

The Role of Academic Libraries in the Sustainability, Preservation and Access Control of Digital Repositories

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Abstract:

Creating an Institutional Repository is only the beginning of supporting the academic activities in a higher education institution- maintaining and providing controlled access to its content is a challenge, as well as digital preservation, security and interoperability between institutional repositories. Academic libraries, research institutes and teaching and learning departments from universities worldwide have dedicated great amounts of time in the last few years to design Institutional Repositories with various foci, from creating repositories with e-research publications, to supporting research via virtual collaborative workspaces, or building learning objects repositories to enhance the teaching and learning experience.

Built on open source architectures, most of these repositories seem very promising in terms of technical capabilities, but they still face numerous challenges in terms of sustainability, interoperability, preservation of data and controlled access to their content. This paper outlines some of these challenges and investigates solutions to some of the issues:

Sustainability: who is going to maintain these Institutional Repositories in the long run and to what degree are various academic departments ready to deal with all the issues related to a sustainable repository? What is the role of Academic libraries in this context?

Preservation: How could academic libraries help preserve the information stored in Institutional Repositories and disseminate the right information to the right groups?

Who should be responsible for preserving research information- the institution where the research took place in the first instance, the researcher or the publisher? What about the unpublished material? How is it going to be preserved and by whom?

Security and Access Control – How is access to appropriate information controlled and maintained? Who should have access to what and who should be authorised to assign access control? While solutions like Shibboleth deal in access control between Institutional Repositories are they going to provide the whole answer?