An International Repository for Library and Information Science: the experience of E-LIS

Imma Subirats Coll and Antonella De Robbio

Established in 2003, E-LIS (http://eprints.rclis.org) is an international Open Archive for Library and Information Science. Being the first international e-server in this area, E-LIS is organised, managed and maintained by an international team of librarians, with different backgrounds. It relies on the voluntary work of an international team of information management specialists. The open archive resulted from the RCLIS (Research in Computing, Library and Information Science) project and the DoIS (Documents in Information Science), promoted by the Spanish Ministry of Culture and hosted by AEPIC team on machines of the Italian Consorzio Interuniversitario Lombardo per Elaborazione Automatica (CILEA).

Being a not-for-profit/non-commercial project, it is freely accessible and users are able to search and access full-text documents. Searching and archiving in E-LIS are totally free for any user. It is based on the philosophy and principles of Open Source Initiative in computing whereby people from all over the world cooperate in building software for the public domain. Its aim is to further the Open Access philosophy by making full text LIS documents visible, accessible, harvestable, searchable, and useable by any potential user with access to the Internet.

1. The Team

At the top of the E-LIS Governance, there are the 8 members of the administrative board which is responsible for overall policy, organizational development, and contents available in E-LIS. Other important roles are the coordinator of the editors which appoints all country and regional editors, the technical board (made up of 4 members) which is responsible for the services offered by E-LIS and the chief executive that is the person who is the first port of contact of the public with E-LIS.

The editorial team is entitled with the task of approving the documents deposited in E-LIS. When a document is approved by the editorial staff, it means that the quality of its metadata is assured. Each editor approves the documents of his own country and coordinates the actions on the promotion of E-LIS in his country. The maximum number of editors per country is three. Forty countries from all five continents are currently involved in the E-LIS editors’ team: Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Iran, Italy,
Mexico, Moldova, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Serbia and Montenegro, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States and West Indies Islands. All the editors, over sixty now, share this common vision and mission, while contributing to E-LIS with their own experience and competence.

E-LIS deals with each country specific issues to decide the best solution for technical and non-technical barriers so that international visibility can be promoted whilst national interests are served. International co-operation can facilitate debate on current issues on many levels and provides new professional experiences and expertise to editors, on a personal level.

The technical section concentrates on the software - its implementation, enhancement, development and added-value functionality. E-LIS runs GNU EPrints v. 3.0. The technical team provides the over-arching structure within which the methods and procedures followed by E-LIS staff are established, maintained and developed.

2. The methodology

Authors are invited to self-archive their work. Accurate submission guidelines help the user while submitting his document in E-LIS by self-archiving. As far as the submission policy is concerned, the only requirement is the authors’ registration in order to obtain a user id in the system. The E-LIS archive accepts any scientific or technical document, published or unpublished, in Librarianship, Information Science and Technology, and related application activities. The criteria for acceptance is that the eprints are relevant to research in LIS fields and that they have the form of a finished document ready to be introduced into a communication process. Submitted documents are into the submission buffer, where they may be approved by the E-LIS Staff, rejected, or returned to the author for modifications at metadata level or problems with the electronic file. Two business days is the maximum time period since between when a paper is deposited and when it becomes accessible to other users. A proxy service supports authors who may feel less IT-confident or concerned over editorial agreements with prior publishers. Metadata are set on the basis of a 23 document typology and then checked by an international editors committee in accordance with editorial guidelines. Agreements with institutions and library associations from many countries have also been a part of the submission policy which is open to proposals from new partners. So far, 60% of submissions were mediated by E-LIS editors, following these agreements, or on behalf of the authors who, for some reasons, were unable to do it on their own, while another 30% were self-archived. In the aggregate, authors amount to 2540.

E-LIS value-added features provide tools for editors and for users. Among others, these include automatic alerts for editors, full metadata display of metadata.
records, full-text search, browsing by user, a counter in the homepage as well as statistics from Webalizer. E-LIS also provides reference linking with ParaTools: a seek button parses citations and links them with online resources that hold a strong probability of providing the free full article. An e-mail alert service is currently subscribed by 1020 users.

3. The content

E-LIS is the largest repository in library and information science and currently there are 7,331 documents in the archive. Publications may include: preprints (pre-refereed journal paper), postprints (refereed journal paper), conference papers, conference posters, presentations, books, book chapters, technical reports/departmental working papers, theses, and newspaper and magazine articles. Statistics point to over 5,585 post-prints and 400 pre-prints deposited documents. These consist of over 3,433 articles from 500 different journals and 1,743 conference papers from 750 conferences. As far as the quality is concerned, it is important to point out that the 54% of the documents have been refereed.

![Graph showing the number of records over time](image)

4. The policies

E-LIS policies determine its identity, quality and direction. An archive’s organisational model is the sum of its policies and an archive without policies is like a library without rules, especially in such a case as E-LIS. The main policy
concerns are discussed and democratically agreed upon by the editorial staff. The discussed issues are organized in the following points:

- Mission: aims and objectives, what it is and where it’s going, target audience and communities involved, clearly outlining its previously discussed international traits;
- Submission policies: who can deposit and how;
- Metadata quality;
- Copyright policy; clearly stated and follows the RoMEO Project recommendations concerning the self-archiving of documents.
- Organisational model.

The development of an international LIS network has been stimulated by the extension of the OA concept to LIS works and facilitated by the dissemination of material within the LIS community. These are some of the reasons for the success of E-LIS as an organizational model, which has been developed within a framework in compliance with OAI, and, exactly for this reason, it can be regarded as a tool for disseminating the OA philosophy.

The invisibility of scholarship from countries so-called developing countries, such as African countries or India, was regarded as a *fait accompli* in the pre-Internet era. Nowadays, the discussion concerning the digital divide, scholars from these countries may expose their work via the networked services of digital repositories, such as E-LIS. Thanks to these projects, authors who contribute to an e-print archive are participating in a global effort by universities, researchers, libraries, publishers, editors, and readers to redefine the mechanisms of scholarly research. This e-print archive will make LIS research more visible, available, and relevant, which in turn increases its visibility, status, and public value. In E-LIS papers from 82 countries are currently deposited in 36 languages: Afrikaans, Basque, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Catalan, Chinese, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Indonesian, Italian, Kannada, Malay, Malayalam, Maori, Nepali, Norwegian, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, Ukrainian.

5. Copyright

The copyright is one of the key issues for E-LIS. The submission of documents and their accessibility is not an infringement of copyright. All work in E-LIS remains property of the author. The authors are responsible for ensuring that the documents they have archived do not have any restriction for the electronic distribution. If the document is a preprint, the process is quite straightforward because there are no limits concerning copyright: the author holds the exclusive copyright for the pre-refereed preprints. For the refereed postprint, the issue
becomes more complex. The author might have given the rights, e.g. publisher. The right to self-archive the refereed postprint is a legal matter because the copyright transfer agreement belongs to the text. But the pre-refereed preprint is self-archived at a time when no copyright transfer agreement exists and the author holds exclusive and full copyright. In general, when you publish in a journal you transfer copyright to the publisher. Most journals permit self-archiving, but it depends on the publisher’s copyright policy. Authors can also deposit the postprint inside the archive with restricted access. Authors may request that the publisher give back certain rights, e.g. the right to deposit the postprint in an open access archive, or to put it on your own homepage. Some publishers have stated that they grant these rights as a standard procedure. Copyright law gives the creator of copyrighted work exclusive rights, which may be both segmented and transferred to others. The documents posted on E-LIS archive are protected by copyright, retained by the authors, or by other ownerships.

6. Preservation

In the process of conveying digital information, one of our must is to focus on the issues of preservation of digital information. As we know, digital information is highly fragile and it can be easily damaged or corrupted. Metadata designed for managing digital content over a long period of time is commonly referred to as preservation metadata and they are useful to hold documents, inform, describe and record a range of activities related to the preservation of specific digital objects in a repository. As a consequence, our main concern is to implement the policies on the preservation of metadata. To date, E-LIS policy for the preservation of documents states that all materials posted in the E-LIS will be retrievable but E-LIS strongly recommends authors to use PDF and HTML. E-LIS will fully support and preserve the formats Adobe PDF, HTML and Text using either format migration or emulation techniques. To support a document means that E-LIS will make it usable in the future, using whatever combination of techniques (such as migration, emulation, etc.) is appropriate given the context of need. The other proprietary formats (such as Microsoft Word, Microsoft Power Point and Microsoft Excel) are recognized and preserved by E-LIS but we cannot guarantee full support in the future.

Directories and digital libraries spread widely as a result of technological interventions and as a reaction to the demanding and competitive economical conditions. E-LIS efforts are contributing to outline some of the challenges and opportunities resulting from a global vision of the Library and Information Science domain, giving E-LIS team the necessary motivation to engage in such a venture and to further develop international research activities.

7. Conclusions
In few years, E-LIS has achieved a lot of goals and it has established itself as the largest international open repository in the field of library and information science. Looking at the future, undoubtedly there are more challenging tasks to cope with but the never-ending voluntary work of a lot of experts in the field is a guarantee for their fulfilment. In addition, it is high time to reflect upon the identity of E-LIS because, being an international disciplinary repository which relies on voluntary work, it is not supported in terms of funding by any specific institution, association or organization.

Actually, the mission of E-LIS is to remain international and world-wide: a place where people from all over the world can deposit their documents and contribute to the world-wide dissemination of knowledge. However, this identity, which lacks boundaries and well-based definitions, has its pros and cons. The pros coincide with the purpose of E-LIS: not to be bound to a specific country or institution means that the repository has been created at the international level and that it is destined to have a world-wide visibility. We could define it as a sort of “commons”. The other side is that a clear identity is the condition sine qua non to be recognized as an “organization” at the international level when funding is necessary. If the fact the E-LIS is supported voluntarily by communities of librarians and specialists in information technology from all over the world is positive in terms of availability of different and specific competences, it can be quite the opposite in terms of necessity of funding. To present any sort of UE projects -such as the Framework Programme, TEI or eContentPlus etc.- in order to get grants, we need to have a clear identity identifiable all over the world. We should establish ourselves as a well-defined entity but this implies efforts and labour that currently we cannot afford relying only on voluntary basis.

Consequently, our main concern for the future is to define ourselves through a non-restrictive identity, for example a “federation” of a number of organizations interested to offer a common platform for E-LIS. Obviously, many ways could be detected but we have to examine them deeply and think hard about them in order to protect the free identity of the server. E-LIS must not become the exclusive property of an organization or country. The problem is not to find an owner for E-LIS, but to create new alliances with partners who share the same purposes in order to carry on with the future development strategies and challenges.

More Information


archive, Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia -INGV, Roma (Italy).
Presentation.


Sequeiros, Paula. 2006. Acesso Aberto a documentos sobre Documentação e Informação. *Cadernos BAD*, (1). Also available from: [http://eprints.rclis.org/archive/00008309/01/eLIS.pdf](http://eprints.rclis.org/archive/00008309/01/eLIS.pdf)


