University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Library Conference Presentations and Speeches

Libraries at University of Nebraska-Lincoln

10-30-2023

A Short History of the UNL Digital Commons

Paul Royster

A Short History of the UNL Digital Commons

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October 30, 2023

Fall 2004

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Dean of Libraries
Joan Giesecke signs contract with **ProQuest**

to acquire institutional repository package
(**DigitalCommons**)
developed by **Berkeley Electronic Press**

Digital Commons

- 3rd-party leased software package & platform
- "Out-of-the-box" functionality
- No load on Libraries IT staff or servers
- Hosted & maintained in California
- Price based on FTE (originally $1.50 per)
- No limits on contents or storage space
- Fully supported, upgraded, & defended

(Joan's instructions to me: "Fill it up.")

April 2005

Paul Royster hired as Coordinator of Scholarly Communications, filling vacant slot created by retirement of CSC Agnes Adams.

Background: 25+ years in scholarly publishing:
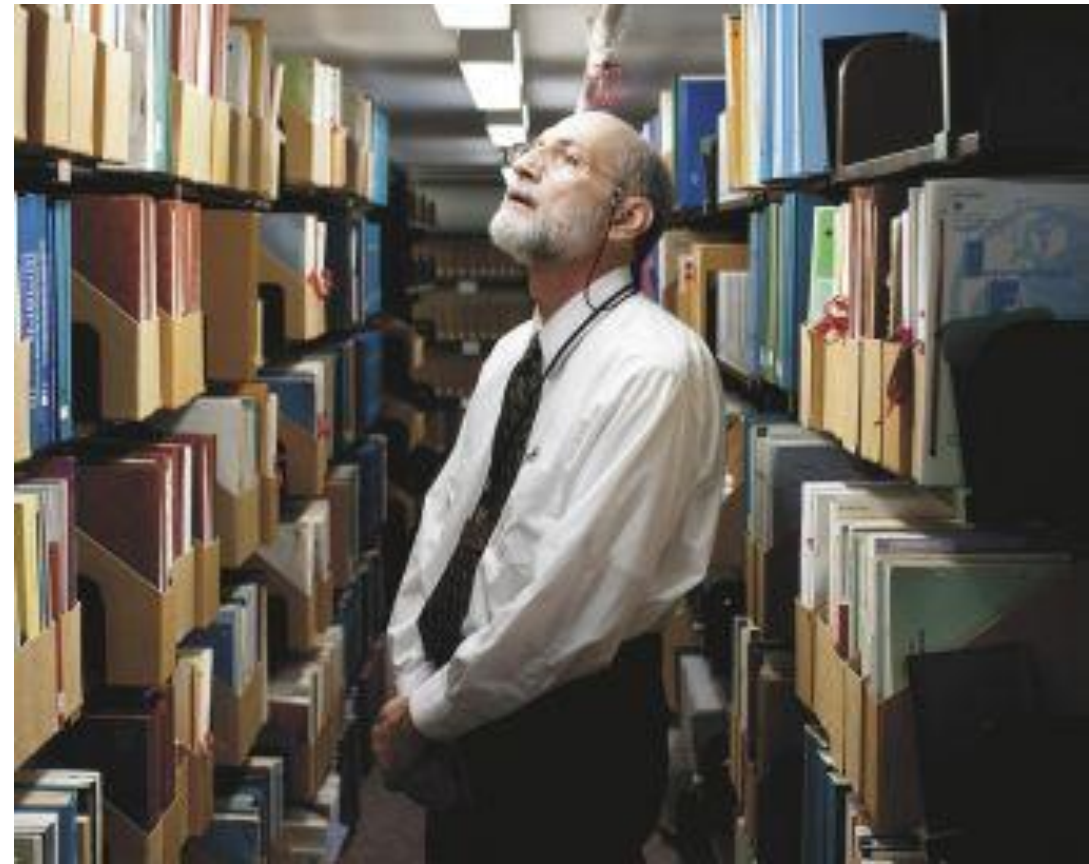
PhD, Columbia University 1984

CFO & Director of Production, Library of America, NYC, 1980-1993

Project Editor, Barron's Educational Series, Hauppauge, NY, 1994

Design & Production Manager, Yale University Press, 1994-2002;

Director, University of Nebraska Press 2002-2004;

Professor of English, UNL, 2004-2005.

Assembling a team

- 2008: Sue Gardner, Scholarly Communications Librarian
  MLS, Catalog & map librarian

- 2014: Linnea Fredrickson, Production Specialist, MLS
  Scholarly publishing, expert copy-editor

Blossom: She's the leader
Bubbles: She is the joy and the laughter
Buttercup: She's the toughest fighter
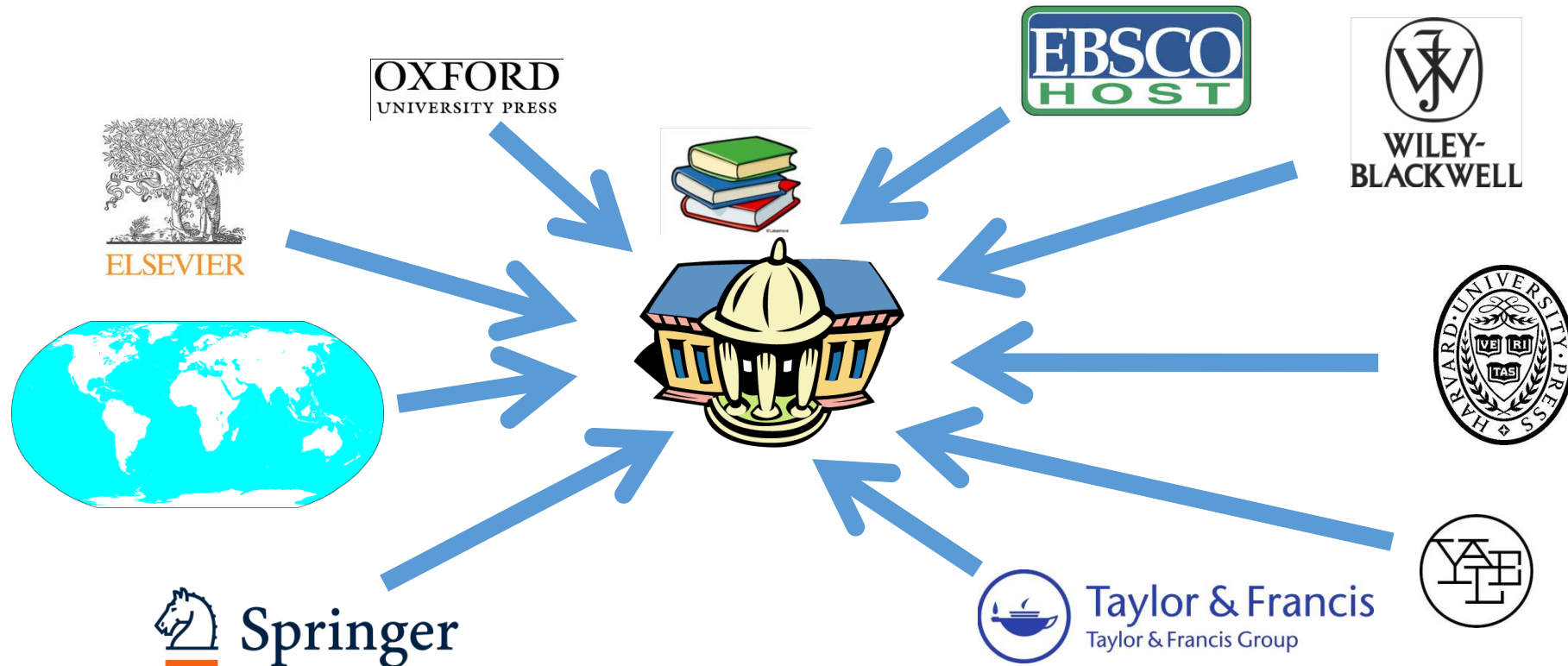
IR in the Library: How Does It Fit ?

Start-up mentality, energy, flexibility, innovation, adaptation = CHANGE

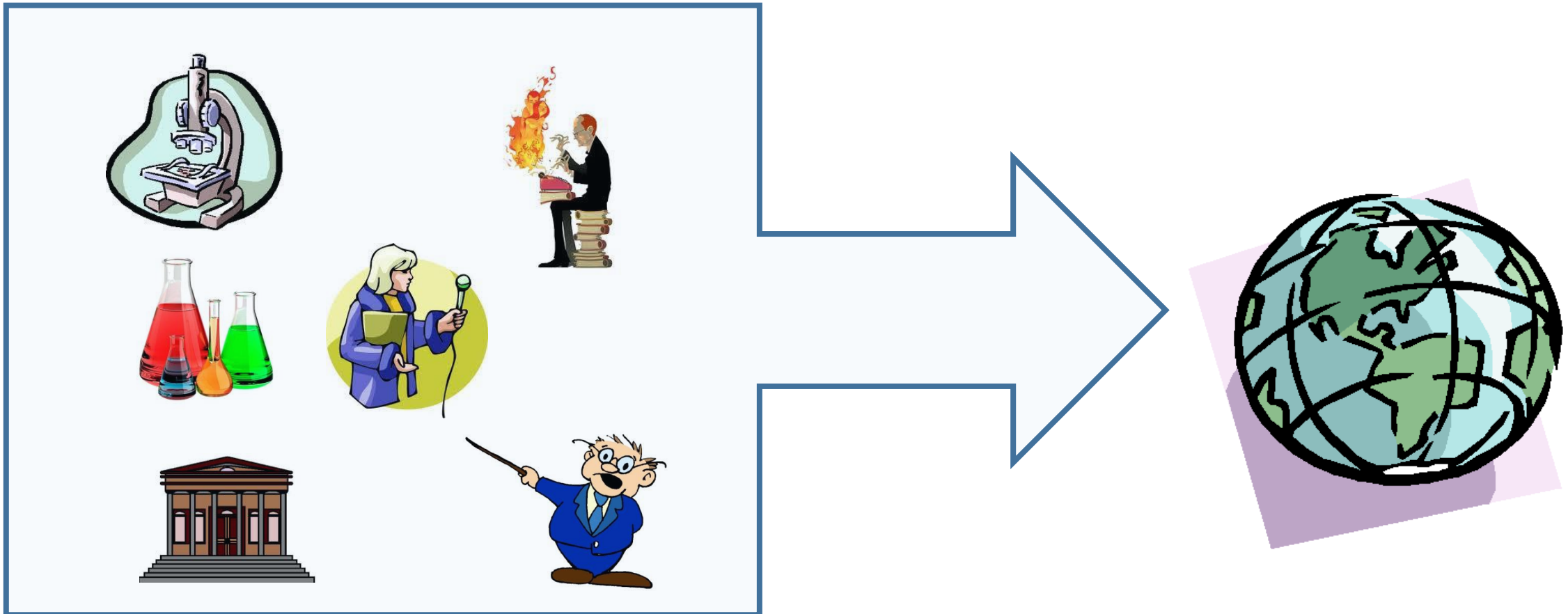Institutionalized environment
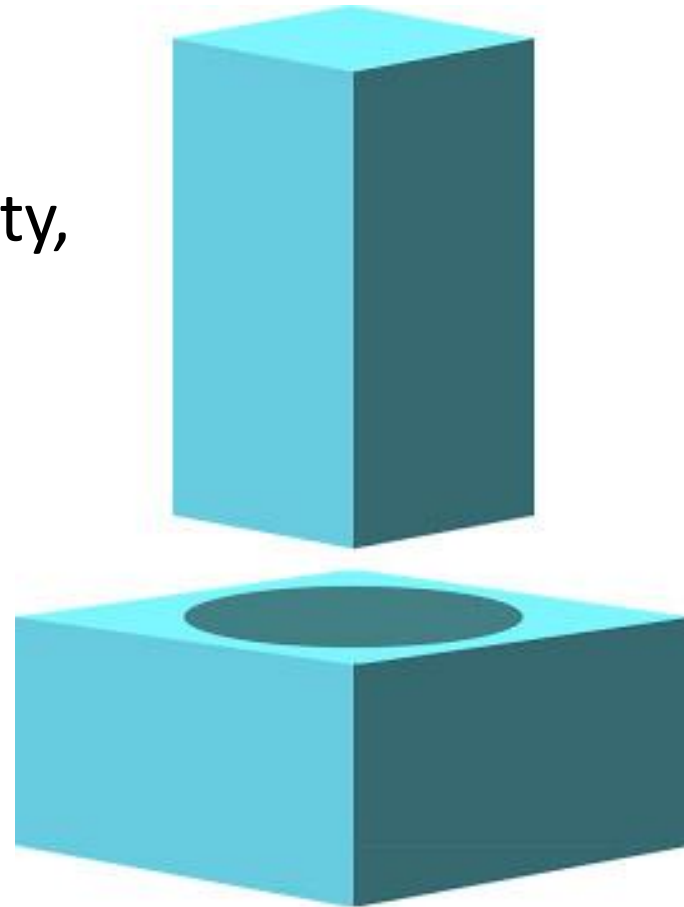
Traditional library mission

- Acquire resources from world marketplace
- Deliver to local community

Mission of the Institutional Repository (IR)

- Acquire locally developed resources
- Deliver to worldwide community

Fall 2005 Campus Outreach

- Visit department chairs & library liaisons

- Make presentations at faculty meetings

- *Explain how desirable; demonstrate how easy.*

# Self-Archiving: The Ideal View
(fishing metaphor)

(late) Fall 2005

- By Christmas it was clear to me that I needed another approach.

- Less than 5% of the faculty I presented to expressed any interest in participating or pursuing further.

A different approach: How we do it ...

1. Provide services

2. Make it easy

3. Immediate feedback

4. Maximize content

5. The IR belongs to the depositors
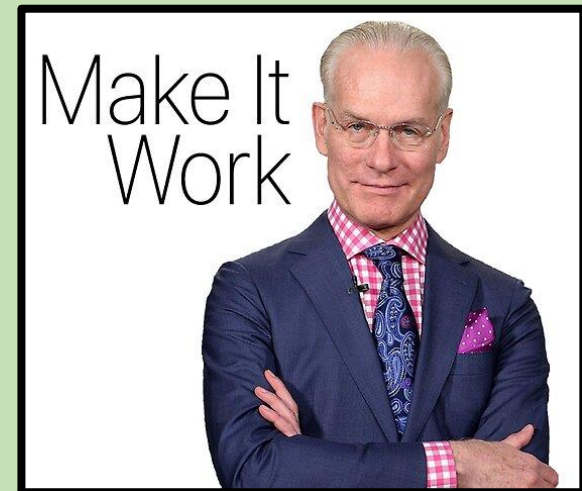
Institutional repository: It's not a collection.

This is a collection →

It's a service.

1. Services provided:

- permissions & copyright clearance
- hunting & gathering
- scanning
- typesetting
- metadata-ing
- uploading & posting
- usage reporting
- promoting
- POD publishing

"Beyond Mediated Deposit"

2. Participation made easy

"Send us your vita, and let us do the rest."

3. Give feedback

Monthly email →

My September 2023
downloads

4. Maximize Content Upload

How do we make 100% of scholarship freely accessible online?

By posting documents! This is ultimately how the struggle to free scholarly communications is won.
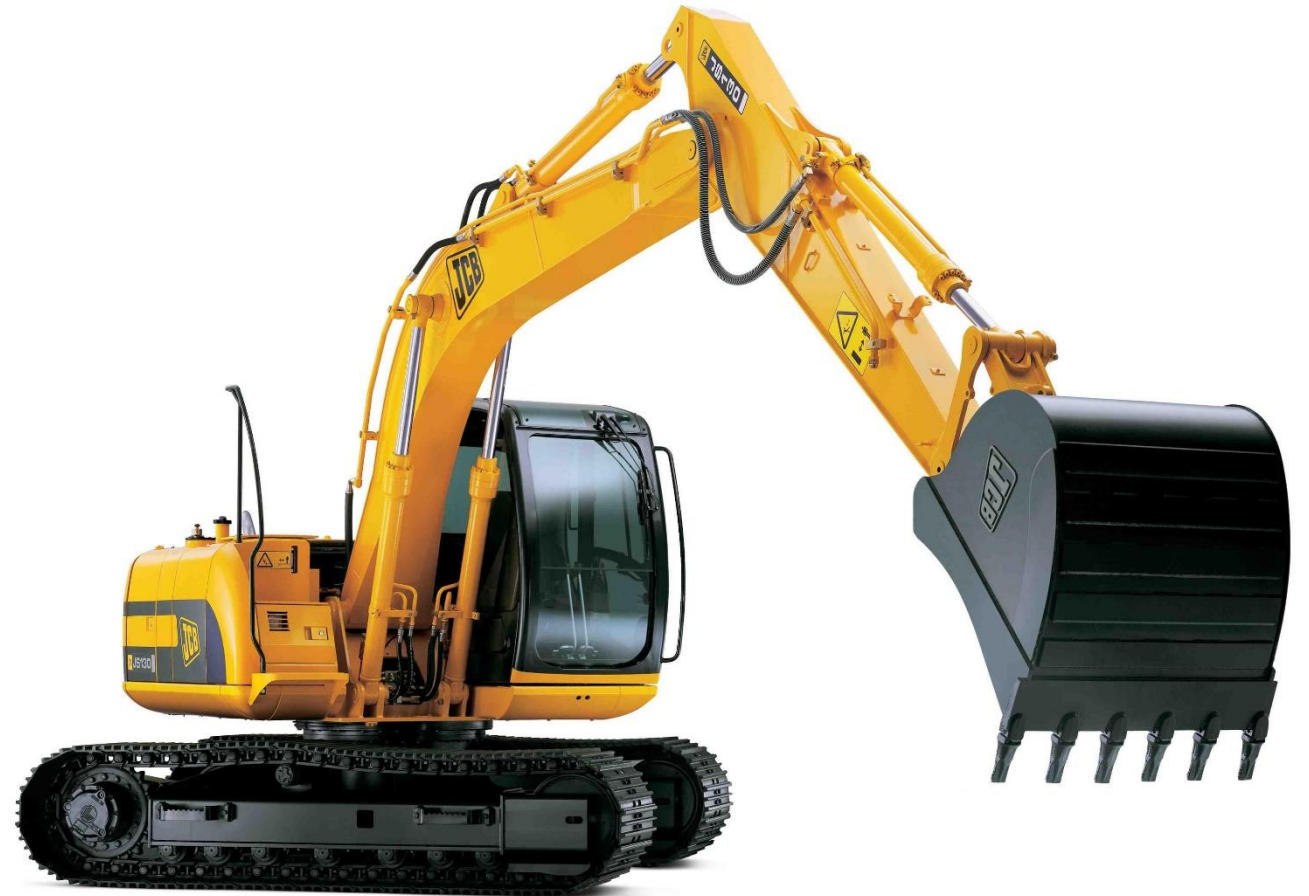
<u>Our mission</u>: Shovel as much free content as possible onto the Internet.

Maximizing content upload (2)

Good !

Better !!

Don't build a wall to keep content out !

5. The IR belongs to the depositors

- Not to the library or the university or the public.

- Policies and rules derive from this principle.

- The IR is not a gatekeeper, arbiter, enforcer, approver, censor, regulator, or judge.

- Its function: disseminate UNL authors' content, as widely as possible.

- We do not use the IR to track faculty grants or productivity.

The trust of the depositors is the IR's most valuable and irreplaceable asset.

From the outset, we have viewed the IR as a **publishing** program

- Enhance distribution of published UNL authors' works

- Enable publication of otherwise unpublished works

- Provide feedback to authors on distribution of their works

- Broadcast UNL-branded content to a global audience, including the most remote places on earth (and potentially beyond)
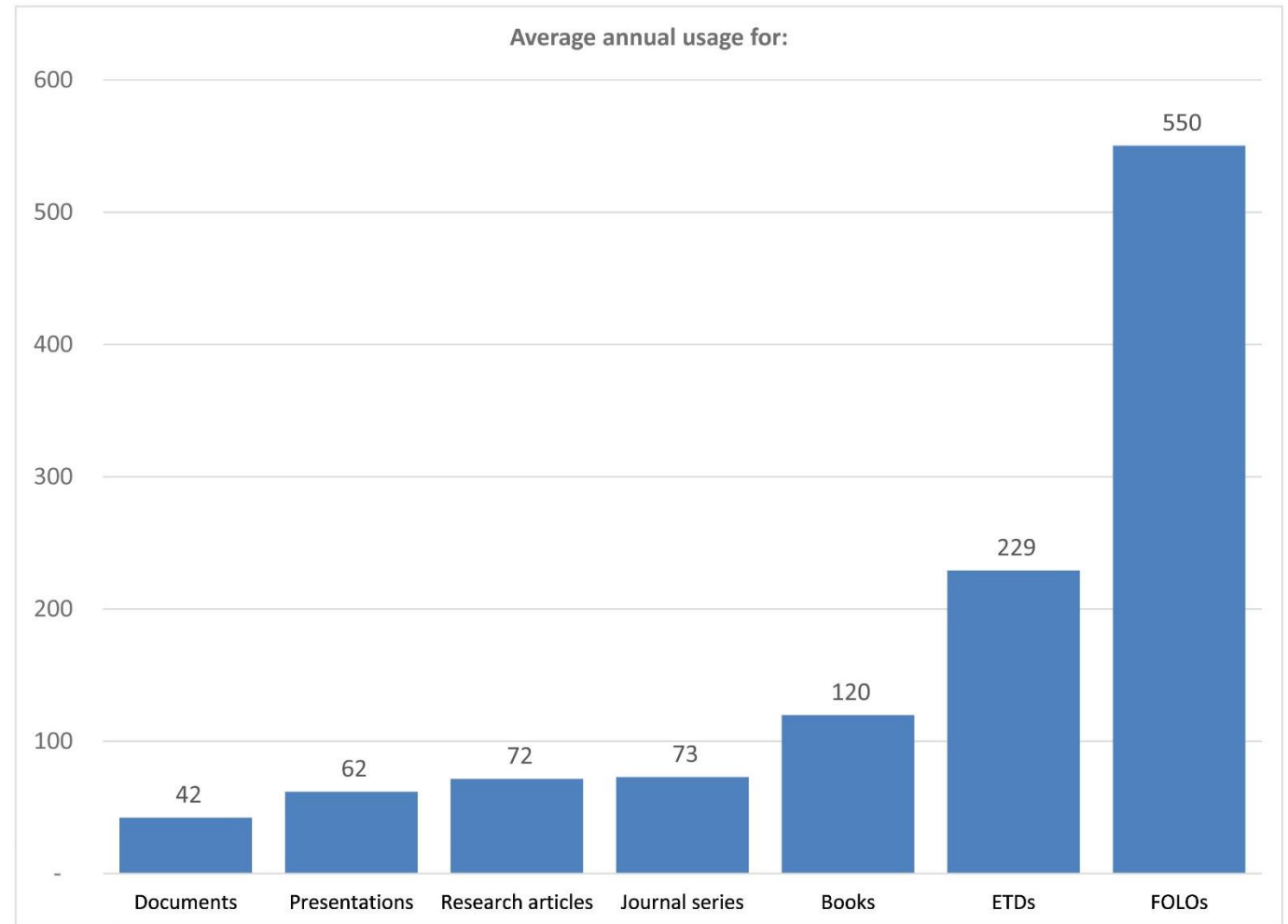
- Support and enable open access

Host & distribute OER documents

Highest performing segment:
Free Online Learning Objects (FOLOs)

➢ Lessons

➢ Texts & teaching editions

➢ Textbook chapters

➢ Notebooks

https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/oer/

Average annual usage for:

|						
Documents	Presentations	Research articles	Journal series	Books	ETDs	FOLOs
42	62	72	73	120	229	550

Annual downloads by document type

Who is doing IRs? Who is investing in them?

- University of California system
- University of Michigan
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Harvard University
- University of Illinois
- Cornell University (especially support of arxiv.org)
- Elsevier
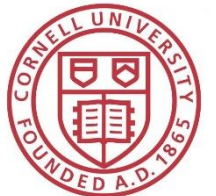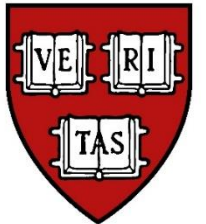
About our IR

- 305 communities
- 1,082 series
- 129,000 items
- 113,000+ are free full-text public
- 91 million downloads (to date)
- 7 million downloads annually
- 3rd largest in USA
- 1st in traffic

The university's most-visited site:
16% of all unl.edu web traffic !

UNL Publications 2017 – 2022 (18,416)

Open Access publications

All authors of publications are considered (not only corresponding).

- Closed — 39%
- Green/Bronze — 27.8%
- Pure Gold — 21.1%
- Hybrid — 12.1%
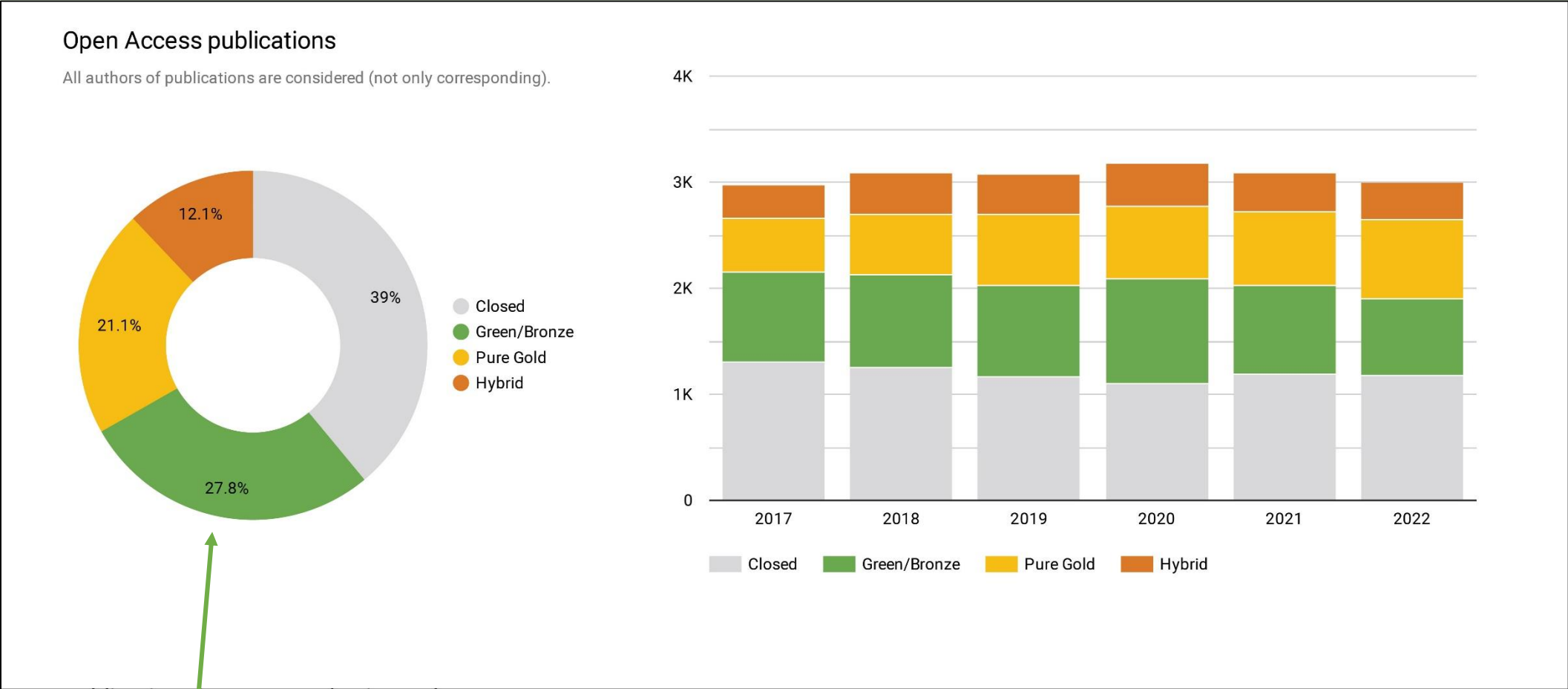
UNL Green OA = 27.8%

Worldwide portion of Green OA = 19.1%
https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0272730.t001

Distribution of contents, by date (*N* = 129,414)

Period	Items	Years	Items/Year
Pre 1800	81	300	0.27
1800-1850	35	50	1
1850-1899	261	50	5
1900-1925	1,498	25	60
1926-1950	2,693	23	117
1950-1959	2,517	10	252
1960-1969	4,111	10	411
1970-1979	6,716	10	672
1980-1989	9,453	10	945
1990-1999	15,950	10	1,595
2000-2009	31,456	10	3,146
2010-2019	39,941	10	3,994
2020-2023	14,702	4	3,676

Destination of downloads from UNL Digital Commons

Oceania 2%
South America 2%
Africa 11%
Europe 15%
North America 44%
Asia 26%
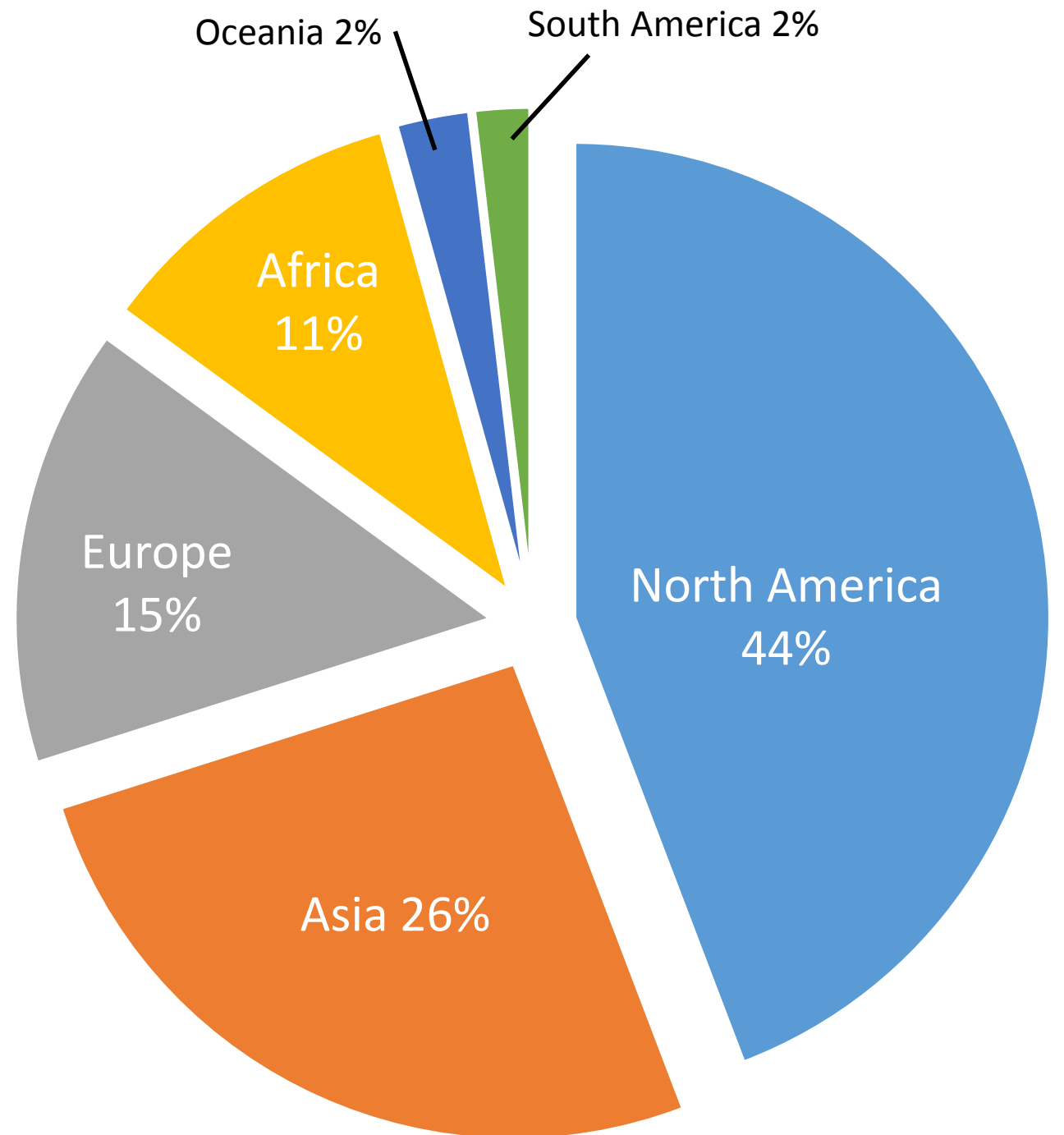
Growth of Digital Commons contents (cumulative)
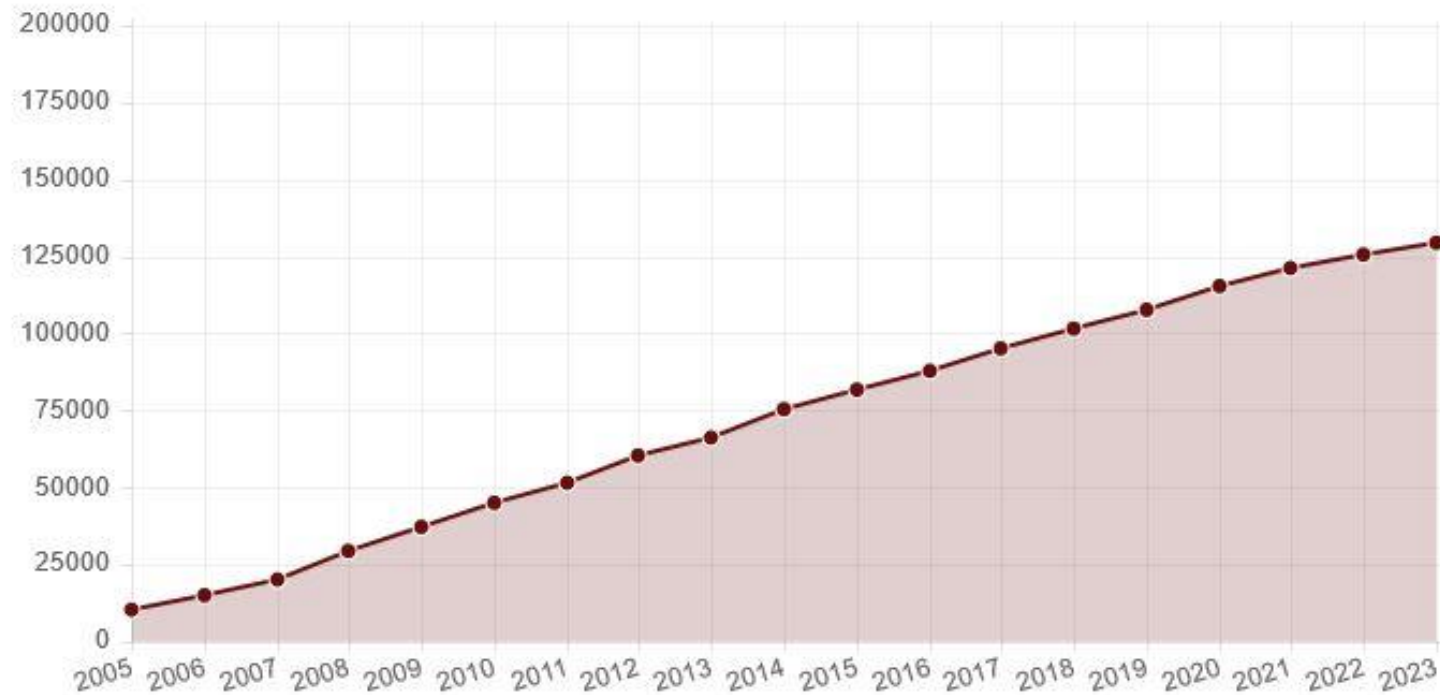
Pretty consistent straight-line growth

Traffic 2005-2023 (monthly downloads)

Library Philosophy & Practice

- https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/

- 7,382 papers, 9.5 million downloads (1.5 million last year)

- Founded by Dr. Mary Bolin & Prof. Gail Z. Eckwright at University of Idaho. Moved to UNL Digital Commons ca. 2010.

- Still active.

- International authors and readers.

Nebraska Tractor Test Reports

- https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/tractormuseumlit/
- Initiated Fall 2006 by Jeremy Steele, coordinator for the Lester A. Larson Tractor Museum
- 3,322 papers, 1919-present
- 4.7 million downloads (200,000 last year)
- A room-full of file cabinets, scanned & uploaded by museum volunteers.
- Museum had a resident cat.

Internet Center for Wildlife Damage Management

- Steve Vantassel 2005-2011 (approx.) Introduced by Beth McNeill (then UNL Assoc. Dean, now Dean @ Purdue). Steve is now a game warden in Montana.
- 28 series; 3,823 works; 4.4 million downloads
- https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/icwdm/

Electronic Texts in American Studies

- https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas/
- 125 texts, 2 million downloads

- Jonathan Edwards, [Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. A Sermon Preached at Enfield, July 8th, 1741.](https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas/) (925,000)

- **Famous white guys:** Thomas Hariot, John Smith, John Cotton, John Eliot, Cotton Mather, Joshua Scottow, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, John Filson, Daniel Webster, Horace Greeley, Herman Melville

- **Others:** Aphra Behn, Jupiter Hammon, Lemuel Haynes, Peter Williams Jr., David Cusick, David Walker, William Apess, Henry Highland Garnet, Frederick Douglass, Victoria Woodhull, Ida C. Craddock, Countee Cullen

Zea Books
2011-present

- 156 monograph titles
- Simultaneous online (PDF) and print-on-demand editions
- "Zea" = genus of corn (maize) *Zea mays*
- https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/zeabook/

Paul Johnsgard (1931-2021)

- 185 papers

- 28 Zea Books

- Ornithologist, naturalist, author of more than 100 books, artist, photographer, conservation activist
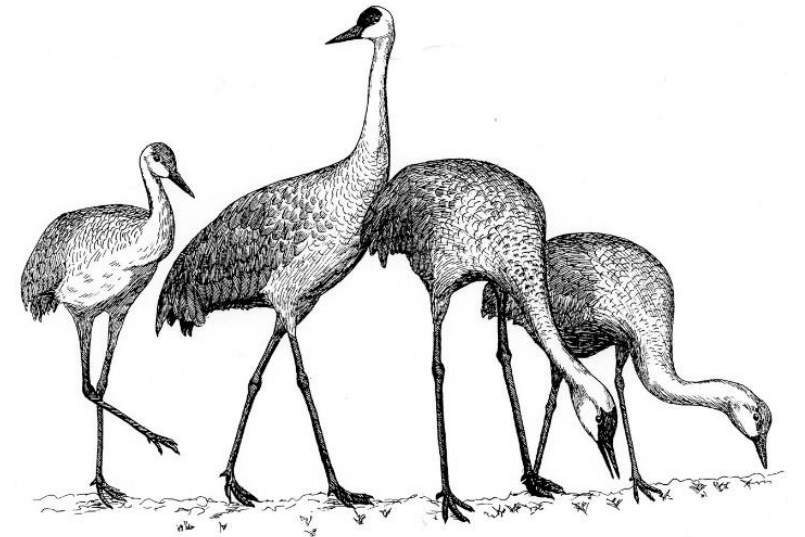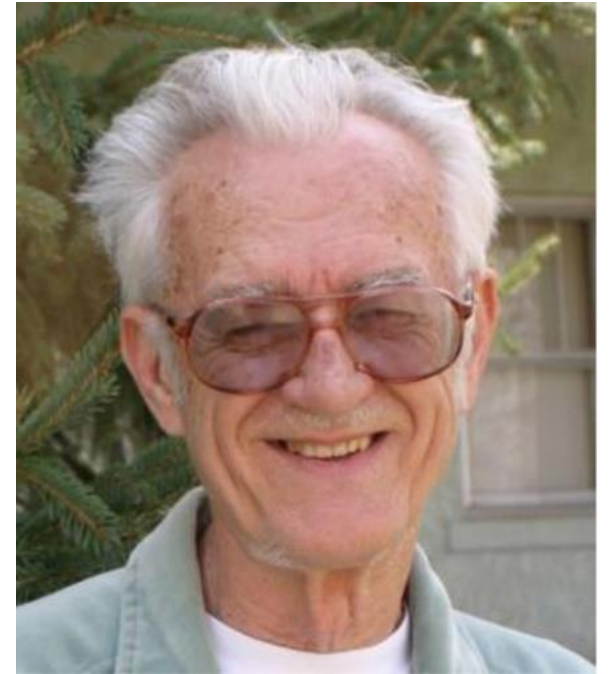
Robert Katz (1917-2011)

- 194 papers, 1.7 million downloads
- Still avg >325/year
- Particle track physics; X-rays, radiation
- B.A. Brooklyn College, M.A. Columbia, Ph.D. Illinois; also U.S. Army scientist. Came to UNL 1966 from Kansas State.
- "These numbers are astronomical!"
- His son reported there were print-outs of his downloads on his desk when he passed away.
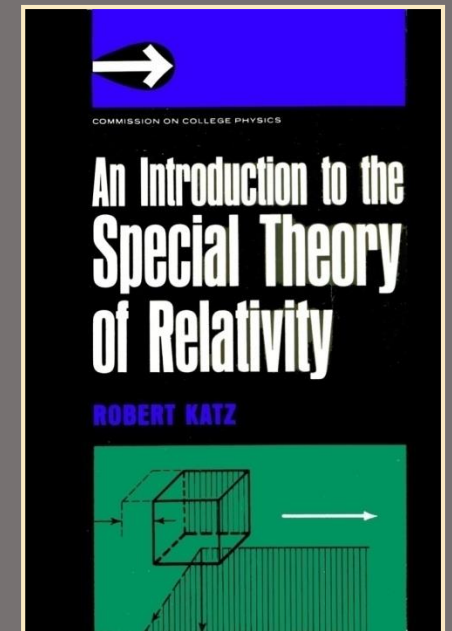
Anthony Starace (1945-2019)

- Professor of Physics & Astronomy
- https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/physicsstarace/
- 252 papers: high-energy lasers & atomic structures
- My intro into the Physics Department, which now includes 3,985 works, with 3.4 million downloads
- He always emailed me the day each new article was published!

Student workers

- We are privileged to work on a college campus with access to a pool of bright and talented but necessarily transient labor. The first student workers were **Jessi Chandler** and **Nathan Raabe**; they were followed by (in alphabetical order) Abbey Strahm, Addy Roth, Ashleigh Auman, Ashlyn Hans, Audrey Denning, Bailea Kerr, Candy Hermosillo, David Clawson, Edgar Reynaga, Eva Gautam, Gabriel Ajang, Gaby Kline, Gina Lucero, Haley Hack, Jackie Spencer, Jade Zuehlke, James Chu, Kasey Ma, Kendra Gallup, Krystine Phelps, Marie Shaw, Mary Elizabeth Barmettler, Nhung Phan, Nicole Bogus, Phillip Sanks, Roz Thalken, Ryan Smith, Sam Lee, Sara Huwaldt, Taylor Stumpf, Teal Gardner, Telesa Madole, Toan Nguyen, & Viangri Santay.

- Their commitment and enthusiasm has made the work more successful and enjoyable along the way.

- I am indebted to Maggie Van Diest for finding them all and steering them to us.

2017: bepress/Digital Commons purchased by Elsevier

- Reported price $150 million

- In reaction, "Beprexit" campaign urged users to leave Digital Commons in favor of an open-source, community-governed platform yet to be invented.

- Our program has come under fire from parties that dislike this company, including SPARC, Library Publishing Coalition, et al.

- Meanwhile, Elsevier has invested in product enhancements (e.g. streaming), retained the core staff, and not escalated price.

What is our relation to Elsevier ?

We are driving on their road, but the passengers and the cargo are not theirs. We are getting somewhere—wherever Google takes us.
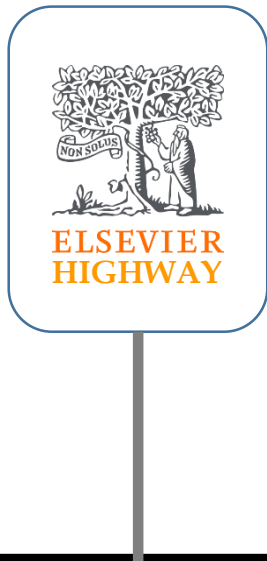
V. I. Lenin is reputed to have said,

"The capitalists will sell us the rope with which to hang them."

I'm against hanging, but using Elsevier's platform to release a free version of a paywalled Elsevier article feels just slightly revolutionary.

ПРИЗРАК БРОДИТ ПО ЕВРОПЕ, ПРИЗРАК КОММУНИЗМА

Неизвестный художник. Москва

L'auteur inconnu. Moskou

I would like to overwhelm the commercial publishers with free content, until there isn't any money to be made in academic publishing, and they sell out cheap and move into something more profitable.

The IR means Freedom .....

"Freedom of the press only belongs to those who own one."
—A. J. Liebling

The repository is essentially a press. It gives authors direct access to the means of production.

IRs provide an "on ramp" to the internet and the freedom to participate directly in publishing and scholarly discourse.

Kevin Siers, *Charlotte Observer*, © 2019

Achievements 2005-2023

1. Built top-ranked IR at University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries.

2. Planted the Nebraska flag all over the world, from pole to pole, building UNL's international reputation.

3. Supercharged the reach, citations, H-index, and recognition of several thousand UNL researchers.

4. Delivered library materials to users 92 million times.

5. Made it possible for underserved, overlooked, or neglected scholars to share research and find community.

129,450
Total Papers

91,705,107
Total Downloads

7,394,138
Downloads in the past year

Bibliography

- Paul Royster, "The Institutional Repository at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln: Its First Year of Operations," *OCLC Systems & Services: International Digital Library Perspectives* 23, no. 2 (2007), 183–89, https://doi.org/10.1108/10650750710748487 or https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libraryscience/58/ .

- Joan Giesecke, "Institutional Repositories: Keys to Success," *Journal of Library Administration* 51, no. 5–6 (2011): 529–42, https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2011.589340

- Paul Royster, "Evolution of an Institutional Repository: A Case History from Nebraska," in *Open Praxis, Open Access: Digital Scholarship in Action,* ed. Darren Chase & Dana Haugh (ALA Editions, 2020). https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libraryscience/382/

THANK YOU & GOOD-BYE

To all our supporters, depositors, and users from the past 19 years,

a personal and heartfelt thanks for making the program such a success.

We couldn't have done it without you.