Case history: University of Southampton, e-Prints Soton

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Organisational context
The School of Electronics and Computer Science (ECS) is one of 19 academic Schools in the University of Southampton. It is one of the world’s largest and most successful integrated departments of Electronics, Electrical Engineering, and Computer Science. It offers a wide range of undergraduate degrees and taught Masters programmes, and has a large and thriving Graduate School.

The repository’s mission
The mission of the repository (eprints.ecs.soton.ac.uk, or ECS EPrints) is “to maximise the visibility, usage and impact of our research output”. Increasingly, as the School becomes more aware of the need to manage its online visibility and research impact, the repository is also required to demonstrate and measure the visibility and impact of the school’s research.

Building a business case
The requirements for a school or departmental repository are much lower than for an institutional repository, therefore the business justification can be much lower. Hardware costs are trivial and support costs are dominated by the responses needed to the institution’s changing agenda (e.g. research assessment, research management etc). Ongoing school support for the running of the repository is in the form of a support staff programmer’s time (25% FTE) and an academic’s time for management (<5%FTE). The programmer’s 25% allocation is divided between strategic EPrints support and development, ECS repository support and support for six other repositories run by the school for various research projects, scholarly interests and teaching activities.

Overview of current contents
The repository has over 12,000 records, many of which were inherited from a previous bibliographic database. The repository gets about 600 new deposits per year. There have been 2,400 papers deposited since 2004, of which 1400 have open access full texts. A spot check of Computer Science papers published in 2006 found 100% of them deposited in the repository. A subsequent sample from ISI found 80% of the 2006 publications deposited in the repository.

Overview of current deposit activity
Items are self-deposited, or deposited by proxy (secretary, research assistant).

Developmental phases
Before 2000, the repository existed as a bibliographic database, for which a mandate was already in place. In 2000, EPrints took over the role of the

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1 These projects are not researching repositories, they are using a repository to collect their research literature.
database, and a full-text mandate was adopted in 2003. There was no formal demo or pilot phase.

**Institutional embedding**
The repository manager reports to the research committee. The repository manager sits on the school’s “web working group” whose responsibility is to enact the management’s strategies for marketing the school to external parties.

**Faculty engagement**
The head of research committee seeks regular reports on deposit activity by person, and ‘encourages’ recalcitrant depositors.

**Policy formulation**
Strategic policy formulation is undertaken by research committee in consultation with the repository manager. The latest example of policy change is that researchers are expected to deposit their research outputs *irrespective* of publisher statements and so the research committee have undertaken to deal with any queries that arise from publishers instead of leaving it to the individual.

**Hosting and support**
The repository is hosted and supported by the School’s service team.

**Service sustainability**
The aim of the repository design and the process design has been to keep the repository from impacting too heavily on anyone’s job.

**Measuring and demonstrating success**
Download statistics emphasise the use of the repository to management. Also RSS feeds and similar awareness displays around the campus make people aware of the repository’s activity and benefit.

**Key challenges faced**
Responding to changing agendas in an agile fashion, balancing the requirements of school and institution, maintaining support through changing departmental leadership regimes.

**Major achievements**
Good levels of deposit.

**Important unresolved issues**
Integration with the institutional repository is an ongoing and undecided issue. Although in theory we wish to merge repositories (and we have a very good working relationship with the library), in practice having control of our own system gives us the freedom to experiment and innovate for local conditions.

Even in a technology-centric school, people’s attitudes to the web differ vastly. Electronics researchers with established careers tend to see the web (and hence the repository) as something insignificant. This affects their attitude to the importance of depositing material, and makes for an uneven compliance with the mandate.
Attitudes to copyright are very deeply held. Even when presented with ROMEO data or publishers’ copyright statements on the web, various staff are still convinced that they shouldn’t be depositing full texts.