

DLIST: Opening LIS Research and Practice

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we describe DLIST, a digital library for Library and Information Science Research and Practice and for Information Technology as it relates to LIS. It is built upon the open access eprints model, but that extends materials in the collection beyond the formal, scholarly literature to include other types of content created by researchers and practitioners. DLIST is intended to promote resource sharing in LIS and IT and to attempt to bridge the gap between research and practice. The notion of open access is briefly discussed as a central tenet for the development of the intellectual commons as an interactive space for learning.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

H.3.7 [Digital Libraries]: User issues

General Terms

Management, Documentation, Experimentation,

Keywords

Eprints, Open Access, Library and Information Science

1. INTRODUCTION

Open access has been touted as a means for addressing the pricing and permissions issues that make access to the scholarly and scientific journal literature problematic in the current environment.[1] Proponents argue that it increases the visibility of an author's work thus increasing the potential impact of one's research.[2] While the tenets of open access demand the freeing of the journal literature, they do not suggest that all content be made freely accessible. Nor are they intended to compete with or eliminate commercial publishing ventures. Rather, open access is proposed to make works that are freely given to publishers by researchers freely available to all.[2]

2. RESEARCH AND PRACTICE IN LIS

Lyman has written that successful libraries support a sense of community among users, and that while digital libraries also have the potential to support community they must move beyond digitized versions of print materials and access tools to do so.[3] One way for digital libraries to

make this transition is to develop in the open access model toward an 'intellectual commons'. In some disciplines (e.g., Physics), open access digital libraries have become central to the discipline's research culture, and to its community. This generally has not been the case for Library and Information Science (LIS) and information technology (IT) as it relates to LIS.

Developing such a community-based tool might be a simple matter of building an eprints server such as arXiv.org if LIS/IT were strictly an academic discipline whose outputs were strictly formal works such as journal articles and conference papers. There is a complex relationship between research and practice within the discipline that makes it difficult to develop a resource that meets all needs. Although there may seem to be a significant gap between the interests of researchers and those of practitioners, these differences are often superficial and increasingly blurred. So, while devising a system to better facilitate sharing of the formal literature may help some, notably researchers and practitioners in some academic settings, it does not address all needs for online sharing in the discipline.

Researchers, and particularly practitioners, in LIS/IT create a wealth of information in informal formats. The most notable research example is the data set. There is no central repository of LIS/IT research data, much of which is stored only on the hard drives of the researchers who created them. Access to shared data could facilitate an increase in research productivity by eliminating some of the labor involved in curating large data sets. Librarians create massive amounts of content for their users and each other. This content is very diverse in format, including instructional and training materials, bibliographies, technical or administrative reports, and documentation of locally created software. These materials are not centrally managed, nor are they often harnessed for later reuse. Sharing the ideas contained within these materials has great

potential to aid librarians as they try to better serve their own constituencies, and could also be of great benefit to researchers interested in these aspects of LIS/IT practice.

There has been some writing that suggests that disciplines that do not have strong preprint traditions will not be able to develop a strong eprint repository.[4] Although this may be true for some disciplines, LIS/IT does have a sufficient resource-sharing tradition that it is feasible to develop a digital library to support research and practice in the discipline. As mentioned earlier, there have been some, mostly informal, efforts to share research papers in the research areas of LIS/IT. Additionally, librarians have a strong tradition of sharing knowledge and resources in an informal manner. LOEX, for example, has long served as a clearinghouse for instructional materials in print formats. These intellectual commons have transcended the idea of enabling merely open access to serving as interactive spaces for lifelong learning. Finally, librarians with their strong bonds of community have been enthusiastic adopters of technologies that further the notions of information environments which use tools like electronic mail, mailing lists, and blogs as means for sharing their knowledge.

The blending of research and practice, as well as the needs of each, demand a new type of intellectual commons for sharing knowledge and building community. The sharing of research materials and data sets will further the research agenda of LIS/IT by both researcher and practitioner, while facilitating the sharing of informal materials created by librarians and other practitioners has the potential to disseminate ideas for excellent practice. Additionally, such a commons could serve as a testbed for many other sorts of research – for the study of collections, social networks among researchers and practitioners, the effect of metadata standards and practice on information retrieval, and more.

3. DLIST

DLIST, the *Digital Library of Information Science and Technology*, is a recently initiated project of the School of Information Resource and Library Science at the University of Arizona in partnership with the Arizona Health Sciences Library.[5] The primary objective of

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DLIST is to create a web-accessible, open, digital repository for LIS/IT. It is based upon GNU Eprints.[6]

The DLIST project is unique among the Eprint repositories that currently exist and is similar in concept to the recently announced MIT project, Dspace.[7] DLIST has extended the eprint types beyond the traditional scholarly products of research to teaching materials and learning objects (tutorials, syllabi, lesson plans), and data sets. The fundamental principles and knowledge in the two areas of our collection development, LIS and IT, are areas in which the lines between research and teaching products are often blurring. The need for continuous updating of information and computing literacy skills is becoming more important in our modern-day society. Repositories that integrate the outputs of research and teaching activities can make the information necessary for the acquisition and constant updating of these skills more easily and widely accessible.

DLIST provides a venue to explore solutions such as self-archiving, discipline, institutional archiving, and similar other innovative processes. Not only does DLIST contribute to the development of a strong intellectual commons it can serve as the venue of a global scholarly communication consortium in LIS/IT and contribute to the community of research and practice in LIS/IT.

4. REFERENCES

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