**If the Shoe Fits: Institutional Repositories
and Technical Services**

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In 2000, the institutional repository (IR) movement was in its infancy. Since then, the IR has had an interesting trajectory.[1] At the University of Maryland School of Law, the decision to showcase faculty scholarship in an institutional repository may be traced back to the early 2000s with the establishment of a Research Papers series in the Legal Scholarship Network (LSN). Based on that experience, and after investigating a number of options, the decision was made to implement Berkeley Electronic Press' Digital Commons platform. The reasons for selecting the Digital Commons have been well documented.[2] The Digital Commons at UM Law (http://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/) includes not only faculty publications but also content such as congressional testimony, award-winning student articles, videos on environmental law topics as well as a number of image files of historical significance. As we have gained experience with the repository software and learned from the growing community of users, the potential of the repository as a showcase for the research and scholarship of the faculty and a vehicle to promote the depth and breadth of scholarship in which the Maryland legal community is engaged is continually reaffirmed.

Although Maryland implemented the Digital Commons five years ago, in some circles this qualifies us as pioneers! Inevitably, during conversations about IRs, questions are raised about a host of issues including the pros and cons of implementing a repository in-house versus choosing a hosted solution, how tasks associated with the repository are integrated into existing workflows, and the amount and level of staff needed to implement, maintain, and enhance the repository. Underlying these questions, and often unspoken, has always been the question of where responsibility for the repository should lie. And what is meant by "responsibility"? Responsibility for the content of the IR, for technical support, for day-to-day maintenance, or for all or a combination of these? Should responsibility be shared among several units or consolidated in one unit? There are many variables to consider, so offering a single, succinct answer to this question remains elusive. Ultimately each institution must reach a decision based on its needs and capabilities.

That being said, I would like to suggest that technical services is uniquely qualified to assume responsibility for all aspects of the institutional repository.[3] Although IRs are often viewed as a public service, I believe that the staff of technical services possesses the organizational and technical skills and the intellectual capabilities to support the institutional repository.

The traditional technical services unit includes "library operations concerned with the acquisition, organization (bibliographic control), physical processing, and maintenance of library collections...."[4] In a nutshell, technical services manages the acquisition of content and its subsequent systematic organization and description according to highly structured protocols. The successful IR is based on a hierarchical framework with well-defined components in which content is arranged logically and systematically. Technical services specializes in creating and supporting environments such as this.

A significant part of managing the institutional repository revolves around content recruitment. While some may argue that this task belongs more appropriately to public services, I would propose that technical services is exceptionally well positioned to manage this activity. For decades, technical services has been vigorously engaged in combating inflated subscription prices and as a result has acquired a thorough understanding of the economics of scholarly resources. One solution that has been offered to mitigate the crisis in scholarly communication is the implementation of an institutional repository.[5] Technical services staff are well aware of the depth and breadth of faculty scholarship and thus often among the first to recognize new and emerging research trends. A detailed knowledge of collection patterns coupled with collegial relationships with faculty allows technical services librarians to coordinate and manage the solicitation and, by extension, the mediated deposit of content.[6]

One of the hallmarks that sets technical services apart from other library services is the in-depth knowledge of the staff with regard to descriptive and subject analysis. "Resource discovery metadata is an essential part of any digital resource. If resources are to be retrieved and understood in the distributed environment of the World Wide Web, they must be described in a consistent, structured manner ..."[7] Creating accurate, detailed metatdata in a consistent manner and applying name and subject authority control on repository content are all functions of technical services. As discovery tools become more sophisticated, the need for experienced metadata specialists intensifies. By managing content recruitment, metadata creation, and mediated deposit on behalf of authors, technical services establishes the foundation for a reliable and trusted institutional repository.

In today's information-intensive environment, navigating what may seem to be a copyright minefield is a valuable skill. Technical services librarians, with their business acumen and experience in negotiating licenses for electronic resources are well suited to handle the copyright permission process on behalf of authors. By assuming responsibility for copyright clearance, technical services staff are able to systematize and streamline the permission-seeking process, confident in the knowledge that repository content is managed in accordance with copyright law.

The collegial relationship between technical services and information technology formed throughout multiple upgrades and enhancements to the integrated library system created an environment conducive to innovation and collaboration. This is precisely the type of environment in which technical services thrives and which the IR needs in order to flourish.

Data curation and digital preservation are also the purview of technical services. Although the institutional repository is not conceived as a permanent archive providing preservation quality storage, it is often perceived as such. Technical services staff deal routinely with issues related to preservation of both print and electronic content and therefore are best equipped not only to dispel that perception but also to offer appropriate long-term preservation solutions for the collection, including the content of the IR.

Demonstrating that technical services possesses the skills, experience, and knowledge needed to implement and manage the IR is not enough to guarantee its success. The challenge for technical services, with static staffing levels and the need to maintain essential library services, lies in providing continuing education, training and retraining opportunities for staff, in divesting itself of non-essential tasks, and in modifying other tasks so that the additional workload associated with the IR can be assimilated.

As the traditional boundaries between technical and public services become less distinct, opportunities to engage in outreach and facilitate the flow of scholarly communication are becoming more common and desirable for technical services. As Harkness and Cetwinski explain in their 2009 study, "traditionally, [t]echnical [s]ervices has been responsible for organizing and describing material in order to facilitate discovery. Content is the prime concern, format secondary. In all probability, the role of technical services in the modern academic library will expand as content and delivery options increase."[8]

All the skills needed to manage the IR reside in technical services. Entrusting the ongoing responsibility for the institutional repository to library technical services, with the approval and support of the library administration, has been deemed a "good fit."

[1] Greg Tananbaum, *Institutional Repositories: The Promises of Yesterday, The Promises of Tomorrow* (Chicago: ALCTS, 2010), http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alcts/resources/papers/irs.cfm (Accessed 15 August 2010).

[2] Pamela Bluh, *Maryland's (out of the trench) Experience*, http://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/fac_pubs/598/ and *Digital Commons @UM Law: A Presentation for NELLCO*, http://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/fac_pubs/635/ (Accessed 15 August 2010).

[3] In this essay, the term "technical services" is used interchangeably to refer to the unit within the organization as well as to the staff of that unit.

[4] Joan M. Reitz, *ODLIS — Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science* (Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2004), http://lu.com/odlis/search.cfm (Accessed 12 August 2010).

[5] Institutional repositories "provide a critical component in reforming the system of scholarly communication—a component that expands access to research, reasserts control over scholarship by the academy, increases competition and reduces the monopoly power of journals, and brings economic relief and heightened relevance to the institutions and libraries that support them." Raym Crow, *The Case for Institutional Repositories: A SPARC Position Paper* (Washington, DC: SPARC, Scholarly Publishing & Academic Resources Coalition, 2002).

[6] Early promises for the institutional repository were based on the assumption that authors would be willing to self-archive their material, but that has proved to be a faulty assumption. In fact, repositories where mediated deposit is offered are proving to be very successful. "To facilitate and accelerate faculty uptake and participation in the IR, services are provided to supplement the "traditional" self-archiving model. We call it our "Do It For Me" model, and the terms are basically: send us your publications list, and we will do the rest. The IR staff does article collection, permissions clearing, scanning, preparation of author versions (including typesetting and proofing), and ultimately mediated deposit. More than 90% of the faculty articles in the IR have been acquired via this model. Mediated deposit also allows for greater consistency in metadata, file sizes and data integrity, quality control, and copyright/permissions compliance.". Joan Giesecke and Paul Royster, *Value Added Services: Publishing Continuum at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln* (2008), http://works.bepress.com/paul_royster/66/ (Accessed 19 August 2010).

[7] *Choosing a Metadata Standard For Resource Discovery*, http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/qa-focus/documents/briefings/briefing-63/html/ (Accessed 14 August 2010).

[8] Tschera H. Connell and Thomas Cetwinski, *Impact of Institutional Repositories on Technical Services* (2009). http://hdl.handle.net/1811/38978 (Accessed 18 August 2010).