

“Getting the output out!”

Needs Assessment Survey

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Introduction

As part of the discovery phase of the work of the Content Management System Evaluation Team, Deans and Directors of all faculties and units were contacted regarding the project. Interviews were organised and conducted with approximately 40 members of University of Wollongong academic and general administrative staff during May-June 2005.

The interviews primarily sought to ascertain the type and range of digital objects dealt with by the units and faculties, and whether and in what form they would be served by an institutional repository (IR).

The interviews also provided the opportunity to inform members of staff of issues surrounding institutional repositories, learning and research objects, and to record their comments.

Two information sessions were advertised to all staff and presented. A number of staff from a variety of faculties and units attended and a worthwhile discussion session followed each presentation.

A further presentation was provided to the Faculty of Arts Executive Meeting.

The findings of the survey are summarised below.

Findings

An Institutional Repository

1. There is **general support** for the idea of an institutional repository or electronic archive for the University of Wollongong. All those interviewed saw benefits in the idea. Many were keen to see an IR implemented as soon as possible and to be involved in pilot projects.

2. There is a recognised need across campus for a **digital archives** repository to store a variety of digital material, ranging from research and learning objects to certain administrative records which could be made available on open access.
3. A centralised institutional repository would forestall the need for **individual unit and faculty based repositories**, consideration of which is currently being undertaken by some faculties. It would also **centralise IT issues** and provide efficiencies in that area.
4. An institutional repository could take away content load from faculty and unit based individual web pages and **free up faculty storage space**.
5. A Dean noted that an institutional repository could ensure **return on investment** for the institution in regards to research and teaching outputs.
6. There is general support for a **centralised** institutional repository which will bring together and simplify the processes involved in dealing with **intellectual property and copyright issues**.
7. The repository should **only include UOW material** i.e. digital objects owned by, or generated by, the university and its staff. An exception to this could be material associated with a conference held at the University of Wollongong, plus material associated with journals and publications hosted by the University.
8. A number of faculties raised the issue of organising and managing **administrative material**. Procedures and intranets differ widely and few seem to have access to the ImageReal records management system. A centralised digital repository was noted by some as a possible storehouse for archived material that could have wider access than is presently available. Much of this issue falls outside the scope of the present project, however **records management** within faculties appears to be an issue which may benefit from a university-wide solution.

Learning Objects

9. There are **varying levels of support** for the use of **teaching and learning materials** within an institutional repository or electronic archive. The support varies according to units and faculties based on the suite of digital objects dealt with, and also within units and faculties based on individual views.
10. A Dean noted that an institutional repository could provide the means to ensure that **teaching and learning objects were not lost** to the university with the departure of individual academics.
11. **Limiting access** to material in the repository is considered necessary for many teaching and learning objects.

12. A significant number of academics saw **no need** for teaching and learning material to be placed on an institutional repository – they felt that WebCt/Vista dealt sufficiently with this material.
13. A significant number of **academics expressed concern** about putting their course outlines and materials on open access. They raised issues of loss of intellectual property and plagiarism.

Research Objects

14. There is general support for an institutional repository whose primary role is to **improve access to the research output** of the University via open access on the internet, and as a consequence increase citations and improve individual and institutional reputation.
15. There is general support for **open access to research material**. Academics saw the value in having this material freely available via Google and other internet search engines.
16. Chemistry identified the use of an IR in providing access to **supplementary research information** linked in to publications.
17. Centralised open access to research and important honours **theses** was supported, along with archiving of older, significant theses.
18. An institutional repository would provide a means to promote those **non-HERDC research outputs** which are otherwise neglected.
19. Many academics have **concerns over copyright** issues associated with an institutional repository – they generally believe that publishers will not allow material to be put up on institutional servers and that such actions would be subject to litigation and could threaten future publishing opportunities. These concerns are largely addressed when it was pointed out that more than 80% of publishers now allow copies of published research to be loaded onto individual web sites or institutional repositories, and that authors are becoming more proactive in holding on to their copyright.
20. Many **academics are unaware** of the open access initiative, and of institutional repositories. Some are also unaware of the increasing role of Google and Google Scholar and use by students and the research community.

Faculty Needs

21. The Faculty of **Creative Arts** is keen to see an IR implemented as they have a large number of **digital files** – images, sound and video – which they wish to make available. Some would be via open access with others accessible only to university staff and students.
22. The Faculty of **Law** sees a use for the IR in regards to promoting non-HERDC publications and academic research output.

23. Geosciences is keen to link their major **GIS repository** with the institutional repository. Whilst the GIS repository contains a large proportion of third party material that cannot be made openly accessible, there may be the opportunity for connections between the two.
24. The **Janet Cosh Herbarium**, Biological Sciences, indicated potential benefits in its use of an IR.

Selected Comments

25. *A Manager, Personnel and Financial Services* - Sees the administrative desirability of an IR in dealing with research objects and as a supplement to Vista for teaching and learning objects. Suggested that there is scope for UOW administrative historical and corporate material to be made publicly accessible via an institutional repository.
26. *Senior academic, Faculty of Arts* - The faculty has a wide variety of relevant digital research objects – referred papers, reports, articles and theses, and looks forward to making them more widely available via the internet. The present web site access is scattered and metadata attachments are hit and miss. Pointed out that online access increases productivity and improves the output quality of the material because it is open to improvement and comment. Also suggested that if it is up to the individual academics to put material up on the IR, then there will naturally be some self-censorship, and they will want to put up their best material, not their rubbish, as this will reflect upon their reputation. This will help to ensure the quality of the system.
27. *Senior academic, Faculty of Arts* - Most reliable recent refereed publications will be archived electronically already by quality journals. The problem with having a UOW archive can be the encouragement of the ‘vanity press’ syndrome. How will we differentiate between self published slosh and the refereed real thing?

Reply, Helen Mandl - Need to acknowledge that Google has become a fact of life and discovery, and that often people won't find research because it is published within a 'locked' database or journal that has no public access. The aim of an institutional repository would be to make your research available to all, and also link / cite the formally published version. It would certainly be important to provide a means of identifying publications that had gone through a refereeing process.

28. *Recently arrived senior academic, Faculty of Commerce* - At QUT, my faculty had a faculty web page with the working paper series available, but after moving it over to the ePrints server (QUT IR) we found the number of hits increased greatly and as editor I would receive 2-3 emails a week from people around the world asking questions on the research. It is a fantastic means of disseminating research.

29. *Academic, Faculty of Creative Arts* - We have a lot of audiovisual material that we would like to digitize. Keen to use materials such as documentaries as a test case which would involve digitization and obtaining all the relevant clearances prior to placement on the IR. There will need to be collaboration in regards to obtaining ARC and additional funding to carry out such work, now and into the future, as it is labour intensive and expensive, especially in regards to the equipment needed to digitize old audio-visual material.
30. *Faculty IT officer* - If the IR initiative does not proceed, then faculties will more and more do their own thing, within the constraints of the rules and regulations of the University, or even outside those constraints. UOW needs to be more supportive of new technologies.
31. *Senior academic, Faculty of Engineering* - The Institute already has a lot of material which could populate the repository. Members of faculty already send material to international discipline-based repositories such as arXiv – often this preprint material is posted there to secure priority of discovery.
32. *Dean* - Interested in using the IR to store course material such as teaching notes, lesson plans, etc, so that if an academic should leave UOW, then the course material would be available for use by the Faculty.
33. *Senior academic, Faculty of Informatics* - The archiving aspect of the IR is important, because 'curiosity driven research' can result in outputs years later e.g. my book published in 1979 is now relevant in the debate on bandwidths for mobile carriers. If the research output is in the institutional repository, then the University can claim 'ownership' and gain kudos into the future.