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## **USING DASH! FOR DIGITAL REPOSITORIES: A CASE STUDY OF THE EAST TEXAS BAPTIST UNIVERSITY LIBRARY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Presents a case study on how Jarrett Library at East Texas Baptist University in Marshall, Texas, has been using the ebrary DASH! (data sharing fast) product, to create searchable databases of content. The case study explores the possibilities that are made available by the use of DASH!, including multiple types of information sharing with other libraries, openly on the Internet, and also how it is used for creating proprietary digital repositories. The case study concludes with the reasons why DASH! will continue to be used by the ETBU library as well as what has been most useful in regards to DASH!, including the availability of usage statistics, the low cost, and ease of use.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON EAST TEXAS BAPTIST UNIVERSITY**

East Texas Baptist University, also known as ETBU, is a small, private Christian University located in the rolling hills and hardwood and pine forests of northeast Texas in the city of Marshall. At least half of the current campus was technically part of the Louisiana Purchase and the proximity of the area to both Arkansas and Louisiana makes it part of what is known as the Arklatex. Most radio and television comes out of Louisiana, not Texas. Indeed, Marshall is closer to Shreveport, Louisiana than to Tyler, Texas; it is closer to Little Rock, Arkansas than Houston, Texas. As a result East Texas Baptist University and the surrounding region are affected by events in Louisiana, and to a lesser extent Arkansas, as well as the state of Texas.

Founded in 1912 as the College of Marshall, the institution was a junior college until 1944 when it became a four-year institution and its name was changed to East Texas Baptist College. In 1984 the name was changed to East Texas Baptist University. The school has been affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas since its founding, one of nine in the state including Baptist University of the Americas, Baylor University, Dallas Baptist University, Hardin-Simmons University, Houston Baptist University, Howard Payne University, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, and Wayland Baptist University.

East Texas Baptist University currently offers only baccalaureate degrees, although it is anticipated that a recently submitted level change application will be approved with Master's programs in education and religion being offered by 2011. The curriculum is liberal arts with some professional programs in business, education and nursing. It is a residential campus and the student FTE has averaged 1150 over the past five years.

### **THE PROBLEM DEFINED**

Over the past decade the need for a digital repository at ETBU became more apparent for a variety of reasons. First and foremost is the centennial celebration which will begin in 2011 and extend into 2012, making the historic documents located in the library archives and in other offices around campus prime candidates for digitization. Because of the increased emphasis on this event there has been more interest in the organization of the entire special collections and archives and the need for the conservation of fragile materials held therein. Increased emphasis on research has also highlighted the need for a repository promoting faculty and

undergraduate honor student research and a method for sharing that research with the rest of the academic community, as well as the need for a repository for graduate research as those programs begin in 2011. There was also a greater need to publish research for undergraduate students not involved with an honors project.

In spite of these needs there were several roadblocks to actually starting a repository, and they were not unique to the situation at ETBU. These included staffing, time, equipment, licensing issues if outsourcing the work, and of course the main problem that affects the rest: cost versus available money. The cost factors were further inhibited by prohibitions against ETBU or its departments accepting any type of federal funding by the University due to annual gifts by other foundations. This includes federally supported groups such as National Endowment for the Humanities and Institute of Museum and Library Services, both of which have contributed a great deal of money for digitization projects over the years.

These roadblocks also showed us what was needed from a system: ease of access, ease of use, and an easy integration with our existing collections and information sources. Terence K. Huwe called for something similar in 2005 when he gave three wishes for digital repositories. The first wish was “to see far more integration of born-digital, or ‘built’ content with traditional library collections and services.<sup>1</sup> The second wish was “for dynamically generated pages that show related documents...pages that point at related resources would add greater context to each document with its specific contents.”<sup>2</sup> His final wish was for more of us to “get serious about creating and using repositories as key elements in our overall information ecologies.”<sup>3</sup>

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM**

One of the options was to outsource the work of digitization and several companies were investigated. Yet that too was problematic. First of all, materials would most likely have to be sent off-site; not the best option for rare and/or fragile materials. Cost would have been a factor of course, but another issue was that of licensing and hosting of the materials. Would the materials be hosted on an ETBU server (cost of the equipment plus staff to maintain it) or would the vendor host (on-going costs)? What might happen if at some point there was a decision to switch to another resource? Would the existing formats work on another system or could they be easily converted? Would the formats be easy to migrate as technology changed?

One consideration to starting a digital repository that didn't involve currently available (and costly) software or outsourcing was to work with the very talented IT department at ETBU and come up with some type of home-grown version. This, however, would have had to wait on other priority projects within the University before it could even be planned. In addition the learning curve for each person involved would be very steep.

Another option was really a hybrid of the first two. We would do the work, but using software developed by an outside entity. Again, our main issues were staffing, time, and the cost of such software. In addition we still had the questions of where would the digital repository be located? Would we purchase another server to house the resources or would it sit elsewhere? Would we actually need to keep the information in two places – on our own server for master copies and another server to actually house the items being made available to the public?

By the summer of 2009 we had seen the digital repositories of both Baylor and Hardin-Simmons at two of the annual meetings of the Texas Baptist Academic Librarians. Both had a wide range of projects and both had the benefit of receiving major grants allowing the purchase of equipment and the allocation of staff. It was obvious that the ETBU Library was still very far

away from developing repositories of that caliber, not to mention owning the equipment needed and having the human expertise. There was a need to begin somewhere, even if not on as grand a scale.

During the summer of 2009 the Library was informed that limited free access to OCLC's CONTENTdm Quick Start would be forthcoming, due to the current FirstSearch subscription. This was an exciting opportunity, but as so often happens, time became more of an issue due to the resignation of one of the librarians and the subsequent decision to freeze that same position for budgetary reasons. Once again the digital needs were put on hold in order to keep up with day to day activities.

In January 2010 a brief article appeared in the Infotech section of Library Journal entitled "Ebrary Offers Self-Service PDF Platform."<sup>4</sup> It went on to describe the soon to be released DASH! product which would allow libraries to upload PDF content to the ebrary platform. Three things about the article caught our attention. First of all, the content would be available on an interface that was already familiar to our user base, as we had been subscribers to ebrary since 2001. Secondly, the service would be available to us for no additional cost. Lastly, "while the service is not designed to be the primary outlet for any school's digital collections, it may prove attractive as yet another means of exposing an institution's digitized contents..."<sup>5</sup> which meant we could use it exclusively or as a secondary source for digital collections.

Not long afterwards email was received from ebrary announcing the product and offering training to anyone interested in trying DASH! Registration was made for the first scheduled training session and when the time arrived it took less than an hour to complete. In addition, it was obvious that DASH! was very easy to use. Once training was completed our site was set up with a login and password. While waiting for that a decision was made on what materials would be added first. Several things came to mind, but it was decided to contact the author of the Free Bible Commentary web site, former ETBU professor Dr. Bob Utley.

## **USING DASH! AS A SOLUTION**

Dr. Utley, retired professor of hermeneutics, left ETBU around 2003 to devote himself to his writings and Bible study seminars. He had already requested the assistance of the Library in making sure that his commentaries and related audio and video files were cataloged into OCLC. Dr. Utley was delighted to let us download his commentaries into DASH! and we were fortunate in that they were already in PDF format and readily available on the Free Bible Commentary Web site.

By the next day PDF files from the Free Bible Commentary Web site were loaded into DASH! using both the single and batch file loading processes. The download completed quickly, and the processing was extremely fast. Once these had been completed and the metadata had been added to each record, a test was conducted by searching the commentaries in several different ways. These included keyword searching on books of the Bible and even specific scripture passages, as well as author, title, series, and subject.

Since this time we have made Dr. Utley's commentaries available on a public site in addition to the Jarrett Library site. Ebrary set up a separate channel for this collection and assigned us a new address specifically for the publicly available DASH! resources, using the same login and password. There was also the choice of limiting "public" to other ebrary-affiliated libraries or opening it up to the larger Internet community. In this case the latter was chosen because Dr. Utley's commentaries are being translated into at least twenty-eight different languages from

Afrikaans to Vietnamese and it is also in keeping with his ministry of offering these commentaries free of charge.

After the success of these downloads the next publications downloaded were the annual Scholar's Luncheon Program. Since December 2002 the Scholar's Luncheon has been an event honoring ETBU faculty who have published, presented, or performed during the previous academic year, or more specifically between September 1st and August 31st. The printed program is essentially a bibliography of these achievements. Fortunately these were already in digital format and easily converted from a Word document to a PDF file through the "save as" feature.

By making the printed program part of a digital repository through DASH! users may search on the faculty member, the schools and departments, and of course, the subject areas where publishing, presenting, and/or performing occurred. Search terms are highlighted, just as they are in any other type of ebrary search. One of the main benefits of digitizing the programs was to allow students and other non-faculty the ability to see the accomplishments of the faculty, something heretofore available on a limited basis, mostly by faculty who attended the Scholar's Luncheon each year.

One of the more interesting additions to DASH! was the result of the desire to preserve materials generated by the arrival of our new University President in 2009. On October 2nd of that year Dr. Samuel W. "Dub" Oliver was inaugurated as the 12th President of East Texas Baptist University and a large number of accolades arrived from around the country in the form of letters and certificates of commendation. The Library had displayed these materials following the formal ceremonies, but before they were packed away each letter and certificate was digitized and then combined into a PDF file to make a book of these accolades.

By this time the library had been able to obtain an unused scanner that another University Department had purchased and was now available through the IT department. Unfortunately the resolution only went as high as 600 dpi, but for most print documents it was felt that was sufficient. Once the scan was completed the file was downloaded to DASH!. A separate file for the inauguration program was also downloaded.

An interesting comparison can be made to CONTENTdm here. The same scanned documents, plus additional images that were taken of the various events, were used as the first foray into uploading documents and pictures into CONTENTdm. Once both were completed it can safely be said that both are pleasing and easy-to-use, but the DASH! product was much easier from the processing side. The main difference is that full text indexing that is automatically done in DASH! but has to be done manually in CONTENTdm. Even if the CONTENTdm file was scanned with OCR there is still heavy editing necessary if characters are misread by the scan; either way it is more time-consuming than DASH!

By this time using DASH! had become second nature, and the next group of documents that we added were the Honors Projects. At East Texas Baptist University the honors project leading to graduation with distinction is a four-semester program of original research directed by faculty in the student's academic major. Previous to DASH! the most recent project files were relegated to a list on the Honors Projects Web page, with older projects listed on a separate archives page. The only organization came from a catalog record added to TigerCat. Now that the projects have been added to DASH! they have become part of the permanent digital repository of the library, even if they eventually fall off the University Web pages .

One other collection that has been added through DASH! is The Martian, which is the official East Texas Baptist University yearbook. The first Martian dates back to 1918, the first year classes were offered by the College of Marshall. Unfortunately the library is unable to scan the 1918 yearbook at this time because there is only one copy, so other scanning possibilities are being investigated. However, there are at least two copies of the 1919 yearbook and that was the one chosen as a test. The scanning was completed in early March and the entire file was ready for downloading by April. At that time there was still a limitation on the size of the files and unfortunately our 1919 yearbook went over that cap. ebrary soon remedied that situation and the cap has been eliminated, allowing this file to be uploaded.

Unfortunately, the finished product of these scanned yearbooks is less pleasing than the other items added through DASH!. Somewhere in the process of the conversion from PDF to the e-book there is some moiré in many, but not all, of the photographs. This is likely due to the scanning process itself, and not due to DASH! so this will likely be remedied in the future with a higher resolution scanner and more experience with the scanning process as well as graphic software.

However, the yearbook was also downloaded to CONTENTdm and a comparison of the results is noteworthy. Although the files look slightly better on CONTENTdm at this time, it is much slower in loading the individual pages than it is on DASH!, and once again, the indexing of the individual yearbooks is faster and easier with DASH!. Additionally, the 1960 yearbook was finished in time for the fiftieth reunion of that class. While the entire file was uploaded to DASH! the file had to be split in half for CONTENTdm as it was over the file size limit. For these reasons it is still felt that DASH! is a viable option for this collection and the staff looks forward to digitizing other yearbooks and adding them once a better scanner is available.

In addition to the ETBU documents mentioned above the decision was made to download government documents available as PDF files since the vast majority of these resources are public domain. So far the documents loaded have mainly dealt with education, criminal justice, and health and medicine and useful for our education, criminal justice, nursing, and related fields. This is a great way to supplement our own collection, plus it's a way to gather many of these documents into one easily searchable database.

## **CONCLUSIONS ON THE USE OF DASH! BY THE ETBU LIBRARY**

The reasons for trying DASH! in the first place are the same reasons the ETBU Library will continue using DASH! for the foreseeable future. First of all, was the availability of the resource in both the timing of the implementation at ebrary and the fact that we were already subscribers to ebrary. The Library was in the right place at the right time.

The second reason is the ebrary interface itself. It has been a staple of electronic resources through Jarrett Library since 2001 so the ETBU community was already familiar with it. As technology changes ebrary will be responsible for any migration or upgrade issues and the files sit on their servers, another cost-cutting aspect for ETBU.

The third reason is the full indexing given the ebrary products, including those uploaded through DASH! The full text of each e-book is searchable and in the case of DASH! you can also add pertinent metadata related to the bibliographic content. This makes everything added accessible through traditional author, title, and subject browsing and searching, as well as keyword searching.

The fourth reason is a major reason and that is the availability of usage statistics. There was no way to keep usage statistics for the library on the University web site, at least in the way the ETBU Web site is currently set up. Even keeping track of the clicks didn't give the type of information needed for the tracking of usage patterns. However, if one or more pages are viewed or printed via ebrary it will be recorded. If people are reading government documents downloaded through DASH! there is now a record, whereas no statistics are available when a user accesses the same documents through the government web site where it sits. The statistics are also COUNTER compliant and only one report is needed for all ebrary materials, including those added through DASH!

The fifth reason the library will continue to use DASH! is its ease of use and ease in sharing the documents. The online training took less than an hour and the process is extremely simple. No special software needed to be downloaded as is the case with many other repositories. Each document receives a permanent URL allowing easy sharing of links.

The sixth reason is that DASH! is free since the library already subscribes to Academic Complete. There is no limit on the number of files we can download, or at least one that will be reached in the foreseeable future, so that cost will not increase because of the amount of items we add. Indeed, one can make the case for the fact that there is added value to the subscription because of the addition of documents through DASH!.

The seventh and last reason is the ability to add to the knowledge base, even in a small way. This is one of the greatest opportunities for smaller academic institutions that want to highlight faculty and student achievements and research. These are the institutions that are often overlooked because their emphasis is on teaching and/or on undergraduate education, but they are often institutions that contribute research of the highest quality. This is what will receive the most emphasis in the future as we formalize a repository that will be a publication outlet for many of our faculty and students, as well as an archival repository.

In conclusion, Jarrett Library at East Texas Baptist University will continue to use DASH! as a viable method of producing a digital repository and highly recommends the product to other libraries, large or small, which are looking at an effective method to create digital repositories.

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Huwe, Terence K., "My Three Wishes for Digital Repositories," *Computers in Libraries*, (April 2005): 33

<sup>2</sup>Ibid..

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 34

<sup>4</sup>"Ebrary Offers Self-Service PDF Platform", *Library Journal*, (January 2010), p. 22

<sup>5</sup>Ibid..

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