

SLA Conference Poster Write-up



Depicting diversity and similarities in specialized institutional repositories through Venn diagrams and tables – an initial exploration

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Introduction

In early 2024, a group of librarians began assembling virtually to explore and reflect on the academic institutional repository (IR) community that encompasses specialized libraries, collections, and formats. The initial motivating purpose was to discuss the submission of a proposal to the Special Libraries Association (SLA) 2024 annual conference, a venue where not all attendees may be familiar with specialized and open institutional repositories. Group members represented various sectors, including medicine, science, technology, engineering, music, and research universities. They were brought together by their common interests and involvement in several repository initiatives, two virtual symposia, MIRL ([Medical Institutional Repositories in Libraries](#)) and NIRD ([Northeast Institutional Repository Day](#)). One librarian who was involved in both symposia helped convene a group of seven librarians, six of whom ultimately committed to the project.

The initiative lasted almost six months, from initial discussion and commitment, to submitting a proposal, to planning and designing the poster, to the presentation by two co-authors at the SLA annual conference in July 2024. Since time limitations did not allow for an extensive survey of the IR community, the group decided to submit a proposal for a poster based on data from a self-survey of their own IRs. Group meetings not only featured discussion but progressive goals for individual team members which helped move the project along towards various milestones and deadlines.

Methods and Challenges

Common definitions of institutional repositories (IRs) include words and phrases such as “archive for collecting, preserving, and disseminating scholarly output”.^{1,2} Some institutions bundle various services, such as library publishing and repository activities. The group decided to limit the focus of this project to discussion and analysis of institutional repository activities, functions, contents, and services. While most questions were devised through the group’s discussions, some were adapted from the [Directory of Library Publishing Survey](#), particularly the section regarding IR content formats.

The self-survey format provided a means to the IR landscapes of each institution and its IR, but it was recognized that this was a case study and a “snapshot in time.” Questions included demographic questions about the institutions and their IRs, including when the IRs were launched and the IR platforms’ history. Other questions sought to identify similarities and differences among the IRs’ content types, services, and policies on several IR management issues. In reviewing the results of the self-administered survey, it was discovered that the librarians did not always agree upon definitions for some of the terms, particularly regarding what constituted a “policy” and how certain content types should be differentiated within a digital platform, such as “photographs and images.” After a clarifying discussion, each librarian revised survey results as necessary to be in line with group consensus.

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Admittedly, further challenges arose during the design phase as some self-survey responses did not lend themselves to visualization in Venn diagram format as originally intended, and it was decided to show some of the more interesting responses in tabular format. Again, the poster's design was adapted as warranted by author group consensus.

Reflections and Conclusions

The discussions, the self-survey responses, and the resulting poster spotlighted that, even with a small sample of six IRs, there is institutional diversity in technology, users, roles, priorities, and challenges. The small sample also illustrated some common threads and opportunities that have relevance and implications in both the special library and the broader IR landscape. The responses to the self-survey questions helped inform the layout of the poster members, which ultimately included a section for demographic information

about each of the six IRs, some Venn diagrams, and a table. As illustrated in the demographic information portion of the poster (*see Image 1—Demography*), the founding dates and numbers of deposits varied among the six institutions, as did the repository platforms themselves and the number of deposited items. Also listed were the participating libraries' memberships in external organizations. Though the list was perhaps not exhaustive, those that were listed were varied and showed ways that each institution sought to be part of broader IR communities. Migration to new platforms was one theme that was described during discussions as resulting from a need that arose when "a platform was outgrown." Several institutions had already migrated to a new platform and two were in the process of migrating to new versions of their platforms during the course of the project and soon afterwards.

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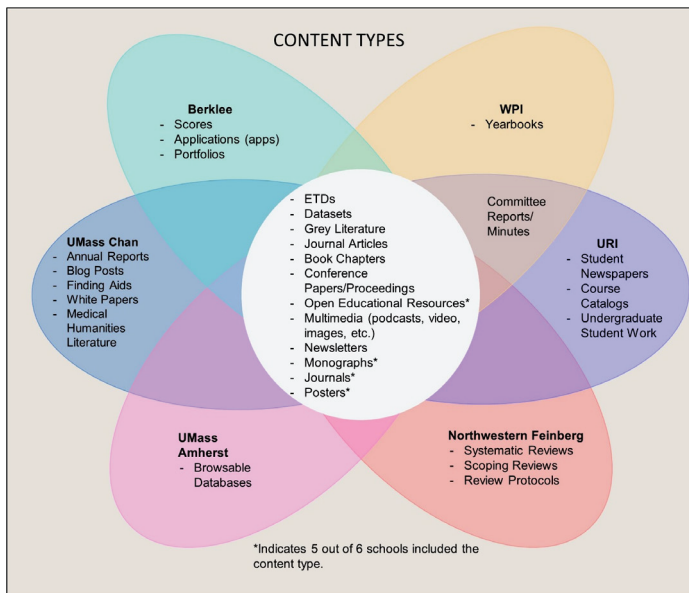
Image 1—Demography

<p>Berklee College of Music</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Private Institution- Research Media & Information Exchange (REMIX), remix.berklee.edu- Platform: Digital Commons- Launched 2019- 4,829 items	<p>Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Private Institution- Digital WPI, digital.wpi.edu- Platform: Hyrax front-end, Samvera open source repository solution- Launched 2018- 46,244 items- Memberships: Samvera, SPARC, NDLTD	<p>University of Rhode Island (URI)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Public Institution- DigitalCommons@URI, digitalcommons.uri.edu- Platform: Digital Commons- Launched 2006- 37,695 items- Memberships: CrossRef
<p>UMass Chan Medical School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Public Institution- eScholarship@UMassChan, repository.escholarship.umassmed.edu- Platform: DSpace 5 (Atmire)- Launched 2006 (on Digital Commons)- 26,836 items- Memberships: DSpace, DataCite, Crossref, DOAJ	<p>University of Massachusetts Amherst</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Public Institution- ScholarWorks@UMassAmherst, scholarworks.umass.edu- Platform: DSpace 7.6 (Atmire)- Launched 2006 (on Digital Commons)- 57,459 items- Memberships: DataCite, DSpace (Lyrisis), ORCID	<p>Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Private Institution- Prism, prism.northwestern.edu- Platform: InvenioRDM open source repository solution- Launched: 2015 (on DigitalHub)- 6,257 items- Memberships: COAR, DataCite, GREI

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Analysis of self-survey responses, shown in the larger and two smaller Venn diagrams (*see Image 2—Venn Diagram*), revealed that even with so many overlapping content types in the IRs at the six institutions, there still were unique kinds of materials that served the different communities. What a music library prioritizes and spotlights in its repository differs from what a technical university might showcase. A review of the visualized results reveals that the two medical institutional repositories in the self-study were no more similar than the general academic libraries were, and IRs at the same parent institution may have chosen different practices to address their local users' needs.

Image 2—Venn Diagram



Responses to self-survey questions that pertained to IR policies and practices were laid out in tabular format (*see Image 3—Policies and Practices*). The responses “yes” or “no” clearly showed that though there were some common policies and practices among the IRs, although there were no consistent responses among all six IRs on all questions, whether it related to requirements or mandates, to statistics, or to policies on how to respond to various user requests. Some self-survey questions were not analyzed for visualization. One question that the group decided not to analyze for the poster, but deemed would be a worthwhile topic for further discussion or analysis, was one about the future plans (future outlook and aspirations) for the IRs at the institutions: upgrade, re-design, migration.

Image 3—Policies and Practices

	Berklee	WPI	UMass Chan Medical	UMass Amherst	Northwestern Feinberg	URI
Campus open access policy/mandate	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Collection dev. policy	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Data sharing policy	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
DOI minting	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Embargo policy	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Funding outside of library	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Name change policy	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Takedown request policy	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Thesis submission required	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

The poster authors were affiliated with institutions and disciplines within the academic sector where IRs have been growing since the early 2000s,³ and there is broad adoption³. In the academic sector, and even beyond, information and scholarly output from an institution or its affiliated members is able to be widely and openly shared, as this is the optimal ultimate intent of institutional repositories. In all sectors, some content and scholarly output may need to be embargoed or remain internal to an organization, and repository management features can be utilized for these purposes. In some specialized non-academic sectors, other flavors of knowledge and asset management may be more common than IRs.

The IR landscape is not homogenous. There are many variations in motivations, goals, and decisions made by various institutions embarking on the implementation and maintenance of IRs. Knowledge of the evolving IR landscape has become and will continue to be an important task in the current awareness portfolio of librarians who work in many sectors. Formal network initiatives, such as the [US Repository Network \(USRN\) in the United States](#), and the [European repository network](https://zenodo.org/records/10255559) (https://zenodo.org/records/10255559), seek to enhance a vision for repositories working together. Survey studies have sought to analyze general and specialized IRs,^{5,6,7} and continuing scholarly work can provide data for ongoing analysis of the IR ecosystem. During a six-month project resulting in a poster, one group of academic librarians from different institutions realized the opportunities for and benefits of informal discussions that can play a role in greater understanding and that may lead to future networking or collaboration opportunities.

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The SLA 2024 poster and self-survey questions

Kubilius, R., Burke, M., Jerome, E., Lovett, J., O'Brien, E. P., & Palmer, L. (2024). The IR Venn Diagram: Diversity in Technology, Content, Users, and Roles in Specialized Institutional Repositories. Prism. Galter Health Sciences Library. Northwestern University. <https://doi.org/10.18131/eenwk-ghd21>

Kubilius, R., Burke, M., Jerome, E., Lovett, J., O'Brien, E. P., & Palmer, L. (2024). The IR Venn Diagram: Diversity in Technology, Content, Users, and Roles in Specialized Institutional Repositories- poster self-survey questions. Prism. Galter Health Sciences Library. Northwestern University. <https://doi.org/10.18131/mcbrn7-2xk60>

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- ⁷ Comparing and Contrasting Medical Institutional Repositories with Other Academic IRs: Results of Two Research Studies, <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14038/36203>