

Transcription of Opening Remarks by Lee Van Orsdel
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Over the last five weeks we've seen a fascinating explosion of news and opinion about scholarly communications and open access:

- Research councils in Denmark, the UK and the European Union have established open access mandates for their funded research, setting a six month embargo for the sciences and a twelve month for the social sciences and humanities;
- The Finch Report came out in Great Britain and was endorsed by the Government; Alma Swan issued a scathing indictment of the Report, challenging the fact that it all but overlooked green open access and less restrictive copyright agreements as valuable and affordable avenues to OA and hypothesizing that the push for gold OA all but handed publishers the opportunity to secure current revenues under a different guise;
- A chorus of editorials in major media—including the Guardian, the Financial Times, the Economist, the BBC and the New York Times—discussed the relative merits of green and gold OA, terms that librarians have been hesitant to use on our campuses because they smack of professional inspeak;
- In the US, a We the People Petition asking the White House to require open access to publicly supported research across all branches of the government resulted in a meeting and follow up correspondence when more than 28,000 taxpayers signed the petition in record time, calling on the White House to act;
- eLife, a new open access journal that is being funded by the three largest private foundations for health research in the world—the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, the MaxPlanck Society and the Wellcome Trust—began taking manuscripts for a December launch; eLife is designed to go head to head with the journal Nature.

These happenings provide great context for this meeting and a discussion of institutional repositories.

I remember the early days of institutional repositories. Only the largest research libraries seemed to have the means to develop a repository, and those of us in smaller institutions dreamed that their faculty would begin depositing manuscripts of their peer reviewed journal articles and, together, we would break the pricing power of the big publishers. I also remember the publication of Dorothea Salo's "Innkeeper at the Roach Motel" a few years later, with its brutal assessment of the failure of IRs to achieve transformative change and its challenge to "adapt or die." I remember despairing that the whole movement would be over before my library got on board. So of course I remember the moment, just a short while ago, when my colleagues and I realized that an institutional repository was in our reach because of a software called Digital Commons.

So we took the plunge into the IR business four years ago. We bought the software and added the management of the IR to an existing job description. Then we put the word out on the campus, quietly and very informally. A line formed almost immediately, even with no formal roll-out. In fact, we still have a line, and we've *never* done a formal roll-out. As contributions grew and the IR

flourished, we “found” a full time faculty line and a full time support staff line from among existing resources. Last year, our repository took Grand Valley’s name to about 140 countries and every US state. We now publish twelve journals, host conferences, create departmental and research center scholarly archives, build SelectedWorks pages for our faculty and are working with an author to publish and host his first online book.

But here’s the rub. I still don’t know for certain what the ultimate role of institutional repositories will be. I can see multiple possibilities: 1) as a publisher of journals and books; 2) as a repository of manuscripts in a networked, indexed non-journal system yet to be invented; 3) as a repository of learning objects, grey literature and other university outputs worth sharing with the world, or 4) as a holding tank for text and data—either to preserve it or to make it accessible for mining, or both.

As a dean, it doesn’t bother me that I don’t know. I have an intuitive confidence that this is important work for an academic library to do. The future of our institutional repositories will be largely determined by things we do not control, like the evolution of the current system of scholarly publishing. But I also believe it will be determined by us—librarians—and by our ability to read the needs of our universities and respond creatively, boldly, experimentally.

For me, our institutional repository has already achieved one important, unexpected outcome. It has helped me rethink the role of the academic library in higher education. Our IR is more than a program or service. It is the outward symbol of a profound shift in understanding about our mission. We used to support the scholarship of faculty and students by making resources available on the front end and preserving the outputs on the back end. Now we are building expertise and infrastructure within our libraries to support the entire lifecycle of scholarship in a way we believe to be sustainable.

So what do we do while we wait for the larger issues of scholarly publishing to resolve themselves into a clearer roadmap? We do what we are doing here today:

- build capacity (hardware, software, expertise)
- seek partnerships with thought-leaders and innovators among our own faculty
- get into every campus conversation about scholarship we can
- articulate and promote a broader role for the library (using the IR as Exhibit A) with the university administration

In closing, two concerns that are on my mind and that might provoke discussion today:

- 1) Does the institutional repository lose its intrinsic worth if green OA—self-archiving—never becomes its main purpose?
- 2) Regarding IRs, I fear that we will get lost in the how’s and fail to pay ongoing, critical attention to the why’s

Again, welcome to Grand Valley State University. It’s our great pleasure to share this day with each of you.