Collecting Campus Culture: Collaborations and Collisions

Stephanie Davis-Kahl, Scholarly Communications Librarian & Meg Miner, University Archivist & Special Collections Librarian

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Undergraduate Economic Review

Common Goals:

Increase visibility of campus scholarly & creative work
Document institutional history
Support Admissions, Alumni Relations, Advancement in their work
Provide durability, stability and searching capability for born-digital and print content



Collisions from the Repository Perspective:

Collection development policies should allow for expansion

Findability of materials crucial for continued campus buy-in

Leverage metadata to provide connections between info silos

Balance between 'velocity and precision'

Digital copies should be as rich in appearance and information as possible

Consensus:

Continued dialogue and active listening is key

Our perspectives and strengths create balance

Success of Digital Commons depends on both perspectives co-existing

Digital Commons is many things to many people

Process and product can be shared by IR and Archives

Collisions from the Archives Perspective:

Some things shouldn't be saved; policy based choices = stability

Series-level descriptions at odds with item-level metadata needs

Importance of noting institution's structure and changes over time

Paths to useful non-repository content unclear

Digital copies must be accurate representations of originals

Outreach & Education

Presentations to students, faculty, departments, administrators Embedding links to content in campus website
Embedding search code on key website locations
News stories through student and University outlets

Illinois Wesleyan University

Visit us at http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu

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Meg Miner, University Archivist & Special Collections Librarian
(mminer@iwu.edu)

Facing the challenge of records' creators storing historical documents on Web pages is imperative; making use of their electronic form is common sense. Digital Commons meets many of our archival records' needs.

It is commonly assumed that since storage is cheap, everything can be put online. But an archives has a collecting scope and makes a commitment to keeping that material in a usable condition forever. Permanent storage in an online institutional repository (IR) raises a host of issues from security of records to format obsolescence to file degradation to preservation metadata.

Understanding what is not included in the archival record and how to find more is not always apparent. Due to our personal knowledge of our collections, archivists can point people to related content based on their specific needs. Professional standards do not recommend describing physical archives to the item level, but IR records need item-level detail in order to be found today and to inform long-term preservation decisions.

Additionally, archivists concern themselves with documenting their organization's changes over time. When people come to our IR through a search engine, making them aware of these structural changes and leading to other information is possible through notes and cross referencing. The time and knowledge needed to make these connections at the item level is significant, though, and should be weighed against other concerns.

Other archival issues to consider include protecting sensitive records and, in the case of digitized records, ensuring that online versions are unaltered surrogates for the originals. Ultimately, IRs require archivists to be grounded in the profession's principles but mindful of researchers' interest in 24/7 access and the possibility of reaching new audiences.

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Stephanie Davis-Kahl, Scholarly Communications Librarian,
(sdaviska@iwu.edu)

My primary objectives as the coordinator for Digital Commons are to create a collection that reflects the intellectual and creative vitality on the IWU campus, to do so ethically, by informing authors and creators of their rights and responsibilities, and to ensure that the technology represents all content accurately, and in the case of creative works, beautifully. My vision for our repository is for it to give a vivid representation of work done in our labs, studios, classrooms and with community partners. I also envision repository content as adding value to the classroom and curriculum.

To meet these objectives and prove the repository is valuable to the institution, I believe we must be flexible, proactive and entrepreneurial (in the cultural, intellectual and educational sense of the word) when seeking out new content and methods of presenting content. I agree with my colleague that collection development policies are foundational to helping us prioritize, but I feel strongly that the foundation can also act as a springboard for new directions.

Metadata is a powerful thing that is central to the visibility of our work, and we should capitalize on our ability to describe and connect our content. One of the added benefits to Digital Commons is its flexibility – we can add metadata easily, which gives us the opportunity to start a collection with broad metadata, then push our content out to the world, communicate with users about their needs, then revisit our metadata to improve or expand it. Cross-linking from repository to other collections is crucial to providing enhanced access to the materials we collect, including embedding links to our repository from university web pages and embedding search boxes that connect users to our content.

Outreach and education about the repository builds relationships and helps us with both building collections and creating metadata. The better the dialogue, the more invested users will be in the success of the repository, and the more often they will think of us if they have content. Outreach creates opportunities to discuss a variety of topics: privacy, author rights, Open Access, students as creators, departmental identity, and library as publisher. It's an exciting time to be part of the repository community, and to collaborate with colleagues within the library and across our institution.