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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.

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, Archival Systems, and the Master of Library and Information Science Program. Knowing that any commercially available software solution was expensive and 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.

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 (JSFUI), 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, & Bals, 2007) for an average user to customize JSFUI and XMLUI, the learning curve for XMLUI was steeper than for JSFUI.

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 is unnecessary for VSU’s IR, plans are in place to use volunteers and interns 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 Knowledge Repository (GKR), a project created to promote and enhance IRs, 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 housed in the repository. Candidate materials for a repository were found in a number of faculty and departmental websites 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 can potentially be one of the most time-consuming steps in setting up a repository. However, the V-Text team has chosen to save time by surveying other policies and adapting them where appropriate. Already, VSU has received permission to adapt existing policies from other established repositories such as those at Georgia Tech and the University of Texas at Austin.

Vtext Policies
The V-Text Digital Repository Copyright and Licensing Policy states the following:

Vtext is a Digital Repository Copyright and Licensing Policy that outlines the types of content that may be uploaded to the Vtext Digital Repository.

1. Vtext is a Digital Repository Copyright and Licensing Policy.
2. Vtext digital repository is a digital repository for the purpose of preserving digital content.
3. Vtext digital repository has a digital repository policy that outlines the types of content that may be uploaded to the Vtext Digital Repository.
4. Vtext digital repository has a digital repository policy that outlines the conditions under which content may be uploaded to the Vtext Digital Repository.
5. Vtext digital repository has a digital repository policy that outlines the conditions under which content may be removed from the Vtext Digital Repository.

Sample Document Views
Sample Submission Form
Vtext Policies