

## WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

An institutional repository should be a collaborative project that brings together the expertise and efforts of several units across an institution. Units whose participation is an absolute necessity are computer services, information technologies (IT) training, and the library.

An institutional repository requires a large amount of digital storage, powerful servers, and technical expertise that is likely to be found within a computer services division. Moreover, a centralized computer services division already has digital storage backup systems in place, into which the IR can be integrated, as well as firewalls and centralized authentication.

In some organizations, IT training and support is an independent unit, or it may reside within the computer services division. Introducing an IR to an organization is similar to introducing other IT, such as online course management systems. Training and ongoing support is required, the level of which is determined by the level of computer sophistication at your organization.

The library has just as much, if not more, to offer to the project as computer services and IT training. The library needs to be involved in an IR project because of the following:

- **The expertise that the library staff can offer.** The core functions of an IR (material submission, metadata application, access control, discovery, distribution, and preservation) are identical to many of the core functions of a library. With perhaps the exception of an institutional archive, only the library can claim expertise in all these core functions, and increasingly libraries are performing these with digital material.
- **The level of trust that a community usually has for its library.** No IR will succeed without quality content. But unless the members of an organization, such as the faculty of a university, trust the IR they will not be willing to turn over stewardship of their documents.

Often a library is seen as a public good outside the politics and feuds that go on at any organization. As such, the library makes for an excellent front for an institutional repository. The library's participation may offer the project the credibility and trust necessary to obtain the buy-in and participation of the community.

- **The pre-existing relationships.** At most academic libraries, subject bibliographers serve as liaison between the library and academic departments on campus. Bibliographers can offer a tremendous amount to the project. Their relationships with the faculty can serve as a conduit through which the concept of an IR can be introduced, the level of interest ascertained, and collections solicited.

By involving the library in the IR project, an organization can leverage not only the library's expertise, but also the trust and relationship it has built with the members of the organization.

Ideally, your IR project team should include people with a wide range of expertise:

- You need participation from those with expertise in digital preservation and metadata.

- Most IR systems provide for interface customization, so you may want to include those people experienced with usability testing and graphic design.
- Marketing and public relations skills also are important, as is IT training experience.
- Access to someone in legal counsel is crucial for issues of copyright, distribution licenses, and appropriate use and privacy statements.
- On the technical side, you will want knowledge of data storage and backup, as well as your institution's authentication system and firewalls.
- Representation from all segments of your user groups, such as faculty, students, staff, and researchers, also is important.

Be sure to include project skeptics, as well as the enthusiasts, to ensure a wide spectrum of concerns and issues are heard.

All these people should not work as one large group. Small teams with focused objectives are ideal, including a technology implementation team, policy team, collection development team, and one that focuses on marketing of the services. A small group that is devoted to raising awareness of some of the larger, associated issues, such as scholarly communication, copyright, fair use, and open access also is useful.

Top-down support of the project is crucial based on the breadth of people who ideally should participate in an IR project. If the project has been blessed by the organization's president, provost, or director, pulling together the right people from across the organization is easier. With a mandate from the top, less resistance will likely be encountered.

Most importantly, an IR requires the long-term commitment of significant resources, including staffing, equipment, and preservation efforts. Ensuring the long-term survival of the repository without commitment from those that hold the purse strings of the organization is almost impossible.

If the project is not already a top-down initiative, then find a way to push the initiative to the top of the organization before moving forward.