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## An Alternative American Approach to Repositories [Open Repositories 2014 proposal]

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## Title of Proposal:

# An Alternative American Approach to Repositories

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## Abstract

The repository community has many organizations, experts, consultants, and “thought leaders” prepared to give direction and advice to the developers and managers of institutional repositories. This presentation is about how one repository (ours) has found success by rejecting much of their “conventional” wisdom and “expert” advice. We have declined to support the SPARC Addendum, promote campus mandates, encourage Creative Commons licensing, use open-source software, rely on faculty self-archiving, or require peer-review for original publishing; and we are not even considered truly “open” access by SPARC or the hard-line “libre” adherents.

Yet we are the second-largest U.S. institutional repository, with more than 70,000 full-text documents available. We experience 7.5 million hits and furnish 6 million downloads annually. Our content ranks higher than Elsevier’s and Springer’s in Google search results. We enjoy a high degree of faculty participation and an exceptional level of return “business.” Our repository accounts for 10%–12% of all daily university website traffic.

We are a medium-size public university (25,000 students, 1,500 faculty) in a predominantly agricultural state (beef, corn, & soybeans), without a library school or a medical college. We have used third-party software and developed a variety of innovative service practices to win the hearts and minds of our campus community and attract users throughout the world. These practices include mediated deposit, delegated hunting and gathering, typesetting and formatting post-prints to match published versions for layout, pagination, etc., assistance with PubMed Central deposits, original and reprint monograph publishing, and the aggressive application of U.S. copyright rules on eligibility and the public domain.

## Audience

The most likely audience is repository managers, library and university administrators, and perhaps consultants and experts who need to re-examine the advice they give.

## Background

This proposal describes a very successful but unconventional approach to repository services. It also focuses on a researcher-centered design for scholarly workflows.

The U.S. national organization (SPARC) seems rather tightly controlled by its central office in Washington, and the narrow repository and open-access messaging it provides is heavily influenced by the cooperating publishers and their consultants. I want to let the world know that there are other, different, approaches being applied successfully in the field—as we say in America “beyond the Beltway”—by people who actually manage repositories, work with college faculty, and deal with PDF files. I believe it is important that alternative voices be heard and that the world be informed of activities beyond those sanctioned or promoted by the official agents and agency.

Ecosystems are not governed by rules of cooperative harmony, but by the struggle for survival among competing organisms. In the repository “ecosystem” there are predators and prey, parasites and hosts, survivors and creatures destined for extinction. We need to figure out which of these we are. Applying a “natural” metaphor to an economic system of capital and labor offers a false sense of security that obfuscates the continued domination of scholarly communication by profit-seeking corporate publishers.

## Presentation content

The presentation will address recommended repository practices that were tried and abandoned as unworkable, ineffective, or inappropriate for our particular situation. It will also describe practices that were invented or adapted to boost faculty participation, increase depositor satisfaction, and expand worldwide dissemination.

- Why the SPARC Addendum (or other author rights addenda) is ineffective, legally suspect, and improperly promoted.
- Why self-archiving is an illusory goal, and why it produces problematic content.
- Why campus mandates are a false crusade and not worth the effort.
- Why Creative Commons licenses are not for everyone, and may in fact be a “Trojan horse” for Gold OA publishers.
- How “peer review” standards are being used (by OASPA and others) to marginalize innovative and disruptive publishing efforts.
- How (gold) open access risks imposing a new form of profit-based hegemony on authors and libraries.

Nebraska’s Office of Scholarly Communications, staffed by two librarians and three work-study students, is among the most active and innovative in the United States. Its institutional repository is the nation’s second-largest, but perhaps its most impressive feature is the degree of

faculty acceptance and participation. While other libraries are challenged to get faculty to contribute to their repositories, we are challenged to keep up with the incoming volume and ongoing demand for services. Our library publishing efforts are also a model for others, and we are a leader in the development of electronic publishing of open-access academic materials.

The basis of our appeal is a two-fold strategy: 1. Make it easy, and 2. Give immediate feedback. We proactively approach faculty with this offer: Give us your *vita* and permission, and we will take care of the rest. Our BE Press DigitalCommons software automatically sends monthly usage reports to all depositors, and these have been instrumental in driving participation (and even competition) among faculty. Our staff gathers the articles and manuscripts, clears permissions, prepares author versions as required, digitizes when necessary, creates metadata, and uploads files. Using the BE Press software frees us from technical maintenance and programming duties; we can concentrate solely on recruiting content and promoting its dissemination. The BE Press DigitalCommons optimizes search engine results, and our repository supplies downloads at twice the rate of some larger repositories using other systems.

We have built a collection and a international following based on materials and programs unique to our institution: a tractor test laboratory and museum, a wildlife damage management curriculum, U.S. Department of Agriculture research institutes, parasitology and entomology labs, and publications focused on the North American Great Plains geography, history, and culture. We began publishing original monographs over eight years ago, and now do them in pdf, ebook, Kindle, and print-on-demand formats.

All our policies derive from one fundamental tenet — the content belongs to the depositor. We do not approve, regulate, or control their works; we make it available, insofar as the authors are willing. Where content is hosted by permission of the publishers, we cannot suggest applying CC licenses. I will describe the active recruitment of content that falls into the public domain by reason of authorship by U.S. federal government employees, and I will discuss the U.S. Eleventh Amendment, which provides us with “state sovereign immunity” from judgments for damages for copyright infringement.

## Conclusion

- Repositories can be successful by dropping the conventional agenda and focusing on their own unique assets and opportunities.
- Two rules: 1. Make it easy. 2. Give immediate feedback.
- A repository is a publishing project, not an IT project.
- The repository belongs to the faculty depositors, not to the library and not to the university.

- Successful repository managers are enablers, not gatekeepers.
- Publishers are not your friends, any more than wolves are friends to the bison.
- Scholars of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains.

## References

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# Open Repositories 2014

June 9.-13. Helsinki, Finland

*Well, the reviewers seemed sort of grumpy, but it did get accepted, so I could not be happier or more excited.*

*For the record, I don't think it's argumentative, and I did not mention MIT or anybody by name (except SPARC). And I didn't think a proposal was the place to submit a statistical data set.*

*I guess they just hated everything else more.*

P. Royster  
4/8/2014

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In the cause of open peer review, I give you the actions of the judges and the contents of the reader's reports. Thank you gentlemen or ladies for your interest, insights, and suggestions. ...

From: OR 2014 Organisers [or2014@conftool.com](mailto:or2014@conftool.com)

To: [proyster@unl.edu](mailto:proyster@unl.edu)

Sent: Mon 4/7/2014 6:11 PM

Subject: OR2014 notification

Dear Paul Royster,

Thank you for your proposal to the 9th International Conference on Open Repositories (#or2014). We received an unprecedented number of proposals this year, making this year's conference the most selective ever. The status of your proposal is shown near the bottom of this message.

Please note that in some cases proposals have been accepted, but in a different track than originally proposed. In other cases, they have been referred to one of the conference Interest Groups (DSpace, ePrints, Fedora, Invenio); notification for the interest groups is expected next week.

Please note:

- general track presentations will have 20 minutes, plus 5 minutes for questions
- general track panels will have 75 minutes, discussion inclusive
- 24x7 and Repository Rants will have up to 7 minutes to present no more than 24 slides
- poster presenters will have 1 minute and a single slide at "Minute Madness" to advertise their poster, followed by 2 hours of presentation at the poster reception

If for any reason you will be unable to present at this year's conference, please let us know by emailing [or-program-chair@googlegroups.com](mailto:or-program-chair@googlegroups.com) at your earliest convenience.

Regards,

Simeon Warner, Mike Giarlo, Tom Cramer

Program Co-Chairs, 9th International Conference on Open Repositories [or-program-chair@googlegroups.com](mailto:or-program-chair@googlegroups.com) <http://or2014.helsinki.fi/>

#### CONTRIBUTION DETAILS

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ID: 256

Title: An Alternative American Approach to Repositories

Track: "Repository Rants" 24x7 Presentations

REVIEW RESULT OF THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE:

This contribution has been accepted.

## OVERVIEW OF REVIEWS

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### Review 1

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#### Contribution of the submission

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The author draws conclusions that repositories "can be successful by dropping conventional agenda and focusing on their own unique assets and opportunities." with focus on evaluating "repository practices that were tried and abandoned as unworkable, ineffective, or inappropriate for [their] particular situation." The intent of this paper is to share knowledge about how the repository did it their own way.

#### Evaluation of the contribution

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Quality of Content (20%): 4  
Significance (10%): 4  
Originality (10%): 6  
Thematic Relevance (10%): 4  
Overall Recommendation (50%): 4  
Total points (out of 100) : 42

#### Comments for the authors

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This submission was evaluated based on the claims stated within the paper. Although the project certainly sounds ambitious and successful the overall tone seems to be rallying against working collaboratively. A number of statistics are provided about the repositories success and rankings but no reference on where these stats were gathered are found. How depositor participation and how rights are secured is unclear.

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Review 2

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Contribution of the submission

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The submission aims to describe a successful repository experience that questions common practices about repositories and particularly open access models. It uses internal staff to clear IPR and put the documents online. The approach can be of value to the OR community as it can generate interesting discussions.

Evaluation of the contribution

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Quality of Content (20%): 8  
Significance (10%): 8  
Originality (10%): 6  
Thematic Relevance (10%): 8  
Overall Recommendation (50%): 8  
Total points (out of 100) : 78

Comments for the authors

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The abstract presents the experience of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to implement a repository. It proposes to criticize the practices usually recommended in the community. The presentation promises to be provocative for the Open Repositories conference community and has the potential to generate interesting discussions.

The openness of the repository is not entirely clear but the presentation proposes a discussion regarding this concept. However the author aims to presents a successful experience of implementing a repository of research outcomes. It addresses repository oriented aspects, deposit in PubMed Central and discusses various aspects of openness.

The abstract is well structured. It should be accepted for presentation at the conference.

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Review 3

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Contribution of the submission

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The paper describes a specific approach to creating an institutional repository that successfully delivers a wide range of scholarly content for open downloading and viewing, due in part to limiting the demands that it makes on scholars contributing to the repository. In part, the paper also makes a case against some of the standard approaches to open access as being too limiting.

Evaluation of the contribution

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Quality of Content (20%): 8  
Significance (10%): 8  
Originality (10%): 6  
Thematic Relevance (10%): 10  
Overall Recommendation (50%): 7  
Total points (out of 100) : 75

Comments for the authors

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The paper presents a useful and informative approach to creating a valuable and heavily used institutional repository, based on a specific set of choices for the services provided and the nature of access to the materials.

However, I found the exposition to be excessively argumentative. Rather than presenting what this IR has accomplished and contrasting the choices made with alternative recommendations and approaches for other IRs, the paper takes a step too far in arguing that because the set of approaches it takes have been successful that therefore other approaches to open access must be wrong. If there is clear evidence that approaches like the MIT open access mandate don't work, then I didn't see it in this paper.

I would strongly encourage the author to dial back on the confrontational tone and do more to let the success of his approach speak for itself. It would certainly be appropriate to contrast the approach UNL has taken on various issues to alternatives and to present the reasons for making the choices that they did, but I don't feel it is necessary to issue blanket condemnations of alternatives - particularly without strong evidence to back those condemnations up.

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