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# DigitalCommons@ILR: Institutional Repository Marketing and Development at the Catherwood Library, ILR School, Cornell University

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# DigitalCommons@ILR: Institutional Repository Marketing and Development at the Catherwood Library, ILR School, Cornell University

## Abstract

[Excerpt] DigitalCommons@ILR is a multipurpose institutional repository (IR) for scholarship produced by the faculty in the Industrial and Labor Relations School (ILR) at Cornell University. Although it shares this purpose with many IRs, DigitalCommons@ILR sets itself apart in a number of ways. First, it was designed to function not only as a collection of faculty scholarly works but also as a subject-based IR for workplace-related information. Furthermore, unlike many IRs, it has been successfully integrated into the organization, receiving support from the school's administration and strong uptake from the faculty. Finally, it has routinely pushed the accepted boundaries for IRs by adopting a stance of flexibility: instead of creating a rigid and complicated set of policies, DigitalCommons@ILR adheres to easily adjustable guidelines so as to best meet the needs of its community. While a great deal of time and energy was initially spent choosing a technology platform, this case study focuses on the IR team's nontraditional approach to the IR's marketing and development.

## Keywords

DigitalCommons@ILR, institutional repository, marketing, development, scholarly work

## Disciplines

Cataloging and Metadata | Collection Development and Management | Labor Relations | Scholarly Publishing

## Comments

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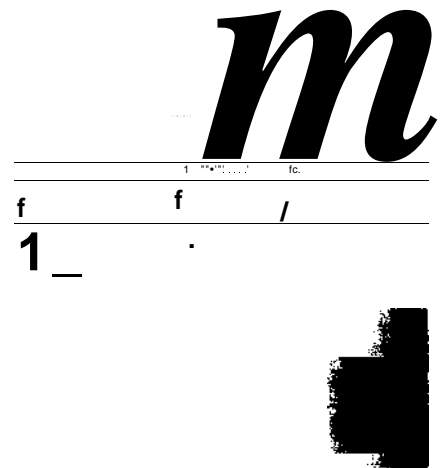
Mary J. Newhart, Suzanne A. Cohen,  
and James D. Del Rosso

## Introduction

DigitalCommons@ILR is a multipurpose institutional repository (IR) for scholarship produced by the faculty in the Industrial and Labor Relations School (ILR) at Cornell University. Although it shares this purpose with many IRs, DigitalCommons@ILR sets itself apart in a number of ways. First, it was designed to function not only as a collection of faculty scholarly works but also as a subject-based IR for workplace-related information. Furthermore, unlike many IRs, it has been successfully integrated into the organization, receiving support from the school's administration and strong uptake from the faculty. Finally, it has routinely pushed the accepted boundaries for IRs by adopting a stance of flexibility: instead of creating a rigid and complicated set of policies, DigitalCommons@ILR adheres to easily adjustable guidelines so as to best meet the needs of its community. While a great deal of time and energy was initially spent choosing a technology platform, this case study focuses on the IR team's nontraditional approach to the IR's marketing and development.

## Background

The Catherwood Library, a unit within the Cornell University Library system, resides in and is funded by the ILR. In addition to its four-year undergraduate program and graduate programs focusing on workplace issues, ILR offers workshops and courses for professionals at extension sites throughout New York State. The ILR currently consists of 110 resident and extension faculty, and library staff work closely with these faculty through reference, instruction, and outreach services. The Catherwood Library collections, including the special collections housed in its Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, serve as a comprehensive national resource for workplace-related information.



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- Adopting a Marketing Philosophy
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For a discussion of the process we used in choosing a platform, see Cohen, S.A., and D.J. Schindle. 2007. "Creating a Multipurpose Digital Institutional Repository." Available: <http://digitacommons.ilr.cornell.edu/articles> (accessed December 22, 2008).

# Starting, Strengthening, and Managing Institutional Repositories

The committee that laid the groundwork for DigitalCommons@ILR was created out of a desire by the ILR to better promote the work of its faculty and researchers and the Catherwood Library's interest in obtaining and preserving scholarly information produced by ILR. Although this committee had the support of the ILR dean and representation from the library, faculty, and technical services, progress stalled until Catherwood hired a Web and Digital Projects Manager whose duties included the implementation of an IR. The Web and Digital Projects Manager formed a team from existing staff, drawing on expertise from Collection Development, Reference, Technical Services, and Information Technology.

## The Need for Strategic Planning

From the beginning, the library team assigned to the IR project adopted the philosophy that, while the quality of the technology was important, the IR was only as good as its content. The team never believed the IR was a "build it and they will come" proposition. While faculty-created materials were the main concern, it quickly became evident that flexibility would be required to meet the immediate needs of Catherwood Library's entire community of patrons. As others have documented, when "transformational technologies are introduced in the conservative, controlled manner associated with stereotypical librarian culture its success can be hampered by organizational culture, often manifested by lengthy and complicated sets of policies" (Lindahl et al, 2008: 1). The IR team kept its focus on the best strategies for acquiring content rather than endless policy discussions.

The IR team decided that the vision and mission of the Catherwood Library would guide the building of the IR. As a tool that assists in furthering the goals of the library, the IR did not require its own mission or vision statement. Adopting this strategic approach removed the need to create separate policies and objectives for the IR and allowed for flexibility in meeting the needs of the school's faculty and staff. Additionally, it allowed the Catherwood librarians the opportunity to include subject-based collections that reflected the library's mission to provide "outstanding information and research services on all aspects of the world of work" (see [www.ilr.cornell.edu/library/about/mission.html](http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/library/about/mission.html)). The collections of workplace-related materials in the IR could strengthen the Catherwood Library's reputation as the most comprehensive resource of its type in North America.

The IR team also made the strategic decision to launch the IR before the marketing plan, policies, and procedures were in place. The IR team felt that the best way to approach the "transformational technology" was to experiment with and learn from it—to "jump in rather than wade in. Although this approach requires a culture that takes and accepts risks, it also creates opportunity for innovation and flexibility. Although some extra labor was involved when procedures/policies were changed mid-course to better meet the needs of users or to streamline staff workflow,

there have been no regrets about choosing to build the internal infrastructure of the IR while simultaneously marketing and populating it with content.

Although a collection development policy was created and basic metadata was decided upon, the priority was given to the creation of a marketing plan for the IR. The decision to focus on internal marketing grew out of the strategic planning done by the IR project team. Based on experience gained from close working relationships with the faculty, the librarians recognized that many faculty members' lack of copyright knowledge, technological skill, and (most important) time would deter faculty from self-contribution of works to the IR. The marketing philosophy adopted by DigitalCommons@ILR reflected, and benefited from, this realization.

To view the DigitalCommons@ILR policy, see [http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/dc\\_information/4](http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/dc_information/4).

## Adopting a Marketing Philosophy

The overall philosophy for the marketing plan was a simple one: focus on content. Knowing your audience is critical in the design of a marketing plan. In our case, we designed the plan for our internal audience, rather than external. Externally, the ILR and Catherwood Library were already well positioned as recognized experts in the field of workplace studies. Additionally, a powerful tool already existed that would find our content—Google. By creating recognition and support for Digital Commons@ILR within the ILR, the team could grow the content of the IR, which would in turn build recognition and support both internally and externally.

In building the marketing plan to support this philosophy, the IR team identified the first step as winning support from the highest levels of the school's administration. The team sought and found a champion for the project within the school's leadership, solicited input from key faculty and staff, and sought feedback and advice from the broader Cornell University Library community. Catherwood Library's director then sought support for the project from the ILR dean, who, having already heard positive feedback, threw his full support behind it. The dean sent schoolwide e-mail communications encouraging participation and invited library staff to make a presentation at a full faculty meeting.

That meeting represented the second step in the marketing plan. To prepare, the IR team established a "representative sample" of documents to demonstrate the possibilities inherent in the IR by soliciting papers from the faculty and staff who had been previously contacted. Next, the IR team organized an educational session for the faculty administrative assistants, anticipating the need for their assistance in working with faculty. A DigitalCommons@ILR brochure was developed, and library staff liaisons were named to serve as a single point of contact for various ILR groups (e.g., resident faculty, extension faculty).

From contacts made during the first part of our marketing plan, we learned that the wider Cornell University Library had adopted the goal of improving scholarly communications by educating faculty on copyright

To access the DigitalCommons@ILR brochure, go to [http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/dc\\_information/5](http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/dc_information/5).

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retention and open access initiatives. We adopted this goal for Digital Commons@ILR, and our presentation to the faculty reflected this purpose in its focus on the issues surrounding copyright in scholarly communication. The faculty meeting, one year after the launch of the IR, was a turning point in terms of participation: afterward, many faculty expressed interest in getting their works into DigitalCommons@ILR.

The third step of the marketing plan was to reach out and respond to those faculty members who expressed an interest in participating. Early on, the IR team had determined that it would be necessary for the library to commit to doing much of the work involved in getting a document into the IR. While this case study does not focus on staffing issues, the importance of adequate staffing to meet this commitment should not be underestimated (see Cohen and Schmidle, 2007). The marketing message was effective because the IR team stressed the efficiency and ease of using the IR: the only thing that faculty needed to remember is that DigitalCommons@ILR existed and they needed only to contact the library to have their content included. Repetition of this simple message in a variety of formats turned out to be a very powerful tool.

## Finding a Champion and Building Support

Early in the planning process, the IR team solicited advice and participation from ILR staff and faculty who could benefit from DigitalCommons@ILR. The team also searched for and found a champion for the project in an associate dean, who saw the IR as a potential marketing and outreach tool for the school. By reaching out to other departments, we learned that the IR might also prove useful in meeting several ongoing needs outside of the library.

For example, the ILR's Web development group needed to manage the growing use of the school's Web site as a place to post copies of faculty articles and papers. The IR offered a "managed system" to not only post papers but also provide proper copyright management. By soliciting the input of this group early on, a procedure was created that required any faculty or staff member wishing to upload an article or paper to contact the library IR team.

Similarly, the *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, a leading interdisciplinary journal published by ILR, had been looking to establish an online presence. When it was determined that DigitalCommons@ILR had the required functionality, the Catherwood Library was able to provide the journal an online home at no additional cost to the ILR *Review*. In exchange, Catherwood received blanket permission to post articles written by participating faculty members that were published in the ILR *Review*.

A third example of building support involves the Employment and Disability Institute (EDI), which provides continuing education and technical assistance on many aspects of disability in the workplace. The EDI wished to make available online and index its many publications, including material produced from grants where the granting agencies required open access. DigitalCommons@ILR met many of the Institute's

requirements, but EDI also desired a more seamless retrieval of documents stored in DigitalCommons@ILR from links on their own Web site. This led to the creation of a taxonomy that is used during the intake process to index all of their content in DigitalCommons@ILR, allowing for both keyword and subject browsing from the EDI's Web site of DigitalCommons@ILR collections (see [www.ilr.cornell.edu/edi](http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/edi)).

## Measuring Success

When claiming success in a venture, it is vital to be clear in your criteria. While we did not set any particular participation goal at the start of the IR implementation, we are very pleased with the fact that scholarship from 68 percent of the ILR's faculty is represented in DigitalCommons@ILR. The strategic decision making and marketing plan described earlier seems to have successfully addressed many of the reasons that faculty cite for nonparticipation in IRs, including the learning curve, confusion with copyright, and concerns about whether posting a manuscript constitutes "publishing" (Davis and Connolly, 2007). The IR team's willingness to act as consultants when faculty have questions about copyright and publisher contracts has increased participation and helped educate the faculty about broader scholarly communication issues. The better that faculty understand issues of copyright, the easier it will be to lawfully deposit their materials in the IR in the future. Of course, being encouraged by the school's deans to participate is a powerful incentive for the faculty and has greatly contributed to our success. Anecdotally, faculty currently participating are pleased with the extra exposure their work is receiving (they tell us that they are being contacted more often by journalists and others outside of the school), and they enjoy receiving the regular usage statistics that the Digital Commons platform provides to authors. As such, "word of mouth" by participating faculty is helping to spread interest among nonparticipants.

But we also measure our success in the ways that DigitalCommons@ILR benefits the Catherwood Library and the ILR beyond the traditional IR mission of housing faculty scholarly works. The expanded scope of our collection has allowed the library to assume an integrated marketing role both internally and externally: we provide an outlet for not only faculty but also institutions and groups within the school who wish to disseminate their work, and we also promote the library itself as a premier source of workplace-related information online.

DigitalCommons@ILR provides support for a number of departments within the school and the library. As noted, the IR team now assesses the state of copyright permissions for all documents posted to the ILR Web site, which both assists the school's Web team and demonstrates the value that libraries can supply to organizations involved in online document dissemination. The IR team plays an important role in collection development, providing a place to store and deliver born-digital documents that would have traditionally been added to our print collection if available in that format.

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Furthermore, we are always looking for new ways to assess the impact DigitalCommons@ILR is having on the library and the school. We track both hits and full-text downloads, for the entire IR and for specific series, and invite feedback from participating faculty and institutions (at the time of writing, the IR has had over 1.3 million full-text downloads). We're also exploring ways to interact more with the end users of the document and get them more invested in the IR. These efforts parallel our drive to keep the IR current in terms of technology, and both are described next.

## The Future

DigitalCommons@ILR is an established and successful IR implementation for Catherwood Library and the ILR. As such, it has moved from being a transformative technology to an established technology. The library, with support of the ILR's administration, has made a commitment to maintain the IR, to grow the IR, and to provide a high level of personalized service to faculty and staff. In order to continue its development, staffing levels will need to be maintained and possibly expanded, time must be allotted for further experimentation and innovation, and plans for longer term preservation need to be developed.

We also realize that becoming an established technology leaves DigitalCommons@ILR vulnerable to obsolescence. As such, an IR team priority is to keep abreast of new developments and trends in the field of digital assets management. Exploring new possibilities—such as user profiles and folksonomies—will allow us to keep DigitalCommons@ILR current and facilitate the continued development of an involved and vibrant online community of patrons. Building on our earlier successes, the IR team is ready to start another round of strategic planning and marketing to meet these new challenges, using a philosophy that embraces risk and flexibility.

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