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Institutional Repositories: A Plethora of Possibilities

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IN LAW LIBRARY MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

Edited by Philip C. Berwick ♦ For academic, firm, corporate, and government law librarians

Institutional Repositories: A Plethora of Possibilities

By CAROL A. WATSON, Director, Alexander Campbell King Law Library, University of Georgia School of Law, Athens, Georgia & JAMES M. DONOVAN, Director and Associate Professor of Law, Alvin E. Evans Law Library, University of Kentucky College of Law, Lexington, Kentucky

Introduction

Originally institutional repositories were primarily within the purview of the main libraries of the university. However, within the past five to seven years, institutional repositories have been implemented at more than 30 academic law libraries. Law librarians have taken the lead at their schools for establishing institutional repositories.

Some History

In 2002, the Association of Research Libraries' Scholarly Publishing & Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) issued a position paper defining an institutional repository as "digital collections that capture and preserve the intellectual output

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of university communities.” Interest in institutional repositories among general academic libraries quickly gained momentum after the publication of the SPARC position paper. The first repositories were aimed almost exclusively at digitizing faculty scholarship that had originally only existed in traditional print journals. Since those early efforts, the role of repositories has expanded beyond plain digital text to include a variety of formats such as audio, still images, animation and video. Additionally, the type of material included in repositories has broadened beyond faculty scholarship.

Why Law Libraries

Law libraries received special inspiration to join the institutional repository movement after the drafting of the Durham Statement in 2008. The Durham Statement urged law schools to commit to making its legal scholarship available in stable, open, digital formats instead of print. Library-managed repositories offered a timely and achievable response to this call-to-action.

This approach did not emerge out of thin air. Law librarians have traditionally assumed responsibility for collecting, organizing and preserving print legal scholarship. Many law libraries have also actively preserved historical archival materials related to their institutions. Consequently, law libraries are logically and naturally situated to assume the role of using institutional repository tools to manage their law school’s legal scholarship and digital history.

One of the main benefits of establishing an institutional repository is providing a single, digital venue for showcasing the intellectual output of the entire law school. In general, faculty scholarship is scattered throughout innumerable publications. An institutional repository provides a snapshot of the institute’s entire intellectual capital in one locus. As higher education is increasingly under scrutiny to produce evidence of output, the repository is ideally suited to highlight a law school’s productivity as a whole.

Furthermore, repository materials are often more highly ranked by search engines such as Google. Such increased visibility contributes to an enhanced academic reputation and increases the scholarly impact of faculty research.

Of course, providing free access to legal scholarship is an important benefit of establishing an institutional repository. In addition to being an altruistic gesture, and one comporting with fundamental goals of librarianship, freely accessible scholarship has been statistically proven to be more frequently cited in many academic disciplines including law, thus producing a measurable benefit to the individual authors. Like highly ranked search results, increased citations also lead to the work's greater scholarly impact.

Implementation

There are several resources available for creating an institutional repository. Currently the majority of U.S. academic libraries use BePress' commercially hosted Digital Commons platform. For a complete list of Digital Commons law repositories, see: <http://digitalcommons.bepress.com/institutional-repository-law/all.html>. Open access solutions such as Fedora, EPrints and DSpace are typically implemented at law schools who share their repository with their main campus libraries. DSpace is currently being used by a few law libraries such as the University of Washington and Texas Tech. Although it is not a repository platform in the strictest sense, some law libraries use OCLC's CONTENTdm to manage special collections online. Examples of content CONTENTdm library implementations include the Chesapeake Digital Preservation Group, and those at the University of Utah and Louisiana State University.

Whether a law library implements open access software or a commercially available product, be forewarned: repositories are not a matter of "if you build it, they will come." Many a library has dreamt of setting up its repository so that faculty can self-deposit their scholarship. However, most law libraries that have implemented repositories will be quick to advise that repositories require care, feeding and nurturing by law librarians. The work load can and should be easily managed by distributing the workload among librarians. No single librarian should be responsible for all of the repository content. If several librarians are assigned responsibility for content categories, the work load can be as minimal as an hour or less per librarian per week.

Collection Contents

What types of materials are libraries capturing in their repositories? Historically many law libraries began populating their repositories with faculty scholarship published in traditional print format as well as faculty working papers. However, once law librarians realized the potential to expand the functionality of the repository, faculty scholarship quickly expanded to include such materials as congressional testimony, lectures, classroom materials, presentations and amicus briefs. Some law libraries such as American University, Western New England and the University of Georgia have established popular media categories to collect faculty appearances in mass media outlets, e.g., articles and letters to the editor printed in newspapers and magazines, blogs, television and radio interviews. A few repositories even include reviews of faculty publications and articles about faculty members.

Transcripts or multimedia recordings from academic lecture series and conference proceedings that take place at the law schools are also ideal candidates for preservation in repositories. Law school administrators are often eager to promote their school's academic activities. Many law schools have research centers with scholarship that is optimally suited for inclusion in the repository.

Law libraries are not, however, simply limiting their repositories to faculty and research center scholarship. In response to the Durham Statement, some law libraries have assisted their student publications such as the law reviews to migrate both production and publication to electronic formats. Duke has been a leader in encouraging its student publications to publish online. Following Duke's example, many law libraries such as American University, William and Mary, Fordham and Boston College, just to name a few, have worked closely with their student publications to publish and preserve them in their institutional repositories.

Other types of student scholarship often included in repositories include student theses and dissertations as well as moot court and mock trial briefs. Nontraditional materials such as electronic portfolios and student presentations have also been preserved in some repositories.

Some law school repositories have expanded beyond faculty and student scholarship and are using their repositories to house law school archival information. Examples include public relations items such as news articles, press releases, brochures and pamphlets. Other types of materials also include annual reports, data sets and photographs. Law school administrative departments can be especially appreciative to have a one-stop online location for archival documents such as admissions brochures, career services workshops, student photographs, course schedules, registration documents, student handbooks, orientation schedules and student organization membership lists.

Law libraries can also use repositories to provide access to its special collections. For example, the University of Georgia hosts a portrait collection in its repository describing various paintings located throughout the law school. Touro's repository includes a catalog from the Ceremonial Objects from the Collection of Rabbi David A. Whiman exhibit. The University of Maryland digitized many documents and photographs from its "African Americans in Law" collection while Yale has included a selection of special collections manuscripts within its repository.

Finally, even alumni materials can find a suitable home in the institutional repository. The University of Maryland has published its alumni magazine, *JD*, and Golden Gate University includes several of its alumni programs in their respective repositories. Alumni annual donor reports and marketing materials are also useful collections to build.

Conclusion

In summary, the law library can be a major contributing partner to the success of its law school by establishing a digital repository to preserve and promote the institution's intellectual memory. Today's law school repositories have matured to include many more types of materials than simply faculty law review and journal articles. Librarians are ideally poised to capture, organize and preserve their institution's history in this new and powerful showcase.

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