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 deposition; 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 Works repository 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.

Figure 1: Conceptualizing the development of IRs

Figure 2: Faculty awareness of Open Access

Current IR situation

The current situation of IRs is rather bleak and calls to question the effectiveness of the current ways of recruiting content, including institutional mandates. According to Primary Research Group (2014), only 5% of journal articles published by the faculty members have been archived in the IR.

The most recent survey by Nicholas et al (2014) suggested that while the size and use of repositories has been relatively modest, almost half of all institutions either have, or are planning, a repository mandate requiring deposit. Nicholas et al argue that mandates vary based on the research community and/or institution.

The effect of mandates on deposit

A survey conducted by Swan (2005) shows that academics favor open access, but will not self-archive unless it is mandated by their institutions and/or their funders.

National institute of Health (NIH) merely reached 4% of deposits with encouragements alone, but with mandated deposit in place the deposit rates rose to over 60%. (Harnad, 2009).

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Conclusion

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.

Access rate for the Scholarly Works

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

References

http://www.researchandmarkets.com/research/7419bc/the_survey_of_higher

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

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

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