Success is in the Eye of the Beholder

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I'm here to talk about how we achieved success with our institutional repository.

Who is the repository for?

What do they want?

I hope to provide some answers to these key questions. If you get the answers to these two questions right, you're well on the path to success.

How do we measure success?

To paraphrase Louis Armstrong in *Hello, Dolly*

"We're still growing,
We're still crowing,
we're still going strong."

And we are growing. We're certainly crowing – what else is this event about but some very loud crowing? – and we're going strong. We have 600 registered users. We have more than 3000 deposits. But more importantly, we have more than 200 academics self-archiving which is a bit of a milestone for us.

What we have achieved success *as* has changed over time, and I'll be talking about that a bit later – about how we moved from the rather narrow mission of ePrintsUQ in 2002 to the ever-expanding mission of UQ eSpace in 2006.

But in the beginning, there was the Word. Printed words. Lots of them – journal articles, conference papers, theses, technical reports – reams and reams of words and no academic wanted to put *any* of those words in a repository they had never heard of at the University of Queensland.

When I accepted the job of setting up an ePrint service, I know the words 'poisoned chalice' were whispered behind my back. For most people at the library, an institutional repository was an Idea Whose Time Had Not Yet Come.

If my programmer Kingsley Gurney and I weren't exactly travelling westwards in covered wagons, we were still pioneers. DSpace was just a rumour, and eprints.org software was the only game in town. We got it working – with Kingsley as my Theseus venturing into the labyrinth – still largely uncharted territory because the instructions weren't finished.

Populating the service was key and I wisely had a stream of material backed up ready to go in once we started. Once that first tranche went in, I started nobbling people one by one to take part. I'm persuasive. I talked about it everywhere I went and I went a lot of places. I called in favours. Some academics got on board without any arm twisting – they were IT people, that's what they do. But targeting people who already have a tendency to use that kind of service is a smart move when you're starting out and need all the friends you can get. They don't need convincing it's a good idea – they just need to know where to sign up. We're talking about maths people, physics people, IT people. They've used preprint services. They like them. They can manage the input forms. They understand the technology. They don't need their hands held.

Once you've got some academics, you can get others. It's just that no-one wants to be first. We didn't have mandatory deposit and that would obviously have made things a lot easier. But we still got a steady stream of material coming in and that trend has only continued. The difference now is that more than 50% is self-archived. Data coming in still needs to be checked but we're over the hump.

So how did that happen?

I targeted specific types of material. I actively sought out non-copyright material such as working papers, departmental technical reports and drafts of conference papers. We also aimed for journal articles with publishers like BMJ Publishing who are amenable to open access. Once a service reaches a certain size, it looks viable. You have to have at least 500 papers for that to happen.

I fired off copyright clearance letters by email. I had a form letter I used and I used it to death. I had a 70% success rate, I'd say. Worth it. Getting papers in from prestigious journals makes academics much more trusting of the service.

I targeted specific people. High up people. Professors. Well known people. Academics who always got monster grants – because other academics envy them and copy what they do. I got their CVs, found which of their writings I could deposit with minimum hassle, and put them in.

Then I got them to sell the idea to their peers. I used them as my Trojan Horse. This works surprisingly well. Academics come up with arguments you wouldn't necessarily think of yourself. One professor said he liked to publish in Australian medical journals because it was his

peer community but it meant his work had little international impact. Many US and UK libraries didn't subscribe to the journals he published in so his citation rate suffered and he felt his work was not well enough known. Putting his publications – and I've got them ALL – into ePrintsUQ turned that around. It broke out of that parochialism. He now has much more contact from researchers all round the world and his citation rate has climbed enormously.

So we solved his problem.

One professor came on board simply because another professor was getting tons of hits. Never underestimate the 'Mine's bigger than yours' thing. It's a BIG motivator.

I had the repository indexed by Google and Google Scholar. We provided download statistics which measured how many people were using their publications. That's when people really started to come on board very quickly. They like big numbers.

We put them 'out there' and we show them that we've done so. I show them the difference in Google searches for papers on their own uni Web pages versus papers in the repository. The difference in the results is striking enough to convince them the repository is the way to go. Google values papers from services like ours much more than it does Web pages and we can clearly demonstrate that. I also tell them 'ePrints today, Google tomorrow'. The repository is reindexed daily. A major selling point. Many our academics turn up in the Google top ten when you search for their specialties. That's gold.

People often think: "If you build it, they will come."

With repositories, just building one isn't enough. You have to give people what they want, and *then* they'll come.

To win people over, you have to see things from their point of view. What problems do they have? What would they like to happen? Find one thing, one benefit that you can use to 'sell' the idea to them. That was how I did it.

Someone once said 'To a man with a hammer, everything looks like a nail.' People always quote this like it's a bad thing – as if the hammer man is stupid or unimaginative or destructive. But I think you need to be a bit hammer-like when selling your repository. See all the problems academics whinge about as the nails. Pay attention when they are talking and you'll start to spot nail after nail after nail … because an IR *can* solve an amazing range of different problems.

For example:

Make me famous, make me rich
The IR will put their work out there. The rest follows …
Promote the institution
The IR can do that too.
My journal article still hasn't appeared!
The IR will get it online today.
I'm already overloaded
The IR will lighten your load.
Make my job easier
We will.
Solve my problem
Whatever it is, the IR can help.

With academics, the key benefits are

- greater visibility and recognition
- ease of access for their peers – pointing them to repository instead of supplying reprints
- ease of access for themselves)
- increased citation rates
- permanent URLs
- download counts
- links for online CVs

a whole range of benefits that solved actual problems.

With mandatory deposit, 'selling' the idea to academics may become less important. If Arthur Sale were here, he'd probably be throwing spitballs at me by now for the notion that we have to sell the repository idea – because he thinks ONLY mandatory deposit is worth discussing. But I would suggest that even WITH mandatory deposit, *enthusiastic* self-archiving beats *dragging-their-feet* self-archiving every day. A popular service definitely has a buzz and it's just a lot easier to get compliance when people WANT to comply.

Unfortunately, academics are not the only people to whom you have to sell the IR concept.

You have to have a consistent message, but the message has to be tailored and slanted to suit the particular stakeholder group.

Who calls the tune?

There is the university administration. If you can get top-down support, it really helps. You have

to convince those people that an IR is going to enhance the university's standing and profile. They need proof-of-concept. Probably the best way is to put their own materials on for them – the Vice-Chancellor's, the Executive Deans', the Heads of Schools', and let them see for themselves that the service works. Show them how easy it is to demonstrate the breadth of research we do when they're out talking up the university. Where else can they easily gather so much research output together in one space? Either that or show them how a competitor university's IR is bigger and better and generating lots of buzz. Whatever! Just harness what works.

For research directors, an institutional repository is a vehicle to display the broad range of research produced in their schools. It was a way of storing and showcasing easily accessible work without having to build specific Web pages that need constant updating. It's worth talking to them. They want to get material out there – it builds the profile, increases awareness. The word 'showcase' is key here.

Your research office, if you have one – I'm talking about whichever unit at your institution reports publications to DEST – is another organisation you need on board. We were probably a bit slow to build those links on campus but they are happening now and things are really moving. They collect the research data that needs to be reported to DEST. We figured cooperation had to be the name of the game. Time managers always advise: 'Handle each piece of paper only once.' Get it, open it, file it – in one go – it saves time. Extend that to your IR – 'Enter this research data only once'. And make sure your repository is the place where it gets entered! The key word here is re-purposing.

Whether you use the data for DEST, the RQF, online CVs, list for annual reports – it doesn't matter. It should all flow out of one pipe and you should be the managers of that pipe.

We scored a ton of content when we partnered with our research people in a trial research assessment exercise this year. The RQF, if and when it happens, could be the key to overflowing coffers.

For library administration and library staff generally, an IR may not be core business. After all, it's the academics' job, or the journal publishers', to curate their own publications, isn't it? Yet building this repository has not only built bridges to academic staff. It has allowed us to think creatively about our own needs for long term storage and preservation. We are using it now to share working party documents. We link to some ePrints in course readers. We use UQ eSpace to store our image collections. Other library collections are slated to go in. The repository is a service we can offer to academics to make them better known – a great selling tool when building relationships.

Other people you should talk to are staff in university records or archives. One system makes

sense to them. Why have *their* system and *your* system and ten other systems? Why not one system? It's all just stuff. Partner with them if you can. Maybe what they have is not publications – but so what?

Which leads me on to my second point – getting to UQ eSpace.

We set up an ePrints repository for published materials in 2002. We grew slowly, then quickly. We took published material and unpublished material. But along the way, we realised what we had built didn't fit us any more. It was like getting out the winter clothes bag and finding everything was the wrong size, or totally out of fashion. What had once fit was now much too small. We needed something bigger.

This could happen to you. Probably the biggest mistake people make when they computerise is to create an electronic version of what they already do. The new system may be quicker, but it really just replicates what you've already done by other means. We set up an ePrints repository for publications because there was eprints software out there and other people were doing it. We didn't stop to think what other kind of repository might have been better. But we learned a valuable lesson along the way. Do what you *want*, not what you *can*.

Setting up ePrints was worthwhile, but it wasn't enough. Increasingly, we found academics wanting to store more than just publications. There were datasets, images, lab books – all kinds of 'unpublications' – that were as valid a research output of this university as publications, yet were outside the scope of our ePrints service. We had two choices – tell people to go away, i.e. 'Your data doesn't fit our profile', or change what we did to more closely match what academics actually needed. Which response would be a better choice for success, do you think?

The datasets and other resources I am talking about had all been created during the research process. The eScience experience in the UK showed that researchers repurposed that material when they could get their hands on it, particularly for interdisciplinary research. So making these datasets easily available aided research as a whole. As part of our APSR work, we set about identifying this kind of research output and figuring out how to store and preserve it and how to make it shareable with others.

Enter Fez, our digital repository software, developed in-house to meet this need. Fez was the system that allowed us to build bridges to staff in UQ research. It was the vehicle for electronic research delivery for the RAE here. It is the system that will probably take over the function of annual DEST reporting and help us arrive at the Holy Grail for IRs – mandatory deposit. We hope UQ eSpace, backed up by the flexibility of Fez, will soon become *the* 'single data entry point' for *all* UQ research reporting. That data can then be repurposed for CV building, future research assessment, promotion and tenure applications, annual reports, Web sites – for any

procedure that involves the listing of research data.

Your path forward may be very different from ours. Your scope may be different. But thinking flexibly about what role your repository can play in your organisation, and whose needs it can meet, is the key to building a successful repository that can command strong support from all areas of the university and thus continue to attract the funding necessary for its survival. We changed what we did. We changed what we would accept. We solved problems for academics and saved some valuable research data from loss and destruction. And in the process, we built a repository that can showcase the vast range of research work done here and make it visible, accessible and safe – for the long haul.

And that spells success in any language.

Thank you.