

Chapter Title: [PART 6 Introduction]

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Part 6

CLOSING REFLECTIONS AND THE NEXT STEPS FOR INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORIES

Institutional repositories were conceived and implemented by librarians who were concerned about an ever increasing commercial impact on scholarly communication. They sought a way to circumvent traditional publishers and increase access to scholarly work. Much of the early work was focused on building platforms and setting policies. Once the mechanics were in place, the next phase involved scholars and crafting ways to sell the idea of curating and increasing access to scholarly work in order to acquire content and encourage use. And yet, regardless of the philosophical or structural perspectives, the tools, resources, and services that are either built within the repository system or added as complementary components must be platform-agnostic.

Since the publishing of Raym Crow's position paper, IRs have been adopted ever more widely. However, an institutional repository is by definition siloed. In her summary conclusion on the future of institutional repositories, Heather Joseph argues for the need for developers to provide deeper and more meaningful levels of functional interoperability among repositories. This will require repositories to find mechanisms and organizations that will assist in binding repositories together, which, as Joseph alludes to, may include the increased adoption of repositories working with organizations like the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC; <http://sparc.arl.org/>) or the Confederation of Open Access Repositories (COAR; <https://www.coar-repositories.org/about/coar-ev/strategic-plan/>).

In addition to a path toward total interoperability among repositories, Joseph points to an obligation among all those associated with repositories to think broadly about content and to work with scholars as well as students and community members about the ways that a repository can motivate a wide array of information and make it useful and impactful to scholars and laypersons alike. Repositories built to handle and serve datasets illustrate the way that repositories are not only expanding access to scholarship but expanding the very nature of what is considered scholarship. In order for repositories to reach their full potential, it is imperative that this expansion of the nature of scholarship and scholarly artifacts continue.

One final key for IRs to fully realize the dream that inspired their creation is to involve, if not indoctrinate, institutional leadership into the goals and aspirations of the project. The language and spirit of repositories needs to be woven into the mission and fabric of colleges and universities in a large-scale fashion. This work has begun and is gaining momentum, but has yet to hit critical mass. Steven Hyman, provost of Harvard University, provides a deceptively simple goal for the university that can serve as a model for all institutions: “The goal of university research is the creation, dissemination, and preservation of knowledge. At Harvard, where so much of our research is of global significance, we have an essential responsibility to distribute the fruits of our scholarship as widely as possible” (Hyman, 2010). As Joseph argues, for repositories to succeed, libraries will need to consider their repositories as integral components of their mission, and the broader mission of their institutions.

As evidenced by the contributions to this volume, much work has been done toward the development, implementation, and evaluation of repositories, which has led to their increasingly widespread adoption around the world. However, much work remains. Throughout this volume, we see the need to deeply understand the value of repository initiatives and demonstrate it to administrators as a key component of the mission of institutions of higher education. While this work must be contextualized on an institutional basis, together we need to promote interoperability with an eye toward not just changing cultural practices at our individual institutions, but profoundly changing the way scholarship is communicated in terms of access as well as content.

Finally, the continued success of institutional repositories and correlated open access to scholarship depends on scholars and practitioners speaking with a unified voice and acting with a unified vision. The legislative environment and byzantine publisher copyright transfer agreements are changing much more rapidly than a volume such as this can capture. To end on a warning: In addition to working toward more interoperable platforms, we must continue not only to follow these changes with a vigilant eye and speak out when they negatively impact openness, but to actively participate in the process. We must continue to develop and implement the infrastructure to archive and make scholarship openly available. However, we must also ensure that authors retain the rights to do so by actively pushing for openness at the highest levels of both government and commercial entities.

REFERENCE

Hyman, S. E. (2010). *Open access policies*. Harvard University.

