



ER&L Cross-Pollinator Reflection on the 2015 DLF Forum

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📄 DLF FORUM NEWS ([HTTPS://WWW.DIGLIB.ORG/CATEGORY/FORUM/](https://www.diglib.org/category/forum/))



This Forum Update was provided by Jonathan Shank, Acquisitions & E-Resources Librarian, Northwestern University Galter Health Sciences Library. Find him on Twitter @ShankLib (<https://twitter.com/ShankLib>).

I am extremely grateful to have received a Cross-Pollinator Travel Award from DLF and ER&L, which made it possible for me to attend the 2015 DLF Forum in Vancouver, BC. I had a wonderful time at the conference and returned home full of ideas and inspired by the amazing work being done in the DLF community. From the opening keynote by Dr. Noble, which challenged us to think more critically about the power of algorithms and the “neutrality” of information online, I learned quickly that this community doesn’t shy away from difficult topics or the big picture implications of our everyday work.

This theme of investigating the “why” of digital projects and initiatives, rather than just the technical “how,” continued throughout the sessions I attended. Just this month, my library (<http://galter.northwestern.edu/>) launched an institutional repository (<https://digitalhub.northwestern.edu/>). As is typical with any digital project, so far we have been primarily focused on getting the repository up and running from a technical standpoint, making sure it’s properly documented, and doing outreach among the relevant constituencies on campus. DLF was refreshing because it allowed me to take a step back and learn from colleagues at different stages of similar projects, who in many cases were looking back through a critical lens.

Among the many highlights for me were:

- Lebow & McLellan’s brief talk about balancing metadata standards with the initial eagerness to get content into IR’s
- The “Linked Data on the Ground” session, which helped solidify my practical understanding of various linked data projects, and the importance of coordination among libraries moving forward, and...
- California Digital Library’s talk on their Open Access policy and the automated harvesting system they’ve developed with Symplectic feeding into their IR, which has seen some amazing results.

In the spirit of “cross-pollination” I hope to bring the big picture perspective and critical lens of the DLF forum back to my day-to-day work, and use this perspective to frame my participation in other communities like ER&L and Code4Lib. While we face many technical challenges in developing digital projects and providing online access to information (which require collaboration within communities like DLF and ER&L), we should also remember to take a step back sometimes and reflect on the larger implications of our work. This will lead to more critical approaches and in turn successful outcomes that are more consistent with our ethical principles as information professionals.

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