

JScholarship: The Conclusion of an Institutional Repository Mentorship

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Background

Many academic libraries have a Scholarly Communication Librarian who has a host of duties; usually that includes managing the institutional repository. Here at Sheridan Libraries, that isn't the case. Robin is the Scholarly Communications Specialist and has a different role than most Scholarly Communication Librarians, yet she still works with these librarians at conferences, within consortia, and in other venues.

To improve her work with these colleagues and ability to move forward in this career path, Robin asked David to mentor her in IR management. He agreed.

We had two goals for this mentorship:

1. Robin will have a good grasp of what managing an IR entails
2. We will have a good description of the current purpose for the IR and a promotional strategy tied to that

There was an unforeseen immediate benefit to Robin's work because in October 2016 the Committee on Open Access was created to discuss the possibility of a faculty open access policy here at JHU. Robin's membership on that committee has enabled information to flow back and forth quickly and easily.

A Brief History of JScholarship

The Sheridan Libraries began planning for our current institutional repository--JScholarship--in the summer of 2007. The decision to build an IR was motivated by a number of factors, but the most immediate concern was to establish a platform for preserving and distributing electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs). After working with the Hopkins Graduate Board on the ETD question for several years, the Board voted in spring 2007 to require ETDs as soon as the library was prepared to take them. In addition to needing a space to host ETDs, the library did not have a platform for planned digital collections. The existing digital collections such as the Levy Sheet Music Collection and the Roman de la Rose Digital Library were both stand-alone websites. Library management and IT services wanted a robust platform that could accommodate multiple digital collections.

The IR Technical Group evaluated several IR platforms during the early fall in 2007 and decided to use DSpace. Elliot Metsger led the development of the main platform while Sean Hannan designed and built the user interface. Meanwhile, the IR Content Group developed a plan for types of collections to be included, as well as promotion and evaluation. We populated a development instance of DSpace, trained liaisons on its use and promotion, and performed a soft launch on February 1, 2008.

After evaluating performance following the public rollout in February 2008, David Reynolds coordinated a campaign to advertise the service with the Academic Liaisons on Homewood Campus and the informationists at East Baltimore. Several departments embraced JScholarship as a venue for working papers and technical reports. In addition, individual faculty members in some departments opted to deposit copies of their refereed journal articles in the IR.

After about two years of operating on the DSpace platform, the IT professionals who support DSpace opted to investigate moving to Fedora. They eventually settled on Fedora as the preferred platform and began the plan to migrate content. David Reynolds worked with stakeholders in 2016 and came up with a prioritized list of collections to migrate. As of July 2017 work is progressing on a development instance of Fedora and we are awaiting content migration.

Challenges for JScholarship

Since the launch of JScholarship in 2008, we have had a difficult time selling its virtues to the faculty. We promoted the service through campus advertising, emails from the Academic Liaisons to their departments, and many one-on-one and small group demonstrations. While we have had success with a few communities, by and large we have not had success in recruiting faculty submissions. The selling points of wider distribution and long-term preservation have not resonated with many faculty members. Some of the reasons that faculty have given include:

- Submission takes too long; faculty members are busy and can't be bothered to submit.
- There are no tangible perks for submitting to the IR; we are not offering anything of value.
- Their fellow researchers can already find their research in peer-reviewed journals.
- They do not see preservation as an issue. The publisher's version is seen as sufficient preservation.

In addition to resistance from individual faculty members, we have encountered uneven support for the service from departmental administrators. For example, the Carey Business School was an early adopter of the IR for working papers. When there was a change in leadership, however, the support for IR submission diminished. The same thing happened with the Africana Studies Program and the Department of Computer Science. Both programs had chairs that advocated submission to the IR, but that support was not continued by their successors.

Another shortcoming of the current instance of JScholarship is the inability to stream audio or video files. The SAIS Oral History Collection owner identified this as a significant problem when they began submitting items to their collection and stopped submitting soon thereafter. In addition, a couple of researchers told us in interviews that a streaming video option would be useful for supplementary files.

IRs at Other Institutions

Some reading in the recent literature and relevant blogs has confirmed our experience. Most IRs at research universities aren't seeing high levels of submission or enthusiasm without some

sort of mandate. ETD mandates are the only guarantee of compliance, since students aren't given their degrees without submitting their dissertation or thesis to the IR. Faculty OA policies rarely include a way to enforce compliance, so compliance rates with institutional mandates are low, generally no higher than 35% (Vincent-Lamarre, Boivin, Gargouri, Larivière, & Harnad, 2016; Zhang, Boock, & Wirth, 2015).

Several groups make the point that submission to an IR is, in most cases, extra work that faculty, staff, and students are neither rewarded for performing nor punished for ignoring. To address that deficit, libraries need to provide staff-intensive outreach, ingest, and deposit services (Zhang et al., 2015). IRs cannot be unfunded nor understaffed efforts if they are to be successful.

This lack of uptake among faculty, along with the recent growth of funder and disciplinary repositories makes some in the library community posit that IRs aren't useful any longer. In a 2016 [blog post](#) Eric Van de Velde concludes "With the IR at a dead end, Green OA must pivot towards alternatives that have viable paths forward: personal repositories, disciplinary repositories, social networks, and innovative combinations of all three." In the post he blames the failure of IRs on lack of enthusiasm among faculty, poor local management, low use and high cost, poor UX design, and several other things. Clifford Lynch, interviewed by Richard Poynder (2016), thinks IRs need to change their mission away from being a green OA solution, to more of a service provider for researchers. Heather Joseph echoed these sentiments about a need to change the mission of the IR in an October, 2016, interview with *Information Today* (Shumaker, 2016). She'd like to see IR technology overhauled to better provide web native services and for institutions to consider sharing repositories, rather than building lots of individual repositories.

JScholarship's Role

In planning for the rollout of JScholarship in 2007, the IR Steering Committee decided to use the repository both to disseminate JHU faculty research, but also to showcase library-digitized scholarly digital objects. The idea was that users would be looking for materials on a specific subject and it should not matter which type of resources were found--both types being legitimate for research purposes. While we have not done any systematic study of the success of this model, we have received anecdotal feedback that it is not always successful. Several users have reported directly or through the Academic Liaisons that they find the mix to be "a jumble" of different types materials. Researchers looking specifically for peer-reviewed papers (as one finds in many purchased databases) are surprised to find sheet music, student newspapers, and archival photographs.

Ten years later the landscape has changed. Most researchers use Google Scholar or a library database to search for and locate useful articles; very few go to an IR and search it. Thus, many IR managers focus on search engine optimization to make their content discoverable (Serman, 2014). We hope that a new look for JScholarship and this ability to search it from a distance will overcome this aversion to the "jumble" of materials therein.

The New JScholarship

The new platform is going live soon, but all the functionality is not yet available. We will eventually have better statistics that we hope to be able to provide to authors.

The ETD collection will continue to be an actively growing collection. The Committee on Open Access supports a requirement for faculty journal articles to be made openly available. The discussion about an open access policy has now moved to JHU administration. We're hopeful that faculty will be required to submit their author final manuscripts to JScholarship. We will obtain more submissions if

- The submission system is simple
- JScholarship can share files and information with other repositories
- Metrics are easily available to authors and administrators
- Links between related documents are easy to follow
- The IR can integrate with other JHU tools

Marketing the new JScholarship should focus on it as a library service, rather than a storage area. Most of the recent gains in IR use focus on the IR-as-useful-service (Armstrong, 2014; Shumaker, 2016; Zhang et al., 2015).

We should think about a short-term marketing strategy (pre-OA policy) that might help get researchers more used to the IR before the policy hits. Possible areas of interest would be to focus our efforts on new features in our Fedora-based repository, try to recruit content from disciplines that do not have subject-based repositories, and actively pursue deposit agreements with undergraduate programs that produce a capstone work.

What Does Success Look Like?

JScholarship will be part of set of services to be offered to JHU researchers. AD Sayeed Choudhury sees the new JScholarship, based on Fedora, as the archiving and storage piece. Tools including the Open Science Framework, the International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF), and others will be more user-facing and able to move files and metadata between them.

With so much up in the air, it's hard to decide how to assess JScholarship. Metrics will be important: how many files, how many faculty deposits, how many downloads, etc. The literature tells us that there are several qualitative 'success factors' we should also pay attention to. To be successful institutional repositories should:

- be community-driven and community-focused (Fried Foster & Gibbons, 2005)
- facilitate scholarly communication and archiving (Kim, 2011)
- be technically easy to use and regularly used (Kim, 2011; Lagzian, Abrizah, & Wee, 2015; Zuccala, Oppenheim, & Dhiensa, 2008)
- have institutional support and dedicated staff (Lagzian et al., 2015)

- enable new forms of communication between scholars (Markey, Rieh, St. Jean, Yakel, & Yao, 2009)
- offer a variety of content (Markey et al., 2009)

Conclusion

As a result of our literature search, examination of other institutional repositories, and discussions with colleagues, we have a few things to suggest for future actions. These are divided into new services to offer and new marketing strategies.

Some potential new services are:

- Enabling scholars to create a personal research page within the IR. This could take the form of a page with links to all their research, a CV, download statistics, contact information, etc.
- Create a “generic” collection for scholars without a departmental presence in the IR. We have had numerous requests to provide such a service, but it was not allowed under our original vision of the IR.
- Actively solicit undergraduate research. Look for programs like the Provost’s Undergraduate Research Awards and the Woodrow Wilson Scholars program and try to get JScholarship to be the official home of their projects. We can offer to do the upload for these collections.
- The ability to embed the search box for a particular collection into other web pages, allowing easy search from other spaces.

New marketing strategies include:

- Have a soft rollout of the new IR and then market heavily after we have a critical mass of materials and a good sense of any differences in the new platform. Stress new services that we offer such as download statistics.
- Hold a series of one-hour introductory demonstration sessions for interested researchers. This has worked well for the ETD program, so we could model the IR class on that.
- Determine which disciplines do not have an established disciplinary repository and actively promote the IR and its services to them.

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