Case Study of Functionality of an Institutional Repository through the Eyes of the Subject Libraries Specialists

Introduction

The development of the repository collections is closely connected to the library's activities. Existing content, which can be presented to various authors shows the usefulness of the repository as well as the enthusiasm and dedication of librarians (Naize, 2010). A well organized institutional repository is not just a sign of well-operating library but also displays an author's research, creative works, and organized institutional repository is not just a sign of well-operating library but also displays an author's research, creative works, and organized institutional repository is not just a sign of well-operating library but also displays an author's research, creative works, and the science of communication. According to Newton, Miller and Bracke (2011), subject libraries specialists are highly qualified workers also for collecting and preserving digital data due to the close relations with university departments. Librarians who collect data from researchers are most likely successful in enriching repository collections because they improve, hold and use already existing relationships.


Background

In 2006, the University of Tartu Library implemented an institutional repository on a DSpace platform. According to Webometrics, UT DSpace ranks in top 100 repositories in the world. However, the amount of data in respective collections differs largely among faculties and collecting files is unsystematic. This variance is attributable to the lack of knowledge and initiative. According to the University of Tartu (UT) Procedure for Publication of Graduation Theses and Dissertations (Dec 2012) student thesis and dissertations are accessible through the digital archive.

Purpose of the case study

University subject libraries are the initial contact points for scientists, faculty members and students. In addition, through these mediums information about collecting data will reach the users. In order to more effectively develop the University's digital archive, there was a need to research subject library specialists' attitudes towards the repository, their evaluation of functionality of the DSpace and if the University's digital archive meets their needs.

Research method

- Semi-structured interviews
- The respondents – UT subject libraries specialists from various faculties and colleges
- Reason for selection – subject libraries specialists know and use the University’s digital archive at DSpace on daily basis
- Time – May 2012

Results

Analysis showed:

- The knowledge of the definition, opportunities and functionalities of the institutional repository is lacking
- General evaluation of the functionality of UT Digital Archive at DSpace was unsatisfactory
- Further training is needed
- Positive side – subject libraries specialists have a lot of initiative to guide and teach their users about the usage options of the DSpace platform
- Various problems and shortcomings are drawn into a table.

Value

The case study offers a different view for the usage and knowledge of the University’s digital archive at DSpace. It gives valuable feedback and guidance for improvements of the functionality as well as popularisation of the institutional repository.

Conclusions

Development goals of an institutional repository must be clear, realistic and provide user satisfaction. The results of interviews show that the knowledge and functionalities of the institutional repository is lacking among the respondents as well as the faculties and subdivisions of the University of Tartu. The general evaluation of the functionality of the UT DSpace was unsatisfactory. Various problems and shortcomings were identified during the interview process. Authors consider necessary to further analyze these shortcomings and to focus on specific tasks which would help to solve mentioned problems. The librarians' highest expectations are connected to the user-friendliness of the UT DSpace – appearance, structure as well as functionality.

It can be concluded that according to librarians, the institutional repository must organise, preserve, make available for access and distribution, the university’s electronic research and study materials. Their needs and expectations confirm Clifford Lynch’s definition (2003, p. 32B) which points out that these four main functions are the backbone of a repository.


Table. Subject libraries specialists’ needs and expectations for the functionality of UT DSpace.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Development tasks</th>
<th>Development goals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Users' Needs</td>
<td>Users' Expectations</td>
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<td>User-friendly structure of the UT DSpace website</td>
<td>Visually good-looking and great design</td>
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<td>Better search opportunities</td>
<td>Advanced search</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to university's study and research materials</td>
<td>Faculties' collections are equally presented</td>
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<td>Implementation of various user surfaces</td>
<td>Orientation on certain user groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wider marketing of UT DSpace in the university</td>
<td>Access to DSpace through faculty or department websites</td>
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This table can be basis for the production of the development strategy of the UT digital archive in DSpace where users' needs can be considered development goals and expectations the development plan.