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Biz of Acq — MD-SOAR, Maryland's Shared Open Access Repository: It's been a Long, Long Haul

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Column Editor's Note: In 2011, **Stephen Douglas** and I published an article in this column, "Acquisitions and the Digital Repository," on ways in which we had each taken on repository work in our acquisitions units. In that article, I proposed that "digital transfer services" would fit well with traditional acquisitions functions, defining it as:

1. Acquiring digital content.
2. Conducting a quality review of digital content.
3. Moving digital content between systems.
4. Inventorying, manipulating, and ingesting digital content into a repository.

While my portion of that article focused primarily on my unit's work with Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs), I had been working toward implementing an institutional repository at **UMBC** since 2009. In 2013, I had Digital Scholarship Service Librarian added to my job title, becoming **UMBC's Acquisitions and Digital Scholarship Services Librarian**, and this year we are implementing our repository, **ScholarWorks@UMBC**, as part of **MD-SOAR, Maryland's Shared Open Access Repository**, developed by a group that I brought together in my quest for money for our repository and have led since its inception. This article is about the eight-year journey to move from an idea to the implementation of a consortial repository with ten other university libraries. — **MF**

The Concept

In 2007 or 2008, at an **ACRL** virtual event, university faculty were talking about their need to make accessible and preserve materials that aren't traditionally published, like datasets, lab notes, and materials created in various social media platforms. I was aware of previous efforts to sell the repository concept to faculty here as a means of dealing with serials prices, but they had little interest. Since our library director was interested in establishing a repository, and this alternative method of selling the concept for materials that were not traditionally published might be successful at my university, I thought we could try again to see if there might be interest. We did have digital collections, on the ContentDM platform, consisting mostly of digitized special collections, but which also included our ETDs, but no means of acquiring, storing, making accessible and preserving our community's work.

At the time, I knew little about digital repositories, but all the same, I sent an email to my interim supervisor and the library director asking if I could work on developing this concept. The answer was that we could discuss it after my new supervisor was hired and on the job. After a significant period of waiting, that happened, and we formed a Digital Collections Team. This team focused primarily on our digital collections in ContentDM and had little interest in working on a digital repository, but eventually decided to form an Institutional Repository Subgroup.

Developing Support for a Digital Repository in my Library and at my University

In August of 2009, the Institutional Repository Subgroup began seriously working. We brainstormed, watched webinars, and researched, and I did a great deal of reading and attended conferences to increase my knowledge on the topic.

In 2009, my supervisor asked me take responsibility for our ETDs which had been moving rather rapidly from one librarian to another. The programming that automated the process no longer worked, so the work was being done manually. I accepted that work, since it fit with institutional repositories, and I had some skills for working with data, and partially automated the process, using Excel visual basic macros, and gave the work to one of my staff. Later, I was able to attend a

workshop on XSLT which gave me the skills I needed to automate most of the remainder of the work. I also worked with our Graduate School, which manages the submission process here, to implement a permissions form to make electronic thesis and dissertations publicly accessible. To date, our ETDs from April 2007- have been loaded into ContentDM, but most have access limited to campus-only, with few publicly accessible.

In May of 2010, our Digital Collections Team's Institutional Repository SubGroup was made into an independent working group reporting directly to our Library Executive Council. Our library director told us to go on a fishing expedition to find faculty on our campus to "sell the concept for us." With budgets very poor, we were repeatedly told that there would be neither new money nor staffing for a repository, but that we should try to be ready when the budget situation improves. We developed a survey, both to find information, and to find faculty on campus interested in the topic. We developed a presentation, and I agreed to go out and meet with all of the people who said that they wanted to talk with us in the survey, and also to attempt to meet with all of our academic centers, and give our presentation. In some instances, I gave the presentation to entire Center staff at their regular meeting. We began to compile a list of "UMBC Repository Partners," and put them on a public facing "UMBC Digital Repository Research" Website along with additional information about what a repository is and does.



These meetings with faculty took many interesting twists and turns. One meeting resulted in me being asked to go talk to the directors of our graduate programs at their monthly meeting. Another resulted in me and another librarian, **Eric Jeitner**, now at **Stockton University**, joining forces with two faculty members, **Craig Saper**, Director of the Language, Literacy, and Culture Program at **UMBC**, and **Helen Burgess**, a faculty member in our English Department, now at **NC State**, to also develop and sell a digital publishing initiative on campus. We sold that concept to our library, and even our library director joined the digital publishing group. **Craig, Helen, and Eric** and I even did a digital publishing workshop at the **ACM/IEEE Joint Conference on Digital Libraries** in 2012. I continued to work with this initiative for several years, and in 2013, **Craig Saper** became the **UMBC** Herbert Bearman Foundation Chair in Entrepreneurship, which comes with three years of significant funding, to start up the digital publishing initiative.

In the end, my library's Institutional Repository Working Group found enough interest in a repository that we sent a recommendation to the library director that we implement one. We were told to find grant funding, so I began learning about grant proposal writing, including attending a number of educational opportunities to learn about grant writing. I decided to start small, and in 2012, I, along with colleagues **Gergana Kostova** and **Tiffany Wilson**, were awarded an **ACLS** Transforming Collections Microgrant, to "transform our collections into safe havens for open access materials by bringing into the library digitally published open-access works that are in imminent danger of being lost by restoring access and by providing for long-term preservation," which allowed us to obtain 66 faculty works and their rights, and load them into ContentDM, as a collection that would eventually seed our institutional repository with faculty works.

Meanwhile, in 2011, another librarian forwarded me an email from the Chair of **UMBC's** Humanities Council, which consists of the chairs of all of humanities departments, relating to what the library was doing in regard to preserving digital work. I attended one of their meetings,

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gave them our presentation, and added them as an enthusiastic repository partner, and their chair also asked if I would attend a Provost's monthly meeting and give our presentation there. With permission from my Library Director, who agreed to attend this meeting with me, I agreed to this. With a number of repository partners there, this meeting went extraordinarily well, with many positive comments. In the end, I asked the Provost if the right course of action might be to form a faculty committee to further study the issue, as I needed something to happen on a campus level, and didn't want to leave the meeting without agreement to move forward in some manner. The Provost agreed to this, and soon thereafter the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, who supervises the library, contacted the library director to work with us to appoint faculty members to the committee. By January of 2013, the UMBC Faculty IR Committee had also recommended that we implement a digital repository.

Finding Money

In the Spring of 2013, I attended the **IMLS Webwise** conference, which had an incubator program for thrashing out potential grant proposal ideas. Since many of the faculty I met with, and our Faculty IR Committee, were interested in advanced repository functionalities, I was looking at perhaps seeking funding for one small project focusing on developing a particular functionality and set of works, when it was suggested that I try to do it all. So I set out to obtain partners to obtain funding to implement a multimedia repository. I began contacting Maryland libraries, beginning with those in our consortium, asking them to partner with us on a grant proposal to implement a multimedia digital repository. That summer, my library consortium hired a new Executive Director, **Chuck Thomas**, who came from **IMLS** where he had been a senior program officer, and immediately after he arrived, we began working on this, and he met with and brought other libraries on board.

After a great deal of thought and discussion with both **Chuck Thomas**, and my library director, we decided to propose that the group of library partners take a two-pronged approach, and both work on the grant proposal and also form a committee to work on contracting for a consortial IR. Our first meeting, on both a grant proposal and a consortial repository, on August 5, 2013, was attended by representatives of fifteen Maryland academic libraries, from both within and outside the **USMAI (University System of Maryland and Affiliated Institutions) Library Consortium**. The group decided to go with the proposed plan.

Chuck Thomas advised heavily on the grant proposal, bringing on additional partners, and re-focusing it on digital scholarship, and I figured out how to navigate my university's grant proposal rules and forms for a proposal with cost-share requirements that included multiple **UMBC** departments as well as multiple outside agencies. **Craig Saper** served as my co-PI, bringing on board multiple additional faculty collaborators to work specifically on the issue of inexorably digital scholarship that couldn't be reproduced in print or in traditional e-journals or eBooks. I also chaired what we initially called the Consortial IR Group, which included representatives from all of the interested libraries that had time to put into developing it. The Consortial IR Group eventually decided to call itself **MD-CSDI (The Maryland Strategic Digital Initiative)**.

Moving Forward the Maryland Consortial Digital Repository

MD-CSDI began by contacting all **Maryland Higher Education Institutions'** library directors, and inviting those interested to participate, and also publicized the initiative through **CALD, the Council of Academic Library Directors**, consisting of all academic library directors in Maryland, looking for additional participants. The group watched Webinars on the services of many vendors who might host our consortial IR, and surveyed interested libraries on their current digital collections, and on what types of features they'd need in an IR. With all of that information gathered, the group invited three vendors that appeared best prepared to meet our needs to provide additional Webinars on how a consortial IR would work on their platform, and a set of key features. Those three vendors were also asked to complete a checklist on features important to us that their platform did or didn't have. The group began to develop RFP requirements, and to draft an RFP.

After about a year of work, we unfortunately learned that our grant proposal had not been funded. After a series of further meetings with **Chuck Thomas** and my library director to strategize about next steps, we determined that the consortial IR had to move forward because of the momentum and support we had, and that we'd ask the **USMAI Council of Library Directors (CLD)** for funding. After careful consideration, we determined to ask for funding for just a two-year pilot, as there was no means of collecting money from the non-**USMAI** libraries, so we'd be asking them to fund those libraries use of the IR too, but we knew we couldn't ask them to do that indefinitely. This proposal took careful discussion in **MD-CSDI**, and careful wording of the proposal, to ensure that the non-**USMAI** libraries would remain full partners with the same say as everyone else to keep them on board. When we presented this proposal to CLD, there was some discussion of the outside libraries being problematic, but once I pointed out that they'd been working with us from the beginning and had put substantive effort into the initiative, they agreed to support the proposal.

At this point, the **University of Maryland, College Park, (UMCP)** offered to host the repository, and we agreed to talk with them about this, and I immediately set up a **MD-CSDI** meeting with their key staff. They provided us with a clear proposal, talked about what service they'd offer, and answered numerous questions. Once they left the meeting, members unanimously agreed that **UMCP** would be our best choice, pending their response to our RFP specifications, which they agreed to provide in writing. We received the RFP response and all of the participating libraries continued to support going with **UMCP** as our platform provider. The request for the actual funds needed for the project and the **UMCP** proposal was sent back to CLD for a vote, and they approved.

System Implementation

Any additional **USMAI** libraries interested in the project were given a period of time to let us know that they would be participating, and we added representatives of additional libraries to our group at that time. Participating university libraries from the **USMAI** include **Frostburg State University, Morgan State University, Salisbury University, The University of Baltimore, St. Mary's College, and the University of Maryland Baltimore County**. The libraries from outside of the **USMAI** consortium were asked to sign an informal agreement document, and all of them did so. They include **Loyola/Notre Dame Library, Goucher College, and the Maryland Institute College of Art**. The project period began on April 1, 2015, and runs for two years. We agreed that during the two years, we'd implement our repository, and participating institutions would use it. Also, during the two years test period, we will develop an assessment strategy, and assess the project, providing a report to CLD, and also devise a means to determine an appropriate amount for the non-**USMAI** libraries to pay in the future, and a method for them to actually pay.

At our first meeting, we determined to call our repository **MD-SOAR**, which stands for the **Maryland Shared Open Access Repository**, and our group became the **MD-SOAR Joint Governance Group**, co-chaired by myself, and the **USMAI Executive Director, Chuck Thomas**. Additional key leaders include **Annamarie Klose**, Digital Projects Librarian at **Frostburg State**; **Kristen Welzenbach**, Digital Systems & Services Librarian, **Goucher College**; and **Adam Zukowski**, Metadata Librarian, **Towson University**. Representatives from our host institution, the **University of Maryland, College Park**, participate actively in our meetings, answer questions, and provide guidance from their years of experience with their own repository.

As of the date of this writing, we are six months from our April 1, 2015 implementation date, so I'll share some basic information about where our implementation currently stands. The system is up! Configuration is still ongoing, as is loading of digital objects and metadata from libraries' existing collections. We've developed a number of policy documents outlining ways in which all libraries have agreed to use the system, and we're planning a training session for system administrators. We're regularly also sharing information about each of our campus' local implementations. As we still have a ways to go before implementation is fully completed, final judgment on the success of the endeavor is in the future, as is a more detailed article on the benefits and challenges of implementing a consortial repository. 🌸