Beyond Web-Based Scholarly Works Repositories: The Effect of Institutional Mandates on Faculty Attitudes Towards Institutional Repositories
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Open Access, IRs and other players

The goal of the Open Access (OA) movement is to expand the capabilities for immediate and broad distribution of research publications. Institutional repositories (IR) play a fundamental role in collecting, preserving and making widely available faculty scholarly and research work. Thus, with the use of latest technology, they offer a prospect of expanding the current scholarly communication system by increasing authors’ impact and institutions’ prestige, and facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration.

Understanding and addressing the issues faced by IRs requires a multidimensional approach that involves all stakeholders including: individual scholars and researchers, academic institutions and librarians, scholarly and scientific society publishers, commercial publishers, and government institutions. However, most researchers (Kim, 2010), agree that the main players are faculty members that can “make-or-break” an IR.

Literature review

Scholars have been slow to act in ways that will bring OA closer to meeting its goals. Surveys conducted by Primary Research Group (2009) show that 57.2 % of faculty in the sample said that they are aware of the digital repository for faculty publication maintained by their library/institution. However, only 9.7 % have ever contributed a publication to their libraries’ digital repository. The study reveals that 59% of faculty understand the term institutional digital repository and 74.6% understand the meaning of open access. Figure 2 provides the summarized data on faculty attitudes towards the OA movement.

Nicholas et al conclude that 22% of researchers were directly influenced by mandate to deposit their work, and this varied based on age. The younger researchers were more likely to comply with the mandate.

Other studies (Sale 2007) compared the rates of three universities in Australia, one with only an IR, another with an IR and assistance in deposit; and one with an IR, assistance and mandate. The results from this study showed that deposition rates were significantly higher (close to 100%) for the last one within two years of adoption of the mandate.

The Impact of mandate at the UNT

The University of North Texas (UNT), was the first public institution in the state of Texas to implement a policy in support of Open Access (Approved on February 1, 2012). The UNT Scholarly Repositories was launched in September 2010 and the collection includes Articles, books, book chapters, Presentations, Posters, Artworks, videos, and datasets dating from 1932 to the present. Out of 50+ Colleges and departments that contributed items to the UNT Scholarly Works, the top two contributors are: UNT College of Arts and Sciences (930 items) and UNT Honors College (580 items).

The graph below (Figure-3) shows the total number of items uploaded to UNT Scholarly Works per year. It is interesting to note that the highest rate of deposits was in 2012, the same year UNT adopted an open access mandate.

Access rate for the Scholarly Works

The UNT Libraries compile usage statistics for digital resources they manage, which can be viewed by any user at any time. The UNT Scholarly Works collection were already heavily used (more than 250,000 times) by scholars and researchers around the world. As can be seen from Figure-4, the greatest usage of items in UNT Scholarly Works occurred in year 2013 - right after the implementation of the open access mandate.

Conclusion

Studies by Nicholas et al (2013); Primary Research Group (2013); and Sale, A.H.J. (2007) that surveyed researchers from an array of disciplines have shown a significant increase of scholarly work deposits in web based scholarly work repositories after their institutions have adopted an OA self-archiving mandate. UNT is not any different. It should be noted that mandates alone may not be the determining factor in the success of IR, but they are an enabling tool to change the mindset and culture of faculty members, and increase deposits in IR. Making scholarly works available to the wider academic community (via open access repository harvestable using the OA-PMH protocol) indeed, requires a well-developed infrastructure and dedicated support from all stakeholders.

References


Figure 1 Conceptualizing the development of IRs

Figure 2 Faculty awareness of Open Access [Source: Primary Research Group (2009)]

Figure 3 UNT Scholarly Works deposited by year, as of April 5, 2014

Figure 4 UNT Scholarly Works access by year, as of April 5, 2014