintaining a server, and assures for the preservation of digital items far into the future.

Kendrick cites Roosendaal and Geurts's criteria for what will validate any mechanism of scholarly communication. In order to succeed, Institutional Repositories must allow for claim of precedence, establish the validity of the claim, allow scholars to become aware of new findings, preserve the scholarship over time and reward participants.

Finally, Kendrick addressed the issue of the City University of New York and Institutional Repositories. The first step is to increase the awareness of IR as a desirable goal for CUNY. Designing an IR requires consideration of the university structure, campus autonomy and the varying levels of support and funding for research that exist on each campus. Guidelines for an IR would need to be established. Who can put in what? Who can take out what? Who pays for all this? Is the content filtered to reflect only scholarly material? Regardless, Kendrick urges that librarians be involved in the solution.

Townsend began his discussion with references to Callimachus, metadata, the catalog of the library at Alexandria, and Gutenberg, more specifically Elizabeth Eisenstein's book, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. Five things changed with the introduction of the printing press: dissemination, distribution, collection, organization, and preservation of information. Those five things are what have changed now with the introduction of networked information highways.

NYSHEI's concern is with published scholarly material. 92 percent of all intellectual output is now produced and stored in digital form. And faculty is not just concerned with traditional scholarly content. They are concerned about their own personal and course space, websites, scanned collections and libraries, and digital learning. Students also have concerns with access to and preservation of their e-portfolios, multimedia projects, digital dissertations, etc.

Townsend refers to Clifford Lynch's description of an IR as a set of services. Townsend sees this as something "that the libraries and only libraries are capable of delivering to the academic community." Content in an IR should be managed, not just dumped. Townsend distinguishes between trusted repositories and just a digital repository. A flash drive can be a repository. A trusted repository results from research and is a way to put together digital content so that we can be assured

that it's going to be there when we need it. Libraries have always played a role in assuring that content is preserved.

Townsend sees scholarly publishing and scholarly communications as different, but connected. Scholarly communications refers to a much broader, more diverse group of data in addition to authored peer reviewed scholarly work. An IR can be a showcase for an institution's work and the site of digital preservation. Townsend disagrees with one of the morning keynotes, Dr. Blume, who commented that digital archive preservation is the promise of the publishers for journals. As a preservationist Townsend sees preservation as the primary role for libraries. NYSHEI's digital collaborative repository project is all about preservation. NYSHEI is trying to define an environment in which institutional repositories will actually be useful in making information accessible, but also contribute to the preservation picture. Townsend refers to "repository frontiers," the various and geographically separated and technologically non-standardized repository sites. A single, archival repository such as the OCLC digital archive, with an OAIS compliant environment, can allow for an archival storage site with assurance that the material will be there when we need it. NYSGEI is trying to bridge the gap between the dispersed, frontier sites, which are most concerned with current access, and a site such as OCLC's, for long-term storage. The organization is looking at ways to do selection of materials and assure access of materials by designing and implementing a layer of collaborative repositories. Libraries can play a role by supplying a collaborative management policy.

The next panelist was Kate Wittenberg. Wittenberg describes EPIC as an organization that is a collaboration of a scholarly publisher, a library, and an academic computing division of Columbia University. She sees the primary content of an institutional repository as grey literature or things that represent scholars' views and findings at a very early stage of development. This is the same research that is likely to later be published in distinguished, peer-reviewed journals. Grey literature is often material that's timely, that's in an early stage of development, and that requires a different form of peer review from traditional journals. That is, it needs to be vetted to be of a certain level of certain quality. But in order to collect it quickly enough and to refresh it quickly enough, to continue to represent the scholarly work at this early stage, it needs to be reviewed more quickly and perhaps in a different way. A model EPIC employs in its international affairs online project is to trust the source of the information -- organizations that produce literature from scholars, working papers, policy briefings, and the advice of a scholarly advisory board -- to state that the submitted information is quality information. Wittenberg argues that this is the only way to create a large aggregation of material at this very early stage of development.

A publisher's role is to add tools and functionality on top of the content. The tools are what make the resource become more useful and take on a whole new role in the scholarly community. Columbia International Affairs Online is an example of

grey literature in international affairs with value-added tools. Columbia charges for CIAO to recover its costs and users do not complain about the charge. Rather, they insist on more built-in tools. Maintaining such a resource, moreover, is not just about building a good engine, but it is also about employing skilled, human editors who understand the content.

Wittenberg says this model of institutional repositories suggests, and the kinds of materials that goes into them, suggests some new priorities for scholarly communication and for scholarly publishing. Users are looking for an array of materials – e.g., working papers, reference materials, journals, monographs – all to be found in one place. Libraries and publishers are becoming more like research centers that work with the scholarly community to create these new models and create innovative ways to address use of these materials in particular fields. Faculty, librarians, and publishers must be willing to experiment in these new areas and to create new models. Editorial talent is needed as well as people who understand copyright and permission issues. Web development and design talent is also needed to create a pleasing, easy to use vehicle for access. And skilled people are needed for outreach or marketing to assure that the public becomes aware of the product. Finally, a sustainability plan is required. Staff and infrastructure are needed and a library or publisher is needed to deploy the resources.

Wittenberg argues that the effective model for success sounds much like a publisher. A library might do this as well, but perhaps some kind of combination publisher/library model is where we are moving. It is a new model of these communities working together but something has to be there that allows people to continue to work on these things and to keep them going and refreshed and managed so that they do continue to be useful to their communities going forward.

The panelists finished their opening remarks. Teresa McManus opened the floor for questions, but before doing so, referred to a number of articles including Harnad, et al, “The Access/Impact Problem and the Green and Gold Roads to Open Access” (<http://users.ecs.soton.ac.uk/~harnad/Temp/impact.html>), “Weariness of the Flesh: Reflections on the Life of the Mind in an Age of Abundance” in *Educause* (<http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/erm0423.pdf>) and a May 16, 2005 *Wall Street Journal* article, “Worrisome Element in Medicine, Misleading Journal Articles.” McManus spoke at some length about the last article and the issues it raises of the need, and expense, of maintaining critical review processes in research publications. A discussion ensued about liability when a published article is challenged. Should publishers and authors share responsibility? Martin Blume, one of the morning keynote speakers, joined the discussion, and noted that by having a publisher, an author is afforded some protection. Open access argues against involving publishers in the dissemination of information.

One panelist responded that the information supply is getting polluted and that IR's are not necessarily the chief culprits in creating this condition. He reminds us that

it is a key to teach people about information literacy, to teach them how to evaluate information, how to assess information and how to use it ethically. Producers of information also need to learn the differences between reputable sources and irreparable ones.

Townsend remarked about concerns that IRs represent a sort of vanity publishing. If libraries take an active role in the design and particularly the management of repositories, this tendency would be avoided.

An audience member pressed the panelists for more information on shared access to repositories, since most users are not interested in searching one site for information but are more likely to be looking for discipline-based information that resides in different repositories. Kendrick commented that a technological solution in terms of metadata harvesting could make it possible to search across several institution repositories regardless of their location, regardless of their sort of political governance system. Townsend reiterated that the goal of NYSHEI is “not to build one big box to put everything in, but really to look at how we would build a network, an interconnected, interoperable network.” He pointed out, furthermore, that there are “some technical hurdles to that, but the main hurdles are not technical. The technology is already there, it’s very easy. The main hurdle is, as Kate [Wittenberg] and several others alluded to, are administrative and they come down to policy and issues.”