2009

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Building an Institutional Repository in Hard Times

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Abstract

This poster presents an overview of an exploratory research initiative to examine and assess the viability of development of an institutional repository system at a teaching-oriented mid-size university with minimal monetary commitment. A need has been identified for an institutional repository and necessary steps have been taken to implement it. Several departments worked together to create a prototype Institutional Repository using DSpace, an open source repository software. This poster focuses on the steps taken to set up and the plans to maintain a quality Institutional Repository at Valdosta State University without placing a large demand on the institution’s resources.

Customizing the Interface

To further streamline the appearance and workflow process of DSpace, the Manakin interface (XMLUI) is set as the default interface to edit the look and feel of DSpace and personalize it to the institution’s needs. Manakin uses Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) to customize the DSpace interface. In addition to providing a more appealing interface than DSpace’s native interface (JSUI), the Manakin interface spells out error messages if there are any inconsistencies in metadata fields and workflows, for example. A staff member with extensive CSS experience from the library software team volunteered to learn and edit the Manakin interface to fit in with the university’s existing web presence and guidelines. Though there are quick start guides available (Donohue, Phillips, & Bato, 2007) for an average user to customize JSUI and XMLUI, the learning curve for XMLUI was steeper than for JSUI.

Identifying the Need

The need for an IR at VSU was first recognized in early 2007 and a pilot project was initiated by the University Archives and Special Collections, Institutional Repository, and the Master of Library and Information Science Program. Knowing that any commercial software solution was cost prohibitive, the open source solution was chosen as a way to move forward with the project. The open source program DSpace provided the software necessary for VSU’s IR project. This was a logical step, as DSpace is an unofficial standard platform for IRs across the University System of Georgia.

The Future of the Project

Though developing an IR program may seem relatively cheap and easy to implement at minimal cost, sustaining such a program in terms of keeping the community engaged and maintaining institutional support are key to the success of an IR program. The project team plans for the future focus on a minimal cost approach to maintaining VSU’s IR. Plans are in place to use volunteers and interns to upload faculty and student content so there will be even more incentives for creators to deposit their materials in the repository. Though a release form for theses and dissertations exists, it has not been standardized and plans are in place to submit a standardized form to the Graduate School for students to submit with their theses and dissertations electronically. A faculty outreach program in spring 2009 will be initiated to raise awareness about the repository and inform faculty and students about hosting and making their scholarly works available to the public thorough VText. The primary focus for future goals is on ensuring that faculty members have much incentive as possible to upload material to the repository and that the uploading process is easy enough to keep contributions coming. The VText project is also participating in the GALILEO Open Knowledge Repository (OKR), a program created to promote and enhance IR initiatives across the University System of Georgia institutions.

Our Process

The process began by identifying willing parties within the library and evaluating how their skills could be best applied to the project. Next, the current web presence of digital content created by faculty and students was surveyed to identify candidate materials that could be hosted in the repository. Candidate materials for a repository were found in a number of faculty and departmental homepages and in student theses and dissertations. Because Valdosta State is not a large research institution, teaching materials were also identified as a potential source of content.

The next step was to set policies and procedures for the repository. The project needed to set metadata guidelines, file type controls, and copyright controls. It should be noted that policy development could potentially be one of the more time consuming steps in setting up a repository. However, the VText team has chosen to save time by surveying other policies and adapting them where appropriate. Already, VSU has received permission to adopt existing policies from other established repositories such as those at Georgia Tech and at the University of Texas at Austin.

Sample Document Views

Sample Submission Form

Vtext Policies

A portion of this project was funded by a grant from the Valdosta State University Faculty Development Committee, the Library Services, the LSRC, the Office of the Provost, and the Center for Information Science. The Valdosta State University Foundation www.valdostafoundation.org, is a tax exempt charitable organization with 501c3 status under the Internal Revenue Code. The Valdosta State University Foundation accepts donations for the development and enhancement of the University’s mission. Donations are subject to all Federal and State tax laws. The Valdosta State University Foundation is the only charitable foundation within the University System of Georgia for which you can receive a tax deduction. The Valdosta State University Foundation is a nonprofit organization and is exempt from Federal income taxation under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, and is exempt from state income taxation under section 42A:2-402. Donations made to the Foundation are fully deductible in accordance with the laws governing charitable contributions.