

Open Access through the Depot

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Summary

The mission of the Depot¹ is to provide a service that enables all UK academics to share in the benefits of open access exposure for their post-print research outputs. It does this by providing a national intake and storage facility - the Depot - for use by any UK academic in Higher Education.

Many institutions already have a repository for their staff to use, but for many there is no current provision for providing open access dissemination of research. By complementing the existing repository infrastructure, the Depot will create a 'level playing field' for open access deposit by all academics in UK Higher Education institutions. The Depot has been funded to support the policies of JISC for scholarly communication via Open Access (OA), aiding national, institutional and funding policy development in advance of a fully comprehensive institutional archive network.

Background

The first open access repositories followed a subject-based model (e.g. ArXiv, PubMed Central). While many of these are well-known and highly regarded, the experience of the JISC FAIR programme (2002-2006)² and many participants in the OA environment is that institutional repositories offer the best way forward to achieve an integrated and comprehensive OA repository network. Institutional repositories can build on local technical and administrative infrastructures and serve all subject-disciplines within the institution.

Experience has shown that the natural desire of academics is to access research material through subject-based points of access like portals. Building repositories that cover all subjects, in institutions or in the Depot, does not mean that academics will have to search through each individual repository to find the research they require. Using OA repositories this search can be facilitated while still providing the underpinning ingest and storage functions of a repository at a local and distributed level. That is, by using repositories holding a range of subjects, the intake and storage of materials can be handled locally, while at the same time search and access to materials can be handled nationally, or through subject-based services.

However, many of the advantages of OA repositories are realised only when they are used by a substantial proportion of researchers in the community. Using institutional repositories, this calls for the establishment of a large number of repositories, depending on "buy-in" from a substantial number of institutions throughout the country. In the UK, through the work of JISC and other agencies, there is now large scale representation of repositories for the research-led universities; 18 of the 20 Russell Group universities have repositories and 13 out of 19 "1994 Group" universities have repositories³.

As always in any long-term process of adoption, there is now a division between haves and have-nots: between academics at universities with OA facilities and those

¹ <http://www.depot.edina.ac.uk/>

² "LINKING UK REPOSITORIES", Swan, A. and Awre, C. study for JISC available from:
<http://www.keyperspectives.co.uk/openaccessarchive/reports.html>

³ information from OpenDOAR - www.opendoar.org

at universities without such facilities. This division presents a hurdle for national policy development for OA, where academics need to be addressed equally. The Depot is designed to overcome this hurdle, offering a facility for all researchers whose institutions have yet to establish their own repository.

The role of the Depot

IN 2006, JISC supported SHERPA and EDINA to scope a remedy to this problem, through the Prospero project. Based on that scoping study⁴, it has now funded development of a short to medium term national facility that is open to academics throughout the UK. This facility, called the Depot, provides academics with an OA repository in which to deposit their peer-reviewed articles. Thus, all UK academics can benefit from a level playing field with regard to OA to their published work.

The Depot is not intended as an alternative to institutions' establishing their own institutional repositories. It is intended as a 'keep safe' facility to be used by academics until there is local provision. When a new institutional repository is established, any content in the Depot that comes from that institution will be migrated to the local service hence also helping to populate emerging institutional repositories with content. Research from JISC considers the most sustainable and stable infrastructure to be provided by a distributed repository network. Such a network also offers the advantage for local institutions of management for their own knowledge assets. In separate funding schemes, JISC is promoting institutional repository development, through projects like the Repositories Support Project (RSP)⁵ and through studies and dedicated JISC repository research officers. Other support comes from innovative projects in the *Digital Repositories, Repositories and Preservation* and other Programmes. Institutional repositories remain key to JISC future strategy and development plans.

The Depot will store peer-reviewed post-prints and make them available both on an open access basis and for searching by services like subject-based portals. It aims to be a service with performance and capacity to meet the requirements of the community as determined by the Prospero scoping study and by field testing. It will be fully supported with a helpdesk, outreach and advocacy, and a website with a full range of supporting information and documents describing its use.

The Depot aims to integrate with other national OA facilities. For example, search functionality will be provided by the JISC-funded Intute Repository Search project. The service developed by Intute will provide access to UK-based OA materials including those in the Depot and will offer innovative services drawing from this material.

In addition, the Depot will offer a 'redirect' facility - Repository Junction - for those authors seeking to deposit content that does not properly belong in the Depot. The OpenDOAR directory of open access repositories is to be utilised to ensure that potential depositors whose institutions offer a repository may be redirected to that more appropriate home for their post-prints. The Repository Junction also aims to provide links to repositories for content other than post-prints (e.g. pre-prints or learning objects). In this way, the Depot will serve not only academics and emerging repositories but extant repositories as well, by redirecting additional deposits to them by authors who may be unaware of their existence.

⁴ <http://edina.ac.uk/projects/prospero/ScopingReport.pdf>

⁵ www.rsp.ac.uk