

CONTENT RECRUITMENT

The success of an IR project is often determined by its quantity of content. Unfortunately, other more glamorous components of an IR project, particularly the technology, usually receive the bulk of initial effort and focus.

Failing to recognize that significant efforts will need to go into content recruitment can lead to an initial disappointment with the IR because no one appears to be using it. Without the recognition that content recruitment will take as much, if not more, effort than the initial technology startup, project members may fail to pace themselves and save some energy and enthusiasm for the task.

Recognize and plan for content recruitment and IR use advocacy from the beginning to ensure you do not end up with an empty IR.

One important facet of content recruitment is marketing. Even MIT, which built the DSpace system and received significant national press coverage for it, has had to actively market its IR. At the DSpace Users Group meeting in March 2004, Margret Branschofsky of MIT gave a presentation about marketing DSpace to the MIT community.

Branschofsky has found that as many as five to seven tailored and personalized impressions about DSpace are required to catch the interest of a new, potential IR participant. These impressions can take many forms including notices in a faculty bulletin, a presentation at a faculty senate meeting, a personalized e-mail, or a feature article in a newspaper.

Creating tailored and personalized impressions requires a thorough knowledge of how the IR could meet actual needs of people, which is no small undertaking. For example:

- A physicist may want to know the benefits of an IR over using arXiv.
- A medical researcher may be most tempted by details of an IR's access control features.
- A retiring faculty member may find the preservation feature most attractive, but a junior faculty member is persuaded by evidence of increased distribution and use of IR content.

Preparatory work to tailor IR impressions should pay off by decreasing the number of total impressions needed.

Often the most persuasive arguments for submitting content to an IR come not from administrators or librarians, but from close colleagues at other institutions. Viral marketing, where a message, concept, or idea quickly spreads through a community, is effective.

This viral marketing explains in part why current use of IRs is heavily concentrated in certain disciplines. Unfortunately, viral marketing is difficult to plan for and control—it simply happens when the conditions are right.

While relying on marketing to attract new future prospects, strategies exist to help identify community members who are ready to use the IR from the onset. Since IRs have previously been used almost exclusively by universities, most of the strategies are aimed specifically at faculty, although some can be adapted for other types of users.

Branschofsky's
Powerpoint presentation,
[www.dspace.org/
conference/presentations/
mit-marketing.ppt](http://www.dspace.org/conference/presentations/mit-marketing.ppt)

arXiv, <http://arxiv.org>

OAIster, <http://oaister.umdl.umich.edu>

Minds of Carolina,
www.ibiblio.org/minds/innovation.html

ARL, www.arl.org

SPARC, www.arl.org/sparc

CNI, www.cni.org

EDUCAUSE,
www.educause.edu

Faculty who already participate in established digital repository, such as arXiv, likely will understand the goals of the IR and be most receptive to it. If you cannot readily identify these faculty members, use an OAI metadata harvester search engine, such as OAIster, to search for the name of your institution or names of faculty members. This technique should reveal those on campus who are making submissions into other digital repositories.

Another strategy is to search across your organization's website to locate faculty members who regularly post preprints, conference papers, and other scholarly works on their personal homepages.

In addition, identify faculty who publish in or are on the editorial boards of online, open-access journals. These faculty members are able to immediately understand and realize the benefits of the IR.

The strategy of the Minds of Carolina project at the University of North Carolina is to focus on retiring faculty. These faculty not only have the time to locate, prepare, and deposit their works into an IR, they also have a strong incentive.

Faced with the question of what will happen to their scholarly contributions on retirement, retiring faculty members are receptive to the stewardship and preservation functions of an IR.

Your library's bibliographers are another excellent means by which to identify early IR participants. Most bibliographers have established relationships with their faculty and are often familiar with the faculty's research. Moreover, bibliographers can serve as the conduit through which IR project members can contact the faculty.

The portfolio of content recruitment strategies will increase as more and more institutions share their successes and failures. What is already evident is that the more successful strategies are those that take the disciplinary and career stage differences into account.

Institutional repositories are still in their infancy, both in the technology, as well as the practice. Librarians need to learn more about how, when, and why an IR will be used.

Organizations such as ARL, SPARC, CNI, and EDUCAUSE are offering assistance in these endeavors through sponsorship of IR workshops, programs, webcasts, and establishing IR tracks at conferences.

Moreover, all institutions, regardless of type of organization or IR system selected, will share these challenges. Take comfort that you are in good company.