Research Papers

INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORY AND ACADEMIC COMMUNITY: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract

Institutional repositories (IR) are the electronic archives of the scientific and scholarly output of an institution. The article tries to discuss why an institution nees to establish an IR and the benefits of the IR to institutions, authors, scientists, academics, students, productive sectors and the society at large. Discusses the probable contents of an IR and the role of different academic communities in establishing an IR in a higher education institution.

KEYWORDS:

Institutional repository, Academic community.

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technology (ICT) has changed the way of daily information activity of human society. Libraries and information centres are the main avenue of any institution that caters the information requirements of the institutions. To satisfy the informational requirements of the concerned institution in particular and to the society in general, libraries have adopted different tools and techniques from ICT. Digital libraries and institutional digital repositories are the result of the applications of different recently developed tools and techniques of ICT. An Institutional Repository (IR) is an electronic archive of the scientific and scholarly outputs of an institution, which have been stored in a searchable digital format and which are able to be retrieved for later use internally, nationally, and worldwide. Clifford Lynch, the Executive Director, Coalition for Networked Information in the US, noted that; "In my view, a university-based institutional repository is a set of services that a university offers to the members of its community for the management and dissemination of digital materials created by the institution and its community members. It is most essentially an organizational commitment to the stewardship of these digital materials, including long-term preservation where appropriate, as well as organization and access or distribution."

1 Purpose of IR:

Educational institutions all over the world are trying to manage their institutional scholarly output more effectively and transparently then in the past. Institutional repositories are the best solution in this regard. The main purpose of and institutional repositories are:

• To create global visibility for an institution's scholarship;
• To collect content in a single location;
• To provide open access to institutional research output by self-archiving;
• To store and preserve other institutional digital assets, including unpublished or otherwise easily lost ("grey") literature (e.g., theses or technical reports).

2. Characteristics features of IR:

• It is institutionally defined – unlike a subject repository; the IR captures only the intellectual property of the host institution.
• Content may be purely scholarly or may comprise administrative, teaching and research materials, both published and unpublished. In collecting, storing and disseminating information it contributes to the process of scholarly communication.
• It is cumulative and perpetual – once items are submitted they should not be withdrawn. This carries with it a long term obligation on the host institution to preserve IR content.
• It is open and interoperable – a primary goal of an IR is to disseminate the institution's intellectual product. (Crow,2002).

3 Benefits of IR:

From an institutional repository institution and individual get different categories of benefits. Pickton & Barwick (2006) and Alfa Network Babel Library (2007) have identified the following benefits for different stakeholders:

3.1 Benefits for institution:

• A means of increasing visibility and prestige. A high profile IR may be used to support marketing activities to attract high quality staff, students and funding.
• The centralisation and storage of all types of institutional output, including unpublished or 'grey' literature. Support for learning and teaching. Shared material may be 're-purpose and re-used.
• Standardisation of institutional records. The compilation of an 'institutional CV' and of individual online CVs linked to the full text of articles are possible outcomes.
• Leverage of existing systems. By exploiting existing computer networks, IT services and library expertise, the IR enables these units to demonstrate greater efficiency.
• Improvements in administrative efficiency, especially if the IR is integrated with other institutional data management systems. Obligations regarding records management, health and safety record-keeping, and freedom of information may all be supported by the IR.
• Possible long term cost savings. Some hope that the widespread adoption of IRs will ultimately enable savings to be made in subscriptions to academic journals. This however is unlikely to occur until a 'critical mass' of content is achieved.

3.2 Benefits for authors:

• Increased dissemination and impact. Research has shown that the usage and citation of open access material is greater than that of restricted access work.
• Storage and access to a wide range of materials, including digital representations of artwork, data sets, and audio-visual material. Compared with traditional print-based publication, the IR offers greater variety and flexibility; compared with personal or departmental web sites, the IR offers greater security and longer term accessibility.
• Feedback and commentary. Some digital repositories permit the deposit of prepublication 'preprints', enabling authors to assert priority and receive commentary.
• Provision of added value services such as hit counts on papers, personalised publication lists and citation analyses.

3.3 Benefits for scientists and academics:

• Facilitate access to the scientific information.
• Increase their audience.
• Increase the impact of the teaching and research work they carry out.

3.4 Benefits for the students:

• Provide them with the tools and instruments they need to learn, study and research.
• Provide them with coherent access to the materials they need to learn and study.
• Acquire skills in knowledge management.
• Achieve better academic results and make them more competitive.

3.5 Benefits for the productive sector:

• Facilitate the contact with scientists and specialists of the institutions in order to achieve a better transference of the research results.

3.6 Benefits that will contribute to society:

• Maximise the performance of the investment made in the repository, because publications will be more and better used.
• Maximise global scientific understanding.

4. Contents of IR:

A range of documents which are the result of teaching and research activities of teachers and researchers of an institution is the main contents of an IR. However other materials of academic interest may also be included in an IR. The following are the materials of an IR (Alfa Network Babel Library, 2007):

• Doctoral theses in the public domain.
• Doctoral theses read in the institution.
• Communications at congresses, posts, posters.
• Pre-prints and post-prints of papers published in journals.
• Audio-visual materials.
• Journals of the institution.
• Patents.
• Datasets resulting from research project.
• Software.
• Journals of institutional information published by the institution in any support.
• Regulations and Rules.
• Archive documents.
• Posts, posters, work documents, technical reports.
• Video recordings, events celebrated, etc.
• Study and exercises guides.
• Audio-visual material.
• Class notes.
• Simulators.
• Bibliography in full text.
• Presentations used in class.
• Online tests.
• Laboratory guides.
• Student projects.

• Committee papers.
• Revised texts of published work with comments from academic readers.

5. Role of librarians in IR:

Reference librarians are a library's eyes and ears. They understand users' needs and perceptions. They know what's working and what's not. When they act as subject selectors, they are the library's primary liaison with faculty in their subject areas and its most visible representatives. They know how to help, inform, persuade, and teach users. For an IR to succeed, it is essential that they be involved in its planning, implementation, and operation (Nixon, 2002). So librarians have critical roles to play in both establishing, maintaining and operating an IR through:

Advocacy: Librarians need to know all about the IR, its principles, benefits and operational processes in order to promote it and act as 'IR evangelists' (Ashworth,2006). Librarians will need to develop advocacy programs, publicize IR through institutional news media and respond to questions by the stakeholders.

Building content: Librarians can employ advocacy and marketing strategies to promote engagement with faculty members and help to generate content. They can also assist by proactively searching for content independently.

Collection administrators and metadata specialists: Librarians have potential roles as collection administrators and metadata specialists. For effective implementation of IR, libraries will need to recruit or train librarians with digital collection management and provide a mediated deposit service for reluctant 'self-archivers'.

Training: Librarians should be able to train staff and students to use the IR and help them prepare their digital products.

6. Role of faculties and research scholars in IR:

The concept of archiving scholarly outputs of a university and making them available in the context of the institution is one that faculty members and research scholars are still coming to terms with (Westell,2006). Equally then, the real challenge is not the technical implementation of the IR but rather the cultural change necessary for it to become embedded in the activities and normal behavioural pattern of faculty members and researchers (Chan et al. 2005).

The roles of faculties and research scholars include:

• Uploading of research output.
• Responding to questions and comments posted by readers.
• Updating materials especially pre-print articles and work in progress.
• Ensuring high quality and standards of materials.
• Negotiating copyright issues with publishers. This should be done before publication of papers.

7. CONCLUSION:

IR is the boon to academic community. Research output in higher education is published in different publications. IR is the place where the academic community of the concerned institution uploads their published and unpublished research output. Concerned institution uploads its reports, publications, etc. to make it available to the members of the institution. In this way academic community gets required information about their respective field of research easily. By including non-ephemeral faculty-produced teaching material, the repository serves as a resource supporting classroom teaching (Johnson,2002). Collaboration between faculty, librarian, research scholars in implementing and

enhancing the collection of IR of a higher education institution will show a new path of scholarly communication for the benefit of the society at large.

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