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Bradford Scholars: An online repository for the University of Bradford

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The University of Bradford Institutional Repository

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Author(s): Nieminen, Satu

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Bradford Scholars: An online repository for the University of Bradford

Introduction:

The University of Bradford currently have a number of digital repositories within the University but it does not have an institutional repository. The principal examples of existing repositories are e-repository® a web-based content management system which hosts some learning objects and archival material for administration, and Virtual Scholars which uses the open source software DSpace to store postgraduate dissertations. There may also be various electronic collections of learning materials, bibliographic databases with and without full-text supported within academic departments.

In order to address the issue of disparate digital collections sitting on their own unique software platforms, the University of Bradford Library applied for JISC funding from the Repositories and Preservations Programme: Repositories Start-up and Enhancement Projects tract. Funding was granted in late 2007 and the one-year Bradford University Repository Project – BURP! - was launched in March 2008 to set up an open access online repository for the University of Bradford. A live sustainable repository service – Bradford Scholars - is planned for first quarter release in 2009.

Aims and objectives:

For the purposes of BURP!, a repository is a hub for collecting and preserving the intellectual output of an institution in digital form(1). In a nutshell the University will have a freely accessible digital online repository of scholarly material. All content in Bradford Scholars will be retained in perpetuity during the lifetime of the repository. Long-term preservation strategies will be drafted to cover hardware and software migrations in addition to bitstream conversions as and when necessary. Bradford Scholars is also built from the start to provide interoperability with other in-house systems like the University VLE (BlackBoard) and the new Content Management System (Terminal4). An important aspect of interoperability is to provide access to research managers at the University of Bradford to accommodate research assessment and planning requirements set by the institution itself as well as HEFCE. Bradford Scholars is also intended to be interoperable with external systems like ETHoS(2), OpenDOAR(3), ROAR(4), Intute(5) etc.

Technical solutions:

The University of Bradford will use DSpace(6), the open source repository software platform developed by MIT and Hewlett Packard, to deliver its repository service. Library staff at Bradford have extensive experience from the past three years in using DSpace to house postgraduate dissertations which has encouraged the Project to adopt the software package for the repository installation. DSpace will be used to capture the University's scholarly materials in any format – in text, video, audio, and data. It will be used to index the content and distribute it over the web so users can search and retrieve the University's scholarly works. DSpace will also cater for preserving the deposited content in perpetuity. Building on this, and wherever possible using open standards, we aim to offer services to best suit our users' needs for depositing, managing and accessing various collections of content. With the very helpful assistance of the Repository Support Project (RSP) staff, the first installation is expected to be available to demonstrate to stakeholders in Summer 2008.

Stakeholder engagement:

The Project Team are striving from the beginning to achieve a user needs and requirements led repository service by engaging a range of stakeholders in the set up process. For instance, the University of Bradford members of staff were invited to take part in an online survey gauging their current knowledge about repositories, their expectations of the content and functionalities and individual research behaviour. The survey was advertised widely in the online Staff Briefing, the University's intranet, the Library's own web pages and the Library's eResources blog to ensure high participation rates. In addition academics were contacted via email by Subject Librarians to guarantee maximum awareness of the survey. The Project Team are in the process of analysing the some 100 completed survey responses to identify trends in user expectations.

Pilot Schools and advocacy:

To further involve academics in the repository set up process and to commence the advocacy drive, potential pilot Schools were invited to a series of meetings in April and May to introduce BURP! The purpose of the meetings was to explain the driving forces behind the planned repository service, the benefits of a repository to an institution and its academics and the way in which academic units could collaborate in the Project. BURP! is now working towards a live repository service with the School of Engineering, Design and Technology; Informatics; and the School of Life Sciences Division of Archaeological, Environmental and Geographical Sciences.

The collaborative work with academic Schools began with a series of face-to-face interviews with individual research-active academics. The purpose of the interviews was to find out more about the academics as authors, their understanding of issues around repositories and their requirements from an online repository. One of the main objectives of the interviews was to map the possible cultural barriers at work that slow down the growth of an institutional repository. The interview responses will be analysed in detail and collated with the online survey results to inform the Project of the direction the stakeholders would like the repository to develop.

At a later stage staff at pilot Schools will also be requested to give feedback on the first repository design round. This feedback will inform the Project on various aspects of interface design, including layout and navigation; information architecture; the content submission process; and the desirability of extra information services and tools on the repository site. One especially challenging area of the platform design is the achievement of a user-friendly submission interface for authors wishing to deposit their research. This is considered crucial for the success of the repository as the administrative effort individual academics need to put in must be kept low for optimum buy-in.

The BURP! Team are liaising with the pilot Schools on various issues during the project year. One objective of the Project is to identify and review existing collections of materials that will feature in the repository as initial showcase material. A range of traditional publications potentially suited for open archiving has already been identified and the pilot Schools have been requested to make the materials available for the pilot repository installation.

This process has revealed another challenge for repository managers: awareness of copyright issues and versioning is regrettably low among academics. Most authors demonstrate understanding of the publishing and/or copyright agreements signed while submitting material for commercial publication, however, many are not aware of the limitations these agreements put on the re-use of their published work. For example, authors have been surprised to learn that while publishers may be willing to permit self-archiving in open access repositories, they are less than reluctant to allow the final published PDF versions to be posted on institutional repositories. There is clearly a need for further awareness building and training in this area. It is envisaged that the repository service will offer further information, tools and assistance to depositors on the issues of copyright, open access and versioning. Some of the tools offered on Bradford Scholars will include the JISC toolkit on copyright(7), SHERPA ROMeO and JULIET databases(8) and the VERSIONS Toolkit(9).

Widening advocacy work:

The Project Team has also engaged a range of other stakeholders, including administrators, the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Research and Development and other senior management and policy makers in the process of designing and setting up a repository with research planning and management in mind. Bradford Scholars would then potentially serve not only academics as a platform for research but also as a database to be used for the needs of the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise. Two particular issues to be addressed by the Project include the creation of a database of all citations of research published by Bradford academics and the provision of appropriate metadata fields.

More targeted advocacy and marketing work aimed at the remainder of academic units at Bradford will commence in autumn 2008. Aimed at academic buy-in this work will take the form of awareness-building events, meetings with heads of schools and research groups, and will become part of an ongoing advocacy drive to ensure a sustainable repository service after the Project year comes to an end.

- 1) Wikipedia, <http://www.wikipedia.org>
- 2) Electronic Theses Online System – ETHoS, <http://www.ethos.ac.uk/>
- 3) Directory of Open Access Repositories – OpenDOAR, <http://www.opendoar.org/>
- 4) Registry of Open Access Repositories – ROAR, <http://roar.eprints.org/>
- 5) Intute, <http://www.intute.ac.uk/irs/>
- 6) DSpace, <http://www.dspace.org>
- 7) JISC Online Copyright Activity, <http://restricted.jisc.ac.uk/freearea/copyright2/0000.html>
- 8) SHERPA ROMeO and JULIET <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/index.html>
- 9) VERSIONS Toolkit, http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/versions/VERSIONS_Toolkit_v1_final.pdf