

## Commercial Repository Solutions

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### Overview

Although many institutions choose to develop their repositories in-house, paying for a commercial repository solution is a viable alternative that can be a better or preferred choice. This briefing paper outlines some of the issues to consider in opting for and selecting a commercial solution, and lists six of the most popular solutions currently in use in UK universities.

### What is a commercial solution?

A commercial solution usually involves paying a third party for repository software or services, rather than managing everything in-house. Services can range from technical support and specified problem solving to customisation and hosting. Hosting is where the repository is hosted by a third party on external servers rather than on institutional servers.

Typical reasons for using external services may include specific expertise as well as systems infrastructure management, scalability and resilience, an institutional preference for outsourcing, or because a cost analysis shows it would be more cost effective than providing a similar service in-house.

### Considerations when choosing a commercial solution

- Does the solution fulfil identified functional requirements? Try to create a list of essential and desirable features as a baseline for comparison.
- How much does it cost? Consider the initial purchase cost and ongoing annual service agreements, and compare it to local staff and equipment costs.
- Are there many other users of the product? What do they say about it?

- What are the ongoing development plans for the product? Is there an exit strategy available to move the repository elsewhere (or in-house), should this be desired?
- What service level does the company offer in terms of 'uptime' (the availability of the service) and speed of response when reporting bugs or service issues? What hours of service does the help desk operate? What backups are taken, and what are the possibilities for restoring old items?
- What limits does the provider place on use of the product? Is there a limit on storage or traffic, and if so, what happens when these are exceeded? Consider what the institution requires of the product today, next year, and in future years.
- What statistics are available from the product?
- Can the software be integrated with local systems, for example authentication systems?
- What training is offered for the system? Are there any additional costs associated with it? Training is essential for effective use of any system.
- How much can the product be customised, and how much of this can only be done by the service provider? Are there any costs for customisations?
- Does the service provider offer the opportunity for a test account to try the service before buying?

### Service Providers

Six of the most commonly hosted repository solutions currently used in the UK are (in alphabetical order):

**BEPress – DigitalCommons:** With their head office in California and a UK office in Bristol, BEPress have been offering their DigitalCommons product since 2002. See: <http://www.bepress.com/ir/> or email [bepressir@bepress.com](mailto:bepressir@bepress.com)

**BioMed Central – OpenRepository:** Based on DSpace, OpenRepository is run by the publisher BioMed Central. Different levels of service are available for different budgets. See: <http://www.openrepository.com/> or contact [info@openrepository.com](mailto:info@openrepository.com)

**EPrints Services – Eprints:** Run by the University of Southampton (the developers of EPrints), EPrints Services offers hosting, training and customisation of the EPrints product. See: <http://services.eprints.org/> or contact [info@services.eprints.org](mailto:info@services.eprints.org)

**Ex-Libris – DigiTool:** Provided by the library systems vendor Ex-Libris, DigiTool is the repository product in their suite of applications. Based in the USA, Ex-Libris have an office in the UK. See: <http://www.exlibrisgroup.com/> or contact [exlibris@exlibris.co.uk](mailto:exlibris@exlibris.co.uk)

**Intrallect – Intralibrary:** Intralibrary, from its head office in Scotland offer a general repository solution with a specialism for learning resources. Intralibrary is the product used to host JORUM. See <http://www.intrallect.com/> or contact [enquiries@intrallect.com](mailto:enquiries@intrallect.com)

**ULCC – University of London Computer Centre:** manages repositories for institutions in the HE and cultural heritage sector, using EPrints software, and offers hosting, support, customisation and development. Contact: [repositories@ulcc.ac.uk](mailto:repositories@ulcc.ac.uk)

**VTLS – Vital:** Provided by the library systems vendor VTLS, Vital is their repository product. Based in the

USA, they have a European office in Spain. See: <http://www.vtls.com/> or contact [info@vtlseurope.com](mailto:info@vtlseurope.com)

## Conclusion

As with the implementation of any new system, it is important to survey different solutions, be that open source, built in-house, or commercial options. When considering commercial services it is likely that many will appear to offer similar services that will need to be judged against defined functional and organisational requirements.

Getting these requirements right in the first place is no mean feat, but these will be valuable documents which should be re-visited often. Judging each option against these requirements should result in a thorough acquaintance with all available products. Advice and information on developing requirements is available on the RSP website or contact us via [support@rsp.ac.uk](mailto:support@rsp.ac.uk)

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## References & Further information

**RSP Software Survey Nov 2010**  
<http://www.rsp.ac.uk/start/software-survey/results-2010/>

**Repositories Support Project**  
<http://www.rsp.ac.uk/>

The Repositories Support Project (RSP) aims to co-ordinate and deliver good practice and practical advice to HEIs to enable the implementation, management and development of digital institutional repositories.