

Introduction

by Helen R. Tibbo, Rachael Green Clemens and Carolyn Hank, Guest Editors

Institutional Repositories: The Great Debate

In April of 2008 the Carolinas Chapter of ASIS&T held its inaugural event entitled *Institutional Repositories: The Great Debate*. In the spirit of 18th and 19th century college debating societies, a challenge was issued for deliberation of a resolution involving the concept of the institutional repository. Two orators accepted the summons to publicly argue the affirmative and negative positions. Helen Tibbo of the School of Information & Library Science at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill took the affirmative; Kevin L. Smith, the scholarly communications officer at Duke University, spoke for the negative position.

During this dialog dual, numerous issues were explored, such as the fundamental question of definitions: What is an institutional repository? How do topics such as scholarly communication, copyright, institutional memory, mandates, leadership, digital libraries, open source software, metadata, intellectual property, research impact, digital preservation and the Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH) fit into the concept and implementation of an institutional repository?

To continue the heated discussion we present this special section of the

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Bulletin. We offer readers the opportunity to experience lively intellectual deliberation on the important but often contentious subject of the institutional repository.

In this collection of brief articles we asked contributors to provide either a pro/affirmative or a con/negative argument in response to one of four important issues within the arena of institutional repository:

- Topic 1:** All universities should have an institutional repository.
- Topic 2:** Libraries should lead the institutional repository initiative and development at their institution.
- Topic 3:** Institutional repositories should be built on open source software.
- Topic 4:** Institutional repository success is dependent upon mandates.

We gave each author the opportunity to promote a personal position or perhaps assume the salacious role of an opposing viewpoint. **Please note: Each essay may or may not reflect the true position of an author – each is presented merely as an argument for the reader to consider.**

We hope this format will provide readers with an engaging and insightful learning experience with the ultimate message that institutional repositories are in fact multidimensional with complex challenges and opportunities. In addition we expect the format will help assuage the absence of strong public rhetoric with the close of the U.S. electoral season.

Our sincere thanks to each contributing author for sharing your time and expertise with the larger community. ■