Exposing Undergraduate Research in Institutional Repositories

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Session Type

• Poster

Abstract

Institutional repositories can play an important role in providing students with opportunities to disseminate scholarship, while also acting to highlight and promote undergraduate research activities at academic institutions. Few repositories have fully embraced this role, however. As recent data from a content analysis of Canadian institutional repositories reveals, a majority tend to focus services around disseminating, preserving, and showcasing the work of faculty members, research centres, and graduate students, while largely ignoring undergraduate work. This session will outline effective strategies for attracting attention to undergraduate research in institutional repositories while asserting the benefits of doing so for students and institutions alike. Additionally, participants will learn ways of overcoming challenges related to promoting repository services to undergraduate student populations and obtaining contributions of work, securing rights, and managing deposits.

Conference Themes

• Supporting Open Scholarship, Open Data, and Open Science

• Managing Rights

• Developing and Training Staff

Keywords

undergraduate research, undergraduate theses, outreach and promotion

Audience

The primary audience for this session is repository managers and librarians, particularly those working at academic institutions that focus on undergraduate education and programming.

Background

This submission speaks directly to the topic of enhancing exposure of works by under-represented groups in institutional repositories, in this case, undergraduate students. Additionally, it addresses managing rights in a discussion of existing undergraduate thesis mandates, and ways of educating students about creative commons licenses, open access, and the importance of maintaining author rights over intellectual works. Lastly, it touches on developing and training staff with specific discussions around involving academic librarians in the work of promoting repository services to undergraduate populations.

Content

This presentation will relate findings from a content analysis of institutional repositories hosted by colleges and universities from across Canada carried out in 2016 that sought to explore the extent to which undergraduate research was included and showcased. The study looked specifically at the presence of undergraduate work referenced on institutional repository homepages, in browse menus and author profiles, and in search facets. It also explored deposit guidelines and help pages for evidence of support information for anyone wishing to deposit undergraduate work, and any related policies or mandates around the deposit of works such as undergraduate theses, formal publications and presentations, and regular coursework.

Existing literature on the inclusion of undergraduate research in repositories emphasizes benefits to students in helping to establish a scholarly record, enhance graduate school applications, and disseminate knowledge openly, as well as benefits to institutions seeking to promote undergraduate research opportunities to current and potential students (see for instance Davis-Kahl, 2012; Exline, 2016; Stone & Lowe, 2014). Findings from the recent content analysis to be presented, however, reveal that in practice, few repositories are actively collecting and showcasing undergraduate work as such. While this study focused on Canadian institutional repositories, software options and services vary little across borders, and initial analyses of repositories managed elsewhere suggests that these findings reflect a common lack of focus on undergraduate work in institutional repositories more generally. Additionally, very little literature exists that outlines strategies for increasing and enhancing the presence of this work.

Reflecting on these findings, this presentation will highlight examples of a few specific Canadian institutions that have clearly made undergraduate research a priority, detailing effective ways that this work might be featured, and made discoverable within repository interfaces, which will be of interest to repository managers as well as developers. It will also provide information on things to consider when developing polices and practices around collecting undergraduate works and securing permissions, such as input from faculty advisors, means of educating students about copyright, open access, and creative commons licensing options, and determining what types of content is to be collected (e.g., undergraduate theses versus regular coursework where quality may vary greatly). It is anticipated that librarians will find this information of interest. Participants will be asked to reflect upon ways that they might work with users at their own institutions to develop outreach and promotion activities, policies, and mandates to encourage deposit of undergraduate student work, as well as means of more broadly promoting this work as evidence of student accomplishment, and scientific and scholarly contribution.

Conclusion

Take-home messages from this presentation are as follows:

- Institutional repository managers and librarians need to give more attention to the inclusion and showcasing of undergraduate research in institutional repositories. More broadly exposing this work benefits students in their academic careers as well as contributing to the open access dissemination of knowledge in general. It also acts to promote undergraduate research opportunities at the institutions that repositories serve, and can potentially strengthen administrative and faculty support for these services as a result.
- Clear deposit guidelines, mandates, and the active participation of librarians in promoting and educating users about repository services can effectively help to facilitate the process of collecting and securing rights for undergraduate works.

References

Davis-Kahl, S. (2012). Engaging undergraduates in scholarly communication: Outreach, education, and advocacy. *College & Research Libraries News*, *73*(4), 212–22. Retrieved from http://crln.acrl.org

Exline, E. (2016). Extending the institutional repository to include undergraduate research. *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, *23*(1), 16-27. doi:10.1080/10691316.2014.950782

Stone, S. M., & Lowe, M. S. (2014). Who is citing undergraduate theses in institutional digital repositories? Implications for scholarship and information literacy. *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, *21*(3/4), 345-359. doi:10.1080/10691316.2014.929065

Appendix A: Recommendations Handout

Exposing Undergraduate Work in Institutional Repositories

RECOMMENDATIONS & EXAMPLES

Provide clear deposit guidelines

McGill

McGill University provides clear guidelines linked from the IR homepage directing faculty to submit exemplary student work on students' behalf.

Learn more: http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R

Showcase student work in IRs on university websites

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Sociology & Social Anthropology (SOSA) Honours theses voluntarily deposited in Dalhousie University's IR are also listed on the SOSA department's website.

Learn more: http://tinyurl.com/sosatheses

Mandate IR deposit for student theses

ACADIA UNIVERSITY

Since 2009 undergraduate students at Acadia University have been required to submit copies of theses to the library's digital collections.

Learn more: https://library.acadiau.ca/eThesesSubmit

Teach students about opportunities to share work in IRs

MacEwan UNIVERSITY

MacEwan University provides students with a "Sharing" guide that details information on publishing and presenting. It references IR deposit opportunities throughput.

Learn more: http://tinyurl.com/macewanshareguide

Promote student-focused repository services to faculty

OPEN ACCESS

- During Open Access Week events.
- At department meetings.
- As part of information literacy instruction sessions.
- Placed in university newsletters, on social media, and on library and research services websites.

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