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Digital Commons @ IWU Report, 2007-2009

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Digital Commons @ IWU Report, 2007-2010

by Stephanie Davis-Kahl, Associate Professor & Scholarly Communications Librarian

About Digital Commons @ IWU

Digital Commons @ IWU (DC@IWU) is an online archive for exceptional faculty, staff and student scholarship, research and creative activity. Its goals are the following:

- Promote and disseminate academic and creative achievements of students and faculty
- Ensure preservation of and persistent access to said work
- Increase discovery of IWU scholarship and artistic expressions
- Foster scholarly collaborations with colleagues
- Document and record IWU's history and progress

Digital Commons is maintained a team led by Stephanie Davis-Kahl. Members include Meg Miner, Amy Sutter, Suzanne Wilson, and Karen Schmidt.

Value of Collections to Stakeholders

DC@IWU has proved its value to key stakeholders since its launch in late 2007. Faculty recognize Digital Commons as a place to search and find key faculty governance documents, have submitted student work from upper-division courses, and have linked to Honors Projects from their departmental websites and have suggested collections that are currently in process (i.e., the Kemp Teaching Award Speech Collection). In addition, faculty are beginning to use Digital Commons in their classrooms and we will be creating and hosting a conference website for a faculty member this fall.

A slow but steady education and outreach effort is currently underway to attract faculty and staff work to Digital Commons through the SelectedWorks platform. SelectedWorks allows faculty and staff to customize an IWU-branded template to their discipline and their scholarship or creative activity. As of July 2010, we have 25 faculty and staff sites established with another six under construction. In the fall of 2009, after a presentation to the Office of Admissions, the library was asked to focus on creating sites for the Biology Department to aid in recruitment of highly achieving students interested in the Biology major. This work is nearly complete, and we will be conferring with the Admissions staff again this coming year to help chart our course in gathering faculty work.

Students also recognize that DC@IWU is a valuable resource and tool for their work, especially student editors of IWU's student journals. Teddy Petrova, past editor of the *Undergraduate Economic Review*, coordinates the submission, peer review, and publishing process using EdiKit, the Digital Commons online publishing platform. While other editors are learning how to make use of the publishing workflow offered by Digital Commons, they already recognize the power of making their journals more visible through Google search results, and the added value of being able to search within the full text of all issues of a journal, a benefit that went unrealized in the past.

Student work is also featured with our collection of Honors Projects, the BA/BFA Senior Honors Image Gallery, and documents and video from the annual John Wesley Powell Undergraduate Research Conference. One significant achievement this past year was the successful implementation of electronic submission of all Honors Projects.

Each of these initiatives has additional developmental benefits for students. They learn about creating and controlling their own intellectual property and copyright, and also become more aware of what it means to use the work of other scholars and artists in an ethical manner. Further, students involved in IWU's student journals participate directly in the scholarly communication

process of peer-review refereeing and publishing other students' works. These activities are supported by the streamlined and easily navigable submission and publishing interface provided by Digital Commons, allowing the technology to support learning these key elements of scholarship.

Data & Statistics

As of July 31, 2010, our collection contained 5,648 items. As of the same date, DC@IWU had 58,474 full-text downloads, with 41,230 downloads occurring in the past year. Our most downloaded document is ""Everybody Drinks Water": Mark Twain's Critique of Social Darwinism", an English Department Honors Thesis by 2004 graduate Sarah Vales, with 1,546 downloads. Our student journals also enjoy a high rate of downloads, totaling 19,172 since the site went live in early 2008. Emeritus Professor Christopher Prendergast of the Sociology and Anthropology Department is the most downloaded professor in our collection with "Phenomenology and Ethnomethodology in Economic Sociology" (1,109 downloads).

Since January 2008, DC@IWU has received over 16,000 visits from 3,244 cities in 128 countries, including the United Kingdom, China, Germany, Canada, India and Australia. The map below shows the countries and cities with the most visits to DC@IWU from January 2008 – July 2010:



Challenges & Opportunities

Until spring of 2010, our major challenge was to create a strong foundation amongst our stakeholders so they understood the mission, goals and creative ways Digital Commons could be used. During the spring of 2010, our efforts began to pay off in very positive ways, and now we are seeking a sustainable balance between continuing our outreach and education efforts and effectively managing the behind-the-scenes processing of items and collections.

Goals for AY2010

We are very pleased with the evolution of Digital Commons since early 2008 but recognize the need for continuous improvement. This coming year we plan to continue with our outreach and education efforts to students, especially to the student journal *Tributaries*, as well as to faculty and

staff to create SelectedWorks pages. Our hope is to begin conversations with key administrations on campus about the library taking a stronger role in communicating and sharing faculty research.

We also will continue efforts to streamline and improve the look and feel of DC@IWU, and will be a beta test site for efforts by the Berkeley Electronic Press (or bepress, the developer of Digital Commons and SelectedWorks), to provide rich media environments within Digital Commons. Our hope is to be able to display different types of media in one place, i.e., a streaming audio or video interview would be accompanied by a photo of the interviewee, a transcript of the interview and relevant metadata and citation information.

We look forward to working with our Admissions staff to experiment with how Digital Commons could be used to attract quality students, and also look forward to conversations with the Schools of Art and Music to explore how their content can best be represented in Digital Commons.

Creating an Advisory Board for Digital Commons is a high priority this year. The library has always positioned Digital Commons as a resource for the IWU community, so creating an advisory board to help us prioritize outreach efforts, identify new collections and partnerships and to help us understand how we can improve the service is key to communicating the value of Digital Commons to our stakeholders and to Academic Administration.

A sampling of the specific collections we will complete this coming year are:

- WGLT Collection: Faculty Interviews
- Writing Program documents
- International Office documents
- Teaching Award Addresses
- International Colloquium on Childhood and Globalization

We will continue outreach to the following publications and offices:

- Action Research Center
- *Tributaries* (student journal focused on the creative arts)
- Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine
- Board of Trustees

Collections to maintain this coming year include:

- Minutes from faculty, staff and student governance activities
- John Wesley Powell Undergraduate Research Conference
- Honors Projects
- Student journals (*Constructing History*, *The Delta*, *Park Place Economist*, *Pseudonym Required*, *Res Publica*, and *Undergraduate Economic Review*)

Conclusion

Digital Commons is steadily becoming integrated into the scholarly landscape at Illinois Wesleyan University thanks to our focus on excellent student work. In turn, our students' work has helped to distinguish our site on a national level. Digital Commons @ IWU has been used by bepress as a model of how student work can be highlighted in company brochures and newsletters, and we are regularly called upon to consult with other schools that are investigating and implementing Digital Commons. In addition, we are part of an Institute of Library and Museum Services National Leadership Grant proposal to study students' understanding and contributions to repositories of scholarship like Digital Commons.

We greatly appreciate the funding from the Office of the President, the Office of the Provost and the Andrew W. Mellon Center for Faculty and Curriculum Development and the Ames Library, and

will continue to seek out ways to strengthen the connection to the scholarly and creative processes on campus by continuing to seek out new relationships and collections.