

Digital Repositories and the Australian Higher Education Sector: Where to Next

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Abstract:

In 2001 the Australian Government announced a raft of digital initiatives as part of 'Backing Australia's Ability – An Innovation Action Plan for the Future'. These were funded under the Systemic Infrastructure Initiative (SII) and have contributed significantly to building the capacity of information infrastructure in the Australian higher education sector. Coinciding with the SII, and specifically encouraged by programs funded by it, has been the arrival of digital (or institutional) repositories as key components of the higher education information landscape. Funding for the SII ends in December 2007, however, and no clear strategy has been proposed by the Government to build on its many achievements. Nevertheless, in December 2006, the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council, Data for Science Working Group released a Report that strongly recommended that a "sustainable publicly funded national network of federated digital repositories" should be established for the purpose of managing and preserving research data. In this paper I argue why implementing the recommendations of the Data for Science Working Group provides the right strategy for moving forwards, and how refunding the SII program beyond 2007 will make it succeed.