

# **Asking Difficult Questions about Institutional Repositories: Factors for Success and New Directions for Development and Research**

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**This interactive point/counter point panel session on institutional repositories will present current research and practice related to the factors for success of IR's. Difficult questions about the feasibility of investing in the development of an institutional repository will generate long overdue conversations about the future directions for research and development of institutional repositories.**

## **Format for Panel**

Each of the three expert panelists will present a short 10-15 minute talk on their current research and work. The presentations will be followed by an interactive point/counter point session in which the moderator will ask a series of directed questions and the panelists will respond to the questions. The audience will also be invited to pose questions to the panelists, as well as respond to the directed questions.

## **Audience**

All researchers and professionals who either conduct research about, or who are involved in projects focused on the development, implementation and adoption of institutional repositories or other digital repositories or archives.

## **Scope of the Panel**

Institutional repositories (IR's) have been increasingly prevalent for about ten years now. IR's are viewed as a means to pool institutional resources, and as a mechanism to store and archive the scholarly output of the institution's members, thereby increasing institutional visibility. The extent of growth of IR's continue to increase, even though many factors related to their development, implementation, and adoption are yet unknown. According to a status report issued by the Association of Research Libraries (Bailey, et al., 2006), 123 of ARL's prestigious members, approximately half, either have or plan to soon implement repositories. The MIRACLE (Making Institutional Repositories in A Collaborative Learning Environment) Project at the University of Michigan investigated the administrative factors involved in determining the support and use for IR's. Researchers collected data from 446 academic library directors and senior library administrators about their involvement with institutional repositories. As reported in Census of Institutional Repositories in the United States (Markey, Rieh, St. Jean, Kim, Yakel, 2007)) it was found that 52.9% of the participants have done no institutional repository planning, 20.6% are only planning for repositories, 15.7% are actively planning and pilot testing repositories, and 10.8% have implemented operational repositories. Research has begun to uncover the issues associated with developing, implementing, and gaining faculty acceptance/adoption of IR's. Studies have examined institutional factors, administrative factors, cultural issues (those related to faculty and university members' adoption of IR's), copyright and intellectual property concerns, and resource allocation demands. The abovementioned studies and those that will be presented by the expert

panelists, have begun to explore the reasons why IR's are either successful or fail to meet the goals of the institution, but the time has come to ask some difficult questions about the real feasibility and usefulness of IR's to both the institution and also to the scholarly community. Can universities continue to invest scarce resources into the development of IR's with little measurable returns? The three panelists will address this question as well as difficult questions we have yet to ask.

The three expert panelists will present findings of their current research and projects as outlined below. The moderator and the panelists will help the audience give voice to their concerns and explore the difficult questions about the feasibility of establishing an IR within their institution by engaging in a point/counter point session designed to facilitate this conversation.

## **Directed Questions for Discussion**

The following potential questions will guide the discussion by the panelists and the audience:

1. How can institutional factors such as resistance to collaborate with other units on campus be ameliorated?
2. What justifications can be given to funding an IR when resources (money, time, intellectual capital) may be stretched beyond limits?
3. Is establishing an interdisciplinary team of faculty, librarians, staff members, and administration the prudent approach to developing an IR and does this cooperative approach add to the success of the IR? If not, what factors may intervene? If not, what suggestions can be given for establishing institutional collaboration/involvement in the development of an IR?
4. What factors help to ensure successful adoption by faculty and members of the institutional community?
5. How are institutions dealing with tenure and promotion issues related to faculty contribution to IRs?
6. What incentives are being offered by institutions for faculty to contribute to IRs?
7. What innovative means/programs are being tried to ensure success of IR's?
8. What rationale can be used to establish a case for developing an IR?

### **Snapshots of Panelists**

**Catherine Mitchell:**

Institutional repositories continue to be a hard sell to faculty. Amidst the swirl of disciplinary repositories, concerns about tenure and promotion, concerns about copyright (not to mention the server under the desk), it is often difficult to make a compelling case for deposit into an IR as a necessary step in the lifecycle of scholarly communication. This talk will focus on the California Digital Library's current effort to stop talking about repositories altogether and, instead, emphasize the innovative digital publishing services available to the UC community on the eScholarship publishing platform. Dr. Mitchell will explore the particulars of eScholarship's new outreach and marketing campaign to the campuses (a campaign that necessarily focuses on unique categories of users - by discipline, by rank, by depositor/end user status) and end with a discussion of an exciting shared publishing services program recently established in conjunction with the University of California Press. Throughout this talk, she will consider how the very notion of the 'success' of an IR lies not in a quantifiable set of objects but rather in its ability to serve the research and publishing needs of its scholarly communities.

### **Carole L. Palmer**

Dr. Palmer will present findings from a Mellon-funded case study of institutional repository (IR) development at three research libraries (Palmer, Teffeau, Newton, 2008), discussing successful strategic approaches and achievements of IR initiatives as well as the tradeoffs and risks involved in current modes of development. Many libraries have made a substantial commitment to developing and sustaining an IR, resulting in important advances in this very new type of library operation. However, development activities have necessarily proceeded before common principles and best practices have been established in the profession, and often before long-term targets have been specified at the local level. The cases examined suggest that the basic aims of universities in investing in IRs "to collect, preserve, and provide access to their research output" are misleadingly simplistic compared to what IRs are actually attempting to accomplish, and what they will need to do to successfully implement functions that are not redundant or high-risk, and that are of real value to faculty. Moreover, it remains unclear if IRs can provide the range of content and services needed by faculty across fields of research and contribute to the more global system of information resources for e-research. If the focus remains on capturing and preserving institutional assets, rather than on coordination with the growing base

of disciplinary repository initiatives and other IRs, the profession will miss an opportunity to innovate in line with trends in scholarship, and to leverage the kind of cooperative approaches that already have a long history of success in our field.

## **Soo Young Rieh**

Dr. Rieh will present her MIRACLE Project team's case studies of five model institutional repositories. The case studies were developed through conducting interviews with various people who were involved in the development, maintenance, and use of institutional repositories, including both administrators and contributors. The case studies investigated specific factors that make an institutional repository successful. Findings indicate that IR projects were well recognized and supported by other university units and communities across five institutions. The findings also identified various approaches to administration, contributing process, content scope, access, preservation, service, and collaboration among university units. The results also indicated that IRs are closely tied together with other types of open access infrastructure and digital libraries.

## **Brief Biographies of the Moderator and Presenters**

**June Abbas** is an associate professor at the School of Library and Information Studies (SLIS) at the University of Oklahoma. She has been project manager for seven digital libraries projects, served as a member on an IR review team and as a member of a taskforce charged with determining the feasibility and usefulness of an IR at the State University of NY at Buffalo. She has also written and presented on digital library development and digital library pedagogy.

**Catherine Mitchell** is Director of the California Digital Library's eScholarship Publishing Program at the University of California. eScholarship supports the University of California scholarly community with innovative digital publication and distribution services through the development of advanced technologies and creative partnerships. She holds a Ph.D. in English literature from the University of California, Berkeley.

**Carole L. Palmer** is an associate professor at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Director of the Center for Informatics Research in Science and Scholarship (CIRSS). She has written and presented

widely on aligning digital resource development with scientific and scholarly information practices and information support for interdisciplinary research. Her recent funded projects include investigations of data curation needs across sciences, the changing nature of collections in the digital environment, and institutional repository development. She has also been one of the lead developers of new educational programs at GSLIS in the areas of data curation and biological informatics.

**Soo Young Rieh** is an associate professor in the School of Information at the University of Michigan. She is the principal investigator of the MIRACLE (Making Institutional Repositories a Collaborative Learning Environment) Project funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Her research goals in the MIRACLE Project are to identify models and best practices in the administration, technical infrastructure, and access to repository collections.

## References

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