DSpace.org:
Possible Futures for the DSpace Federation
Who Are We?

- DSpace is software, so
- DSpace Federation is a community of software users
  - Colleges and universities (libraries, other departments)
  - Research institutions
  - Government agencies and NGOs
  - Companies and corporations
  - Private collectors
  - Service organizations, consortia
Who Are We?

Do we all have the same mission and goals?

Sometimes, but not always

- Open Access to research articles
- Long-term preservation of born-digital stuff
- New digital library (or archives) services
- Metadata catalogs for non-traditional material
- Learning Object storage for VLEs
- …
Who Are We?

Not like other many open source projects

- “Users” are mainly organizations, not individuals
- DSpace is an entire application, not a simple tool
- DSpace is an end-user application, not just middleware or productivity tool
- Features and functions decided by domain experts, not programmers
Who Are We?

Other community characteristics

- Mostly higher education, related businesses
  No “marketing department” so the community reflects the source
- Large library constituency for “IR” service model
  But there are others…
- Many DSpace sites lack large IT departments
  - Need more technical help than other communities
  - Lack spare programmers to throw at it
Where Are We?

DSpace is 3 years old (still toddling)

True “Open Source Software” development process

- “committer” group defined
- process for other developers to contribute code
- active (very!) lists for tech support, developers
- some structure for non-programmers to contribute
  - Feature suggestions
  - Testing/debugging
  - Documentation
How Did We Get Here?

FAST!!
How Did We Get Here?

**Phase one**
- Lots of places experiment, “pilot” IR
- HP and MIT maintain and enhance software

**Phase two**
- As they learn, other people start to answer questions and help out
- But they also complain… “why can’t DSpace do x?” and “when are you going to add y?” (free vendor syndrome)

**Phase three**
- Lots of places go “live” with IR
- Serious development outside MIT or HP, real contribution
- Community grows and wants structure, stability
What’s Wrong With Here?

Community is growing, needs more structure and support

- Roadmap planning, QA, release management
- Better documentation, training
- Developer portal, regular meetings
- Community portal for other discussions
- Regular user group meetings world wide
- Facilitation within community, with other communities
- Marketing
What’s Wrong With Here?

Without this…

- Lack of coherent technical, functional direction
  - uncontrolled growth (feature creep) or forks
- New relationships can’t be exploited
  - no one can “speak for” the entire community
- Ad hoc community support continues
  - lots of places left behind, general frustration
- Legal headaches continue
  - how to include contributed code, linked code
What’s Wrong With Here?

Also

- Technology leadership rests with 7 committers
- They are badly overloaded, covering
  - architecture, feature planning, bug fixing, new development, support, QA, release management
- Need to
  - break these out
  - create specialized work groups
  - streamline process, attract new people
What’s Wrong With Here?

Also

- Should reduce reliance on just two organizations (i.e. HP Labs and MIT Libraries)

- Create a more formal decision-making process for
  - Feature roadmap
  - Technical standoffs
Where To Now?

- DSpace Federation governance for
  - Intellectual Property ownership
  - Licensing and other legal policies
  - Relationship to other businesses, support organizations
  - Develop/maintain relevant standards
  - Community management and support
  - Facilitate feature roadmap, technical direction
Where To Now?

DSpace Federation Advisory Board (ad hoc) meeting in late March

- Chris Rusbridge, Chair (Director, Digital Curation Centre, UK)
- Adrian Burton (Project Leader, Australian Partnership for Sustainable Repositories)
- Matthew Cockerill (Publisher, BioMed Central)
- Susan Gibbons (Assistant Dean for Public Services & Collection Development, University of Rochester)
- Geneva Henry (Executive Director, Digital Library Initiative, Rice University)
- James Hilton (Associate Provost for Academic, Information & Instructional Technology Affairs, University of Michigan)
- Clifford Lynch (Executive Director, Coalition for Networked Information)
- Carole Moore (University Chief Librarian, University of Toronto)
- Siobhan O'Mahony (Assistant Professor of Business Administration, Harvard Business School)
- A.R.D. Prasad (Associate Professor, Documentation and Research Training Centre, Indian Statistical Institute)
- Nick Wainwright (Research Director, Digital Media System Department, HP Labs)
- Peter Walgemoed (Director, Carelliance BV, Netherlands)
- Ann Wolpert (Director, MIT Libraries)
Where To Now?

Mission of the board

- *Define* the DSpace community
- Recommend *legal* ownership option, e.g.
  - Transfer control to new or existing 501(c)3 or 501(c)6 non-profit company
  - Leave control at MIT and/or HP (existing legal entities)
- Recommend centralized services, if any
  - Including funding strategies, e.g. membership fees, selling services, selling merchandise, user group meeting profits, etc.
- Recommend ongoing governance structure
What Happens Then?

- DSpace continues to evolve, improve as the user community needs it to
- DSpace is stable, well-supported
  - Lower risk of technical failure, being stranded
    - Same risk with software companies
  - Efficient, effective community support framework
  - Effective innovation pipeline from research to product
    - Rare with proprietary software
What Happens Then?

- DSpace community continues to
  - Support each other
  - Define needed improvements
  - Add new features they need
  - Test, use, learn
  - MIT and HP among them

- Who will be in charge? It’s still you
What Happens Then?

If this sounds like heavyweight, it needn’t be…

We could decide to leave well enough alone, or make only modest changes…

But we do need to address our problems or we will lose a rare opportunity to achieve something truly innovative
"New frameworks are like climbing a mountain — the larger view encompasses rather than rejects the earlier, more restricted view."

Albert Einstein