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Research Online

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Research Online: achieving success

Michael K. Organ

University of Wollongong, morgan@uow.edu.au

Publication Details

Michael Organ, Research Online: achieving success, Presentation at the Meeting of Bepress (Digital Commons) Australian Sites Representatives, VALA Conference, Melbourne Conference and Exhibition Centre, 7 February 2010.

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library:
research-pubs@uow.edu.au

Research Online: achieving success

Abstract

A description is given of the powerful outreach program that has brought Research Online 8 journals, 5000+ full text objects, and over 1 million downloads, all without a mandate. The author identifies key factors that have contributed to Research Online's success and identifies hands-on strategies for attendees to take back to their home institution.

Disciplines

Arts and Humanities | Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Two Models for Institutional Repository Success

Learn how focusing IR resources, developing inclusive content policies, and creating a strong publishing program can lead to a successful, service-oriented repository.

Monday, February 8th, 2010

Location: Holiday Inn on Flinders, Room TBD

Time: 15:30-17:30

Presenters

Michael Organ, Manager of Repository Services for Research Online at University of Wollongong.

Organ describes the powerful outreach program that has brought Research Online 8 journals, 5000+ full text objects, and over 1 million downloads, all without a mandate. Organ identifies key factors that have contributed to Research Online's success and identifies hands-on strategies for attendees to take back to their home institution.

Lance Deveson, Library and Information Manager at the Australian Council for Educational Research

Deveson discusses the criteria ACER used in selecting an IR platform and how a hosted IR solution frees the library to focus on providing publishing services, including capturing proceedings from conferences, publishing magazines, and managing peer-reviewed publications.

Research Online @ the University of Wollongong

Reaching out - for success

Michael Organ

February 2010

Signs of success – 1 million downloads

On the 1 September 2009 Research Online (ro.uow.edu.au), the University of Wollongong's open access research repository, saw its 1 millionth full text download. A 2006 conference paper by Faculty of Informatics academics Katina Michael, A. McNamee and M.G. Michael, entitled 'The Emerging Ethics of Humancentric GPS Tracking and Monitoring', was the 1 millionth item to be downloaded since the site went live in January 2006. Dr. Michael is one of the strongest supporters of Research Online, with more than 160 items on the site and making heavy use of Selected Works for non-traditional research output.

1 million downloads from 5000 items in just over 3 ½ years – an impressive figure.

How did we get there?

The University of Wollongong is a medium sized Australian university. With limited funds restricting our ability to take on additional IT support staff, at the end of 2005 we chose Digital Commons as our IR solution. The choice came down to cost, functionality and ease of use. Since that time we have had limited resources (2 full time staff, now down to 1), though support from the Library and senior administrative staff such as the DVC (Research) has been strong. We also adopted an informal inclusive content policy – saying “Yes!” to most UOW published research outputs offered to us and doing all we could to make them discoverable.

Reaching out – the Outreach Program

Our success to date has been built upon outreach – securing content by direct involvement with faculty. The future may be very different, with automatic harvesting and populating the norm, though a combination of the two – outreach and automation - is probably the best option as we move forward.

Open access repositories such as Digital Commons are all about publicising, promoting and exposing content – in this case UOW published research – to the wider community.

That community is both on campus and off – our academics on campus, and researchers off.

Content – this is the core to the success of any IR.

We knew from the start that at the University of Wollongong we needed to secure content in order to be successful, and to be seen to be successful by our stakeholders and funders.

The outreach program started before we had even acquired an IR – during 2005 we carried out a “Needs Assessment” survey into the perceived needs of UOW academic staff and senior administrators regarding digital objects.

<http://ir.uow.edu.au/team.html>

The subsequent report was titled “Getting the output out!” and reinforced the fact that there was a need on campus for a digital archive / repository.

The report proved the case for support of an IR – for centralised IT and copyright control, freeing up of faculty storage space, providing the university with a return on investment, archiving research outputs, providing an administrative function and above all, acting as a powerful promotional tool for the university and individual academics.

The process of preparing the report not only informed Library staff, but also began the outreach process – a process whereby as many people on campus were made aware of the IR program and were encouraged to engage in it.

This process began in mid 2005 and continues to this day, though its form has expanded.

What do I mean by that?

The Outreach program has taken the following form over the intervening 4 years:

1. Needs Assessment survey 2005 – interviews were carried out with approximately 40 UOW staff, including the Deans and Directors of all faculties and units, plus academics and general staff
2. Formation of a cross- campus committee in 2005 to select an IR – in this case DC in December 2005

Following the installation of Research Online, and employment of 2 staff, the following occurred:

3. Email to campus announcing acquisition of the IR and branding of Research Online
4. Meetings with Deans of faculties by repository manager and presentation – to gain support for wider interaction with faculties
4. Meetings with faculty research heads – presentation and discussion – identify specific needs and research champions
5. Meetings with departments and schools – brief presentations to large groups of academics
6. Meetings with individual academics – acquire content and, if possible, train them in uploading their own material
7. Development of a promotional material such as brochure – to support presentations
8. Preparation of publicity material for inclusion in research newsletters, faculty publications and student and staff orientation material
9. Digital Commons itself – a powerful promotional tool.

The presentation of the site itself – clean, easy to use, friendly

The monthly email notifying users of their full text download statistics is probably one of the most powerful outreach devices. It serves to constantly remind academics that DC is doing the job it was meant to do i.e. promote their research output.

10. Reaching out beyond campus – very early on we looked to increase the visibility of RO by contacting harvesters and IR listings such as Oaister, Google Scholar, SCIRUS, Web of Science, ARROW, OpenDOAR – and ensure that RO was known to those sites. This undoubtedly increased our full text downloads.

11. Loading content onto the site, with embedded email addresses for UOW staff – both sourced from the internet and from the academic themselves – this then fed into the monthly full text download reports

12. Monthly report to Library which then fed into higher level reporting

As can be seen, the work of running a successful IR is not just that of sitting in front of a computer screen and loading content – it is very much also about getting out amongst the users and being prepared to engage with them.

It is about being

- Proactive – do not sit in front of the computer screen and wait for the content to come
- Positive - in regards to what RO can do for our clients
- Persistent – keep repeating the positive messages
- Professional – maintain accuracy and quality standards within the database and in dealings with clients
- Priorities – content and communication

Content, content, content

A successful outreach program results in both more content for the repository and also challenges.

How can we satisfy the needs of certain clients e.g.

- Scientists and chemists whose publications can be so tightly controlled by copyright that there are few opportunities for open access
- Creative artists whose output is not necessarily paper-based or able to be put in pdf form
- Arts practitioners who only publish books or book chapters
- Film, multimedia
- Associated data
- Theses
- Locally published journals

The latter is a challenge which has been easily addressed by RO in recent years – we now have 8 journals on RO, with 2 using the Edikit software to complete the peer-review publication process.

- Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice
- Australasian Journal of Peer Learning

Summary

A successful open access repository is built on a sound, easy to use software solution, dependable infrastructure and an engaging and proactive outreach program aimed at securing content and also promoting the successful operation of the repository.

We feel we have done this with Bepress's Digital Commons, and for this reason were able to celebrate our 1 millionth download in September 2009 with some pride – the result of a lot of hard work on both our part and those at Bepress.