INTRODUCTION

The 2003 edition of the annual Association of College and Research Libraries' (ACRL) Environmental Scan identifies institutional repositories, among others, as an "emerging issue that may affect the future of higher education [and] academic libraries" (ACRL, 2003, p. 3).

Establishing an institutional repository is not a simple, quick, or inexpensive undertaking. To many, an institutional repository is just technology—a combination of a Web server, relational database, and data storage accompanied by a wide spectrum of functionalities. But the building or purchasing of the technology is just one part of an institutional repository project, and perhaps the easiest part.

Far more time and effort goes into the less tangible aspects of an institutional repository, such as building advocacy, garnering collections, and determining policies. This *Library Technology Report* guides you through the process of establishing an institutional repository at your organization, from conceptualization to actualization, encompassing both the technology and intangibles.

This report answers the basic, yet complex, questions of what an institutional repository is and why one might be of value to your organization. The report also discusses specific policy, use, and technical decisions that will result in a detailed checklist of functions and features of the ideal institutional repository system for your organization.

Chapter 7 gives an overview of the currently available institutional repository systems, both commercial and open source, against which you can compare your customized checklist. This report provides enough information to enable you to be informed in your decisions as to whether an institutional repository is appropriate for your organization, how it potentially may be used, and which of the available systems best fit your needs.

Although the vast majority of institutional repositories are found at universities, many other types of institutions could benefit from an institutional repository. For instance:

- A society or association could establish an institutional repository to facilitate the sharing of digital documents among its members, such as a collection of audio samples of languages from around the world compiled by members of a linguistics society.

- A public library could use an institutional repository to collect historical documents from the community and share them with the world, such as images of the Erie Canal.

- A high school might use an institutional repository to hold student e-portfolios that could be included as part of the students' college or job applications.

- A medical research center could create an institutional repository to help with the sharing of datasets, as required by some federally funded grants.

Any institution with a need or desire to share digital content over the long-term could benefit from establishing an institutional repository.