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A digital library for the University of York

A poster submission for Open Repositories 2008

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Abstract

The University of York has recently launched a project to set-up a multimedia repository service for the University's research resources, both those produced out of and used within research. This project is being given a kick-start by funding from the JISC repositories and preservation programme start-up and enhancement strand, under the name 'SAFIR' (Sound Archive Film Image Repository).

Institutional repositories are growing in number within the UK and offer a variety of services, such as asset management, dissemination, preservation. For multimedia, research data and other resources, institutional-level stewardship is quite new. Often such resources are managed, or mismanaged, on a Departmental or personal level, or alternatively by large data centres and data archives. With the possible demise of the Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS), York is among institutions faced with a duty to find a safe, secure and long-term home for a large collection of image materials.

We would like to submit a poster to Open Repositories 2008 to cover some of the challenges we face in building a repository for non-text resources.

A model for York's thoughts

Here at York we have started out with a phase of requirements gathering which is informing both the future direction of the digital library service and also, in the short term, the decision on which software to select. A process of desk-research, discussions with Departments and scenario development have brought us to a list of detailed requirements and a semi-formal procurement process, due to conclude in February 2008.

Above these detailed requirements, though, is an over-arching model for the digital library service, based on OAIS (the reference model for an Open Archival Information System). This model, already publicly available [1], has helped the project define the user community, functional areas and the types of resources and metadata that the service needs to support. It also provides a language and framework in which to design and describe our requirements.

Within our scope are:
- Images – 2D, 3D and 4D in a range of file formats and sizes
- Digital audio files, including musical performance and broadcast materials
- Digital video and film, including performance and broadcast material
- Transcriptions
- Digitized text and manuscripts
- Web resources
- Presentational resources
- Datasets, for example statistical, experimental or analysis data
- Collections and aggregations combining any of the above types

The importance of integration and interoperability

York is unusual in that our eprints (scholarly works) repository is shared with our White Rose partners at Sheffield and Leeds. This takes care of scholarly research outputs, encompassing research articles, conference papers, peer-reviewed materials and in the future, electronic theses and perhaps grey literature. With a new repository developing here at York, we are faced with questions of how the two can best integrate, on a technical, functional and policy level with White Rose Research Online (WRRO). Pointing users to the most appropriate repository, handling as much of that decision-making process as possible and presenting cohesive and balanced information are paramount. The project is developing strong links with WRRO in order to achieve this.

At the teaching and learning side of things, York offers the Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment to its users. This includes the embedded Blackboard Content Management System which allows materials to be easily included with in Blackboard modules. Again, decisions about where material should go (Blackboard or the digital library) and making deposit and re-use as seamless as possible and key areas for future work.

Other integration targets include University systems holding personal and role data, such as LDAP. In future, the new Web Content Management System, University portal and streaming service will offer new access points and possibly collections of material for storage in the digital library.

Beyond York and our White Rose connections, there are external resources and services which we may want to cross-search or have cross-search us. Defining a model and developing a service which is based on open standards and interoperability are crucial.

Final thoughts

We are at the very beginning here at York, yet by April we hope to have the first stages of a repository system and to be a moving towards populating that with content. Many decisions are ahead of us, not least those surrounding repository policy, metadata, workflow and technology. Getting 'stuff' in is a key consideration, yet a repository is much more than the content it contains. Building a digital library to support the needs of our users is at the core of what we are trying to do and keeping up discussions with our key stakeholder community are central to its success.

For Open Repositories the University of York poster will focus on the range of different considerations for developing a multimedia repository, using as its basis our high-level model.

[1] http://tinyurl.com/2kjbfa