

A digital repository is a tool for managing a university's image and impact. There is a cash cost to the university in establishing a repository but very rarely a cash payoff. Instead, return on investment is measured in other ways, largely related to the mission of the institution in enabling, engendering and in encouraging scholarly research and disseminating its findings.

A repository filled with current research outputs attracts widespread usage from around the world. Where outputs were previously visible only to those who had access through subscriptions to academic journals, a repository exposes the products of a university to Google and other web search engines. The payoff is hugely increased visibility and presence on the web for a university and a greater impact when research made available in this way is used and built upon by others. A case study on how a well-filled repository strikingly raises a university's global impact is [here](#).

The business case for a repository

The business case for a repository cannot rest upon promising a cash return since generating cash is not central to the business mission of digital repositories. Instead, the repository joins other IT operations in the institution (the digital library, the email system, the institution's web pages) in helping to fulfil strategic aims. A repository aligns with the core values of a research-focused institution in supporting its aim to enable and disseminate high-quality research. In addition, it provides a management information tool for monitoring and assessing research activity. The business case is thus made on the basis of enhanced visibility of the institution, measurably better impact for its research, more effective institutional marketing, better management of intellectual assets, easier assessment of research outputs, the facilitation of collaborative and interdisciplinary research and the facilitation of workflow for researchers and teachers. The espida project carried out by Glasgow University developed methods for making a business case for proposals that do not necessarily have a financial benefit for an institution, and may be helpful here (<http://www.gla.ac.uk/espida>) **Repository models**

Most institutions opt to have their own repository but joint, multi-institutional repositories do exist. One example is the White Rose repository, which is jointly owned by the universities of York, Sheffield and Leeds in the UK. Several subject-specific repositories also exist, some very large. The physics [arXiv](#) is the best-known example.

Institutions may create their own repository, or outsource this step to a commercial supplier. A similar situation pertains to hosting the repository. Institutions usually provide their own server space, but a number opt to have their repository hosted by a third party. This provides some 'peace of mind' guarantees about back-ups and long term security which an institution may feel is worth paying for.

The benefits of a repository

- Opens up the outputs of the university to the world
- Maximises the visibility and impact of

these outputs as a result
the university to interested constituencies – prospective staff, prospective students and other stakeholders

Collects and curates digital outputs

- Showcases
- Manages and measures research and teaching activities
- Provides a workspace for work-in-progress, and for collaborative or large-scale projects
- Enables and encourages interdisciplinary approaches to research
- Facilitates the development and sharing of digital teaching materials and aids
- Supports student endeavours, providing access to theses and dissertations and a location for the development of e-portfolios

Sustainability of the repository

A repository is sustainable if it contributes effectively to the university management's agenda in terms of aiding research management, maximising citation impact and improving the visibility internationally of the institution. Senior management's support is crucial for the financial and political sustainability of a repository as staffing needs are minimised by the adoption of a clear institutional policy. The better the policy in the first place – designed to fully involve research staff in depositing their own work (self-archiving) – the less staff time needs to be allocated to gathering content for the repository on an ongoing basis. Repositories in institutions with a formal mandatory policy on depositing research outputs can be run with a minimum of staff time and they [collect content very effectively](#). Those with weak or no policies require staff continually to advocate their existence and purpose and they collect only a minor proportion of a university's outputs.

Repository services

Engagement of researchers can further be encouraged by repository services that offer useful tools for their work or the means to help them take an active management role in disseminating their outputs. Some universities are developing services using their repository, both for internal purposes and for external users. Examples of services for use by the university and its researchers include:

- Using the repository as a management tool for the Research Assessment Exercise
- Measuring the usage and impact of the research output of the university
- Promoting the university's research activities

- A marketing tool for the university
- Generating CVs and personal reference lists

Services for external users include:

- Publishing electronic journals

- As a basis for, or linked with, the university press to publish research monographs
- Making doctoral theses available to the world

There is further discussion of repository services

[here](#)

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Repository software

The most commonly-used softwares are: • EPrints (developed by the University of Southampton) • DSpace (developed at MIT) • FEDORA (developed by Cornell University and the University of Virginia)

These are all open source and free to download.

What does a repository cost?

There are examples of repositories that have cost huge sums but the cost of establishing most university repositories is more modest. A survey of European repositories showed that the cost of establishing a repository in Europe is around 10000 euros (13000 USD). A survey of US repositories showed that the cost of establishing repositories in US universities averages around 180,000 USD. Ongoing recurrent costs can also vary quite widely. **Set-up costs**

The main types of software for running repositories are open source (i.e. free of charge). The hardware required can be a simple desktop computer workstation or a file server, the former costing a few hundred euros and the latter around 1500 euros (2000 USD). Some institutions use existing servers that have sufficient space available for the purpose. Commercial suppliers also offer repository building (and build-and-host) services if a university does not wish to carry this out in-house. Examples are EPrints Services, Open Repository and bepress. Staff requirements vary according to the institution's ambitions for the repository but the general staffing complement for setting up a repository is around 1.5 to 3.0 FTEs for a period of six months to one year. This includes an initial planning phase which enables various stakeholders (library staff, IT specialists, university administrators, research policymakers) to decide upon the main goals of the repository and the programme for its implementation.

Recurrent costs

Most universities have a staff allocation of between 0.5 and 2.5 FTEs for running the repository. In most universities the repository is managed by the library: existing staff may assume some repository responsibilities as part of their duties or a dedicated repository manager may be appointed. Temporary assistance is frequently procured in the form of graduate student labour. Repository staff carry out a number of tasks which can include quality control, depositing content and promoting the repository within the institution. There is further information on [establishing a repository](#) on this site.

Additional resources

[Download](#) our Briefing Paper on Institutional Repositories [Download](#) our Briefing Paper on Business Issues for Institutional Repositories

Click

[here](#)

for a book chapter on business issues for institutional repositories

Click [here](#) for a Powerpoint presentation on repositories and institutional strategy