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The Once and Future IR Agenda: Resolving the Dialectic Aims of Institutional Repositories

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In our 2016 work, *Making Institutional Repositories Work*, **Callicott**, **Scherer**, and I drew a distinction between institutional repositories and institutional repository initiatives. The former referred to the technical infrastructure of the repository itself, while the latter referred to the holistic suite of infrastructure and services “intended to support the preservation and organization of, and access to, the intellectual output of the institution in which they [institutional repositories themselves] were housed” (XV). In the forward to the book and in subsequent publications, **Clifford Lynch** and subsequently **Scott Plutchak** identify the yet unresolved dialectical aims of institutional repositories. By which, they refer to the tension between repositories as vehicles for Green OA, and repositories as platforms to augment the scholarly record by hosting non-traditional research outputs. Both **Lynch** and **Plutchak** challenge the former in support of the latter. Our book consisted of case studies and practitioner observations and, as such, largely discussed the ways in which IRs have enabled green OA.

This practitioner thinks that IR support for the green OA movement has been impactful, and while I am inclined to agree that the future of IRs is best represented by hosting and preserving new forms of scholarship, I do think they can and should continue to support green OA. To that end, I would like to encourage us to think of the dialectical aims of institutional repositories in a Hegelian sense, which is to say not as thesis and antithesis in static opposition to one another, but as an interplay of movement between the two which reveals them to be interdependent parts of a whole. In this way, we can continue with a conceptualization of institutional repositories as locally-based networked suites of both services and infrastructure, rather than singularly-focused platforms aimed at promoting either Green OA or augmenting the scholarly record. Thinking of repositories in this way encourages further diversification of the scholarly communication ecosystem in terms of both types of scholarly outputs, and versions of traditional outputs.

In the early 2000s, **Raym Crow** and **Clifford Lynch** published seminal papers offering differing visions for institutional repositories. **Crow** saw IRs as vehicles to reform the scholarly communication system by serving as part of a “global system of interoperable repositories that provides the foundation for a new disaggregated model of scholarly publishing” (Crow). With this conception, repositories could host openly available (if not always fully Open Access) manuscript versions

of traditional scholarly outputs (IE: journal articles), thus exemplifying a new model for community-controlled and openly available scholarly communication. **Lynch** on the other hand identified institutional repositories as frameworks to preserve and disseminate new forms of digital scholarship, augmenting the scholarly communication system by expanding the scholarly record rather than reforming the traditional scholarly publishing system (Lynch, 2003).

As **Lynch** notes in the forward to *Making Institutional Repositories Work* and further elaborates in “Updating the agenda for academic libraries” this bifurcated goal of IRs continues to proliferate. Many of the advocacy efforts surrounding the widespread adoption and use of institutional repositories has focused on the benefits to individuals and institutions, citation advantages and research showcasing being examples, bestowed by institutional repositories hosting OA versions of traditional scholarly outputs. However, **Lynch** describes “the linkage between journal article open access and institutional repository agendas a mistake” (Lynch, 128) and that OA archiving of the scholarly literature is best conducted at the funder or publisher level.

Rather than focus on populating repositories with Green OA manuscripts, **Lynch** thinks that “academic and research libraries need to be spending a lot more time considering the changing nature of the scholarly record, the broader cultural record that underlies it and that enables future scholarship, and how we can collectively exercise effective long-term stewardship over this” (Lynch, 128). This is to say, institutional repositories should deemphasize or perhaps even eliminate their focus on green open access and instead focus on supporting the expanding scholarly record and facilitating scholarship “designed for digital environments” (Lynch, 128).

I support this latter point that the future of institutional repositories lies in facilitating new forms of digitally native scholarship — transcending the legacy print-based paradigm of scholarly outputs is one of the great allures of an open access scholarly communication ecosystem. However, I push back on the position that the linkage between green OA hosted at the institutional level and repositories has been a mistake. Instead, I think that green OA has made a substantial impact on the scholarly landscape and will continue to do so in the near term. The green OA agenda has also fueled a proliferation of institutional repositories, thus laying the groundwork for libraries to begin to emphasize the use of these repositories in the

important ways identified by **Lynch**, meaning as platforms for the preservation and dissemination of new forms of scholarship.

To explore the way that these dual roles of institutional repositories actually work in tandem with one another, we can frame the dialectical tension between the IR as vehicle for Green OA and as a vehicle for facilitating an expanded scholarly record in the aforementioned Hegelian sense. That is to say, the truth reveals itself through the dialectical movement and interplay of thesis and antithesis, thus revealing themselves to be differences which are none. In the preface to his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, **Hegel** explains with the metaphor of the flower bursting forth from the bud:

“The bud disappears when the blossom breaks through, and one might say that the former is refuted by the latter... These forms are not only distinguished from each other, but, as incompatible with each other, they also supplant each other. However, at the same time their fluid nature makes them into moments of organic unity in which they are not only not in conflict with each other and it is this equal necessity which alone constitutes the life of the whole.” (Hegel, 4)

Much of the work of institutional repository managers has focused on advocacy and practices surrounding the deposit of open versions of traditional scholarly outputs in repositories. True enough, we have not seen the transformation of the scholarly publishing system imagined over a decade ago resulting from these practices. However, they have had a significant impact on the scholarly communication landscape, as evidenced by the proliferation of IRs and their accompanying services at institutions where download counts often register in the tens or hundreds of thousands.

Though no “revolution” per se has taken place, hundreds of thousands of openly available works are being discovered and downloaded through institutional repositories, which has lent credence to those advocating for more openly accessible scholarship on the basis of fairness to those who may not have the resources or support necessary to obtain copyrighted scholarship. We might also look to the recent proliferation of Big Deal cancellations as evidence of change in the scholarly publishing system that is, at least partially, enabled by this advocacy work. The UC system, for example, outlines ways to obtain Elsevier articles after cancelling their Big Deal. The first among these is “Find an Open Access Copy” whether that be through a disciplinary repository, institutional repository, or author’s profile (Office of Scholarly Communication, University of California).

continued on page 22

The Once and Future IR Agenda ... from page 20

Moreover, IRs have provided the essential infrastructure, to borrow **Lynch's** term, that underpins the adoption of **Harvard-style** open access policies. The Coalition of Open Access Policy Institutions, for example, consists of greater than 100 institutional members, all of whom are committed to using their institutional repositories to support both green and gold open access publishing (COAPI). True enough, policies adopted by these institutions tend not to have "teeth" and compliance can be spotty, but the net result is increased access to thousands of scholarly articles that might otherwise remain behind paywalls, and committed institutional support for **SPARC's** advocacy efforts to open research through legislative action. Rather than a condemnation of aims, spotty compliance can be understood as a problem to be solved. Some institutions making progress in this space have seen compliance rates around 50%.

Criticisms of the Green OA agenda of institutional repositories, including those of **Lynch** and **Plutchak**, often focus on the role of disciplinary repositories and the inherent contradiction of a form of open access that is dependent on the continued existence of traditional subscription models. Disciplinary and funder-supported digital repositories can indeed provide the infrastructure for green open access and may offer some perceived benefits in aggregating similar content from a variety of different institutions. However, their centralized nature makes them vulnerable to for-profit takeovers or potentially governmental suppression. We have seen an example of the former in **Elsevier's** acquisition of SSRN, and of the latter in the "guerilla archiving" movements designed to protect accessibility to federal climate data from an incoming hostile U.S. administration (Climate Mirror). The decentralized and largely independent nature of institutional repositories, provided that they

are based on open-source platforms, provides immunity to such threats.

Plutchak calls attention to an oft-posed critique of green OA by referring to it as "fundamentally parasitic on traditional journals" due to its reliance on the editorial services provided by traditional publishers (Plutchak, 30). The idea here is that green OA, making manuscript versions of closed-access publications openly available, is essentially self-contradicting and as such ineffective as a revolutionary force. This is due to the fact that these manuscripts exist as part of the traditional subscription based publication model and as such could not exist should that model be subverted.

However, reflecting back on **Hegel's** metaphor, we can consider the green OA agenda of IRs to be like the bud, self-contradictory though it may be, in that it established the foundation of repository services in libraries. In this same way, **Hegel's** bud establishes the conditions for the emergence of the flower, though the bud remains self-contradictory in that it exists for something (the emergence of the flower) rather than for itself. By this, I mean the IR infrastructure itself, but also the way that IRs have popularized the idea of libraries as disseminators of scholarship and, through authors rights advocacy and Open Access policies, as partners in the publishing process itself. As is evidenced by the unfolding big deal cancellation movement, and the use of content currently housed in repositories, IRs should continue to host green OA content, despite the inherent contradictions of that movement. In brief, we should embrace these dialectical aims by increasing focus on aspects supported by **Lynch** without eliminating the focus on green OA.

Lynch concludes "Updating the agenda" by reminding us "of the truly central challenge and opportunity for our era: to develop appropriate new genres of scholarly communication for the digital environment" (Lynch, 130). The flower that is a diverse and open scholarly record that transcends the bounds of digital imitations of

print-based outputs is truly a grand opportunity and challenge. The green OA agenda, like the bud bringing forth the flower, fueled the widespread adoption of the technical infrastructure of repositories and complementary education and training surrounding authors' rights, open access, and intellectual property in online environments. The dialectical aims of institutional repositories, then, reveal themselves to be interdependent parts of a broader whole.

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Rumors from page 18

The he's here/he's there/he's everywhere **Rick Anderson** is a grandpa. Did you catch the picture on page 1? His granddaughter is named **Miriam!** Congratulations, **Rick!**

The smiling and always upbeat **Glenda Alvin** is much more than a librarian. She is a seamstress and **quiltmaker** extraordinaire! A few months ago, I got a huge box from **Glenda**. Inside was a beautiful handmade quilt of many-colored books! WOW! We are planning to display it in **Charleston** during the **Conference** for everyone to admire! Plus here she is in front of another of her many creations! Like wow!

Steve Fallon (Steve is an account Vice President, Americas and Strategic Partnerships at **De Gruyter**) sent us this Rumor! **Michael Zeoli** and **Steve Sutton** formerly of **Ebsco** have joined **DeGruyter**. **DeGruyter** is very excited to have them on board! I remember visiting **Sven Fund's** office at **DeGruyter** in Berlin several years ago. There were wonderful pencil and watercolor drawings by his children everywhere! A charming memory. I loved Berlin. Had never been there. Definitely worth a visit!

Speaking of the innovative **Sven Fund**, he is now Managing Director of **Knowledge Unlatched**, and we have an interview with him in this issue p.46.

Many thanks to the multi-tasking wonder woman **Leah Hinds** who helped me with many **Rumors!** BTW, we love **Rumors!** Please send them to either **Leah** or me at anytime!! Thanks!!

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The prodigious **Corey Seeman** is a regular contributor to **ATG** and a talented photographer known for animal pictures, most notably of **squirrels**. **Corey** had one of his photos selected for the annual **Comedy Wildlife Photography Awards** "Having one of my squirrel pictures selected for the **Comedy Wildlife Photography Awards** is probably my photographic highlight of the year — if not nearly all of the years." Hey y'all! This website is truly amazing! Highly recommended.

<https://www.comedywildlifephoto.com/>

continued on page 29