

# The Case for Institutional Repositories: A SPARC Position Paper

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## ABSTRACT

Institutional repositories—**digital collections that capture and preserve the intellectual output of university communities**—respond to two strategic issues facing academic institutions: 1) they provide a central component in reforming scholarly communication by stimulating innovation in a disaggregated publishing structure; and 2) they serve as tangible indicators of an institution’s quality, thus increasing its visibility, prestige, and public value...

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In the content layer, authors, author proxies (departments, user communities, and scholarly societies, for example), and institutions deposit scholarly research and other intellectual product in one or more content repositories. Institutional repositories represent but one type of content archive, forming part of a global system of decentralized, distributed repositories. Such a system offers several benefits:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interoperable repositories support the researcher’s ability to <u>search seamlessly across repository types, facilitating interdisciplinary research and discovery</u>. This is increasingly valuable as the trend towards such multidisciplinary approaches increases in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities.</li><li>• The vast global corpus of heterogeneous data that the repositories represent can be curated by the local content managers best prepared to accommodate each data set’s specific detail and particularities (for example with detailed metadata appropriate to the content).</li><li>• Institutional repositories, along with other self-archiving repositories, create distributed, interoperable <u>preservation systems</u>. Digital archiving best practice suggests that multiple mirrored and distributed repositories, varying in location and formats, contribute to a sound preservation strategy.</li><li>• Interoperability comprises <u>persistent naming, standardized metadata formats</u>, and a metadata harvesting protocol. Metadata describes the nature of the digital data stored in repositories (including the content, structure, and access rights administration).</li></ul>	
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The service layer comprises the various value-added services that provide practical mechanisms for the registration, certification, and awareness functions. These services supplement or replace those provided by the current journal publishing system. Again, these services facilitate the use of the content in institutional and complementary open online repositories, but <u>remain logically separate from the repositories themselves</u> .	

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Defined for our purposes then, an institutional repository is a digital archive of the <u>intellectual product created by the faculty, research staff, and students of an institution</u> and accessible to end users both within and outside of the institution, with few if any barriers to access.	
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While some faculty members currently dedicate considerable time and energy to the technical aspects of delivering scholarly information, the faculty’s primary role will remain as information contributors, end users, and change agents. In the long-term, organizing and maintaining digital content—as well as supporting faculty as information contributors and end users—should remain the responsibility of the library. <u>Libraries are best-suited to provide much of the document preparation expertise</u> (document format control, archival standards, etc.) to help authors contribute their research to the institution’s repository. Similarly, libraries can most effectively provide much of the expertise in terms of metadata tagging, authority controls, and the other content management requirements that increase access to, and the usability of, the data itself.	
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At most institutions, faculty submissions will have to be voluntary or risk encountering resistance, even from faculty members who might otherwise prove supportive. Understandably then, the direct benefits of participating in an institutional repository will have to be articulated clearly, emphatically, and often to engender faculty support. Additionally, <u>institution-specific participation incentives</u> —especially if tied to professional evaluation and advancement— will further boost faculty participation. A key element of the faculty publishing process concerns the <u>retention of copyright</u> and the granting of non-exclusive licenses. Author retention of the right to self-archive, including the posting of research on open access institutional repositories, is an essential element of a reformed scholarly publishing system.	
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Irrespective of scope, all the institutional repository projects so far have observed that the effort and organizational costs required to address repository policy, content management, and faculty marketing issues dwarf the technical implementation effort.	
These tasks include:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing <u>content accession policies</u>;</li> <li>• deciding on what <u>metadata</u> to store and present;</li> <li>• creating <u>digital document identifiers</u> (DOIs);</li> <li>• crafting author <u>permission and licensing</u> agreements to disseminate work indefinitely;</li> <li>• developing document creation and input guidelines suitable to long term archiving and proper presentation;</li> <li>• training staff and authors in using the software to submit content;</li> <li>• creating document submission instructions; and</li> <li>• marketing the repository concept to prospective depositors.</li> </ul>	
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