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THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONAL DIGITAL REPOSITORIES TO DEVELOP SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

In this electronic publishing age, academic institutions including universities have increasingly recognized that an institutional digital repository is an essential infrastructure of scholarly dissemination. An IR is a digital research archive consisting of accessible collections of scholarly work that represent the intellectual capital of an institution. Digital repositories are widely used as a mechanism for making scholarly works freely accessible on the web. Academic libraries are often involved in the creation and management of institutional repositories that focus on preserving and disseminating the scholarship produced by their institution's faculty and students. Institutional digital repositories provide institutions an opportunity to establish a prime location that collects and preserves the resources in digital form. Scholars invested demand for the online publishing, networking, and good research are driving the demand for extensive access. The paper explores the development of institutional repositories in academic institutions and their role to develop scholarly communication among academic and research community.

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INTRODUCTION

Institutional digital repository, which may be called an extension of digital library, is now becoming a platform for the sharing of knowledge. An Institutional Repository consists of formally organized and managed collections of digital content generated by faculty, staff and students at an institution. This is the collective intellectual output of an institution, recorded in a form that can be preserved and exploited. There are the result of the vision to collect, secure and provide access to scholarly publication in a novel, digital way, mostly initiated by the institutional library. Institutional repositories are spreading, as they have become a dispensable component for information and knowledge sharing in the scholarly world. In a general sense, an "institutional repository" can mean many things a library, an archive, a museum, or even a warehouse that stores for use and safekeeping an organization's records or artifacts falls under the broad definition of institutional repository. In recent years, however an IR has taken on a more specific, but still evolving meaning that refers to the storage and preservation of an organization's

digital information or knowledge assets. It is a set of services offered by a university to its community members for the stewardship of scholarly publication generated by the faculty, staff, and research scholars by preserving it for long term. Since the resources are generated digitally and electronically it is very easy to build a collection of any specific subject discipline or any targeted user group. Institutional Repository may be defined as information systems capable of capturing, preserving and providing access to the intellectual output produced by the members of an institution. Within the specific context of academia, an Institutional Repository may contribute to the increase of the institution prestige and nourish the idea of an "Institutional Repository". Institutional Repository provides tools that help faculty students and researchers to disseminate the Institutional Repository work to audiences outside the institution. The main purpose of Institutional Repository is to bring together and preserves the intellectual output of a laboratory, department, university or any other entity, the incentives and commitments to change the process of scholarly communication have also begun serving as strong motivators. For many libraries, ETDs (Electronic Theses and Dissertations) are the first targets for an institutional repository program, and represent an opportunity to engage graduate students and their faculty advisors in

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broader conversation about open access, intellectual property management, long-term management of digital content, and other scholarly communication issues. Institutional repositories are especially important for academic institution with open access policies that direct faculty to deposit final manuscripts of scholarly articles into repository. They are further useful in helping researchers comply with funder mandates on the accessibility of research data. Libraries are also instrumental in creating repositories for the purpose of digitizing, preserving, and showcasing cultural heritage collections.

Changing Scenario of Scholarly Communication

There are three models in scholarly communication which the world has generally accepted, viz.

- the traditional paper based journal publishing process which has a track record of over 300 years
- E-publishing on commercial basis and
- The Open Access mode of publishing.

The developments in IT and Internet have contributed considerably to shrink the supply chain of information and it is indeed a welcome change. For the information industry, the supply chain extends from the source of information to the point of usage. The traditional journals in paper format took 36-52 weeks for journals to publish. Surprisingly enough, in this total cycle time of 1 year the value addition (generation, review, correction and printing) takes place in not more than 2-3 weeks, indicating a huge wastage of time and money contributed mostly by non-value adding links. In this context, the advent of the E-publishing has really been a boost to the scholarly publishing domain, bringing down the publishing time frame to a remarkable 3-4 weeks. The third category is the growing sets of open access publishing and scholarly archive initiatives, which are the offshoots of the novel open access movement, catching up globally. Authors are now able to publish their findings at an astoundingly fast pace such as 10-15 minutes or even at a lesser time. The relative features and merits of the three systems are illustrated in the following figure below:-

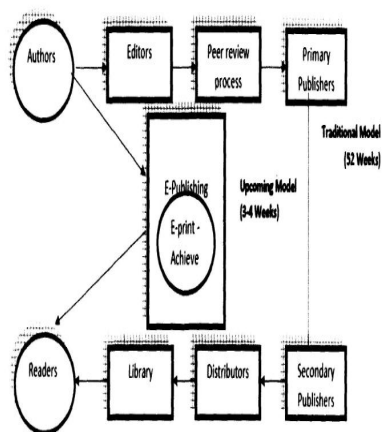


Fig 1- Traditional and Upcoming Scholarly Communication Model

Importance of Institutional Repositories

Institutional digital repository is the marquee of an institution in the world, where institution displays its worthwhile research programmes, projects, and initiatives to the broad spectrum of audience in the world. An institution outreaches its findings that in turn encourage other institutions and organizations to collaborate and to share their knowledge, expertise and skills. Institutional repositories offer seamless access to documents and reflect past and present research interests of the institution as well as its future research goals. The pace of scholarly communication would be highly accelerated if the IR holds research papers, research reports, etc as soon they are made public. This also have publications in receiving more citations, since the research findings are quickly available to the fellow scholars. The IR can be used throughout the institution and collaborative institutions. Some institutional repositories in India are only providing access to metadata to the external communities who are accessing their repository through internet, whereas internal members who are accessing their repositories through Intranet are getting full text information besides metadata. These restrictions exist due to various reasons involving copyright issues, bandwidth issues, permissions from the grant providing agencies (GPA's), and so on. In India there are number of research grant providing agencies. Sometimes some areas may overlap with each other. Using institutional repositories, the GPA's can evaluate the novelty of a research proposal and come to know whether any study has been already undertaken in a particular area or discipline.

Institutional digital repositories as a major benchmark of Digital Scholarship

IR proponent Lynch (2003) regards institutional repositories as essential infrastructure for modern scholarship. He argues that "the development of institutional repositories emerged as a new strategy that allows universities to apply serious, systematic leverage to accelerate changes taking place in scholarship and scholarly communication". Also, Markey *et al* (2007) remarked that, "a considerable portion of the scholarly record is born digital, and some scholarship is produced in digital formats that have no physical, in-the-hand counterparts. The proliferation of digital scholarship raises serious and pressing issues about how to organize, access, and preserve it in perpetuity. The response of academic institutions has been to build and deploy institutional repositories (IRs) to manage the digital scholarship their learning communities produce". All the above definitions of an IR agree that it is an enabling component of digital scholarship and this paper works on the premise that IR is currently a cornerstone of DS and an important tool to manage institutional intellectual output. This seems to suggest that the success of DS can at least partially, if not fully depend on and be measured by the success of IRs.

Objectives of managing institutional digital Repositories

The primary objectives for development and managing institutional repository are following

- To building institutional profile and investing institutional image
- To long time preserve the intellectual output and institutional information of the institutional in digital format for the next generation.

- To create global visibility or freely distribution for an institutions research publications.
- To create global visibility for an institutions scholarly research
- To resources sharing at global level.
- To provide access to institutional research output by self archiving it.
- To facility an open workspace for work-in-progress to promotion of research and academic works

Need to Build an Institutional Digital Repository

- We as educators, and the academic institution as a whole, have an obligation to ensure that our intellectual output is made widely available and preserved for the historical record, as collectively this material represents a valuable resource which should be shared with a global audience, contributes to our and the university's significance with in the academic community, and helps demonstrate the societal and economic relevance of our endeavors.
- Currently, the majority of this scholarly material is not collected or preserved in any systematic or structured fashion, and much of it is not available outside the walls of the academy, nor is it efficiently made visible to web search engines through which most academics conduct their research. Without a plan of action for collecting and managing these assets, their discover ability and availability over the long term cannot be assured. Therefore, a digital repository is needed to provide a central portal to house, organize, and disseminate this output.

Characteristics of Institutional Digital Repositories

Gibbons identifies the five core features of an Institutional Repository

- It is institutionally defined — unlike a subject repository; the Institutional Repository captures only the intellectual output of host institution.
- Content may be purely scholarly, or may comprise administrative, teaching and research materials, both published and unpublished.
- It is cumulative and perpetual. Once item are submitted they should not be withdrawn. This carries with it a long term obligation on the host institution to preserve Institutional Repository content.
- It is open and interoperable- a primary goal of an Institutional Repository is to disseminate the institution's intellectual output.
- In collecting, storing and disseminating information it contributes to the process of scholarly communication.

Contents of Institutional Repositories

An Institutional Repository may contain a variety of material produced by the researchers of the institution like

- Pre print of articles or research reports submitted for publishing the text of journals articles accepted for publication.
- Revised text of published work with comments from academic readers.
- Conference papers.

- Teaching material.
- Student's projects.
- Doctoral thesis and dissertations.
- Database resulting from research projects.
- Committee papers, administrative papers.
- Computer software work of art.
- Photographs and video recordings.

Benefits of an Institutional Digital Repository

An institutional repository can be an efficient effective way of storing and making these documents accessible to authorized users. In digital age open access institutional repositories are open without any restrictions except that the user should have minimum e-infrastructures like computer, tablet, telephone, internet connectivity for accessing IRs. The institutional repository mainly focuses on only the intellectual output of the institution's academicians and researchers to measure institutional productivity and increase its prestige

The main primary advantages appear to include

For users

- Expansion of the range of knowledge that can be shared.
- Opportunities to simplify and extend dissemination.

For institution

- Enabling of intellectual property rights to be exploited more effectively at institution level.
- Leverage of existing investment in information and content management systems.
- The highlighting of the quality of intellectual capital.

For all

- Opportunities of new forms of scholarly communication.
- Flexible way to develop existing scholarly communication.

Drawbacks of Institutional Repositories

Following are the drawbacks of IR

- They affect the balance of institutional power as some departments proceed faster than the others.
- They rely on unproven methods for long term digital preservation.
- They may needs quick wins to sustain institutional support.
- Initial costs may be high as contributors perceive high risks and duplicate effort to reduce them.

Challenges of an Institutional Digital Repositories

Despite the numerous benefits of an IR, there are implications and potential barriers to its success as summarized below (Pickton and Barwick, 2006)

Cost

The initial financial cost for open source software adopted by most institutions for creating IRs is not high but the recurrent costs; especially staff costs may be significant.

Difficulties in generating content

A successful IR depends on the willingness of authors to deposit their work voluntarily and there may be local barriers and hindrances to be overcome. There are acknowledged difficulties in generating content, especially at the beginning.

Sustaining support and commitment

Far too often, it is difficult to sustain continuous support and commitment from the management and academic staff. There is a need for institutions to think seriously before launching institutional repository program as it may disintegrate rapidly if not properly managed.

Rights management issues

Sometimes researchers are apprehensive about infringing publishers' copyright and lack adequate awareness about their own intellectual property rights.

Working Culture issues

Contributing content to user-generated or 'self-service' sites is time consuming; and time is something which academics often lack. They may be willing to contribute content but reluctant to do it themselves.

Policy Issues

Experiences suggest that an IR will only function to its capacity when a mandate is in place to populate it but clearly researchers can react negatively to any suggestion of compulsion.

Lack of incentives

In the absence of any incentive academics feel reluctant to provide even bibliographic details of their scholarly output especially when they know that incentives are available in other institutions.

The challenge therefore in implementing an IR is to promote the benefits it offers while allaying stakeholders' concerns.

Conclusion

In most of the higher educational institutions, the institutional digital repositories is developed and maintained by the library. Hence, the library should work hand-in-hand with the academic administrators and get their full support. The library should publicize and employ a variety of methods to promote the IR to the faculty's head of department, centre directors, academics, researchers and students. The library should maintain a promotional website and also publish articles on the latest development on IR through the newsletters, pamphlets, and faculty bulletin boards. Institutional repository is an important part of any academic institute or university that shows the status of an institution in the form of research output.

The greatness and success of libraries depend more on the strength of their services and their ability to connect electronically with one another than their mere huge collections. Libraries are going to be expected more than ever to be fast-moving and innovative organizations which can still deliver stable services. It is in this way that we will be in a better position to support the needs of our users. It is the need of the hour. It is clear that the institutional repository. In conclusion, it can be said that an IR is very useful to higher educational institutions as a means to promote and share the results of research and writings of academics and researchers. Finally, as the institutional repository platform continues to evolve in response to rapidly developing technology and opportunities for greater efficiency in a more collaborative academic environment, its value will increase and be recognized.

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