Naming, branding and promoting the institutional repository: a social marketing approach from the Canadian perspective

Proposal for Open Repositories 2009
Submitted by Wayne Johnston, Digital Initiatives Librarian, University of Guelph
5 February 2009

Abstract

This presentation will discuss strategies for the promotion of institutional repositories within the context of social marketing, focusing in particular on how the institutional repository is named and branded. It will present findings from successful repositories around the world but will draw particular attention to the experience of member institutions of the Canadian Association of Research Libraries. The University of Guelph Library will serve as a case study for more detailed analysis.

Introduction

One of the most significant challenges facing institutional repositories (IRs) is the need to attract and retain campus participants. A great deal of attention is dedicated to the development of promotional strategies by bodies such as the ARL Scholarly Communications Institute. The role of effective naming and branding of the IR is often overlooked. What roles do naming and branding play in the broader promotional challenge? How can we develop the most effective names and branding for our IRs? What can we learn from social marketing theory and practice?

Methodology

In September 2008 the Canadian Association of Research Libraries held an all-day meeting of representatives from about twenty Canadian universities that have developed IRs. This was an excellent forum for exchanging ideas and concerns and developing a broader perspective on what is happening with IRs in Canada. Information from this meeting will be supplemented by a questionnaire that will be sent to managers of IRs throughout Canada as well as exemplary sites from other countries. This questionnaire will be designed to collect more detailed information about the interrelationships between naming, branding and promoting the IR.

At the University of Guelph we are blessed with a diverse team of talented professionals who are dedicated to ensuring the success of our IR. We have a communications officer who is relatively new to the library environment but has a wealth of promotional experience from the commercial sector. We have a graphic designer who has been a tremendous asset in our efforts to engage faculty and staff in our programmes. We have a development team in the library who are in the process of getting the results we need out of our IR systems. And we have a Scholarly Communications team to guide the work within the context of our broader strategic objectives. Together we have been through an IR naming process and one branding exercise and we are now in the midst of a more ambitious re-branding as well as an aggressive outreach campaign. The presentation will present a detailed analysis of our challenges and successes.

Social marketing

The discipline of social marketing has been around for forty years but has little impact in the context of academic libraries in general or IRs in particular. Heleen Gierveld (2006) wrote an excellent introduction to how the promotion of IRs can benefit from a better understanding of social marketing. This presentation will expand on her introduction to elaborate on what social marketing can tell us about successfully naming, branding and promoting our IRs.

Naming

We will review the experiences of IRs that have been through a naming process. What were the goals of the naming process? What process was used to arrive at a name? What were the strengths and weaknesses of this process? How have the users responded to the new name? To what extent were the goals achieved?

Branding

We will review the experiences of IRs that have done substantial branding of their site. What were the goals of the re-branding? How easily could the IR system be modified to obtain the desired results? How was the re-branded interface received by the users? To what extent were the goals achieved?

Promotional strategies

We will review the experiences of IRs that have engaged in significant promotional campaigns. What promotional strategies were employed? Which strategies proved to most successful and which proved to be least successful? To what extent has the IR achieved the level of profile deemed necessary for success?

Interrelationships

Finally we will review the interrelationships between naming, branding and promotion of the IR. How do naming and branding contribute to the overall promotional goals? What user studies have been conducted to evaluate the success of naming and branding exercises? What quantitative data is available to assess the merits of various promotional strategies?

Conclusion/recommendations

The presentation will conclude with recommendations based on real experience in the field and informed by the discipline of social marketing. These recommendations will cover strategies for naming the IR, branding the IR, and exploiting the name and brand in a comprehensive promotional campaign.