

Reflections of the RUBRIC Project Coordinator at Murdoch University

(One and a half years in!)

Early in 2006, the Library was invited to join the RUBRIC Project to set up an Institutional Repository (IR). The Directory of Library Services called for expressions of interest from staff interested in coordinating this Project.

I was appointed to this role, which required me to work collaboratively with the other seven institutions. For the first few weeks, I had to grapple with numerous acronyms such as FRODO, MERRI, SII, SHARPA, ROMEO, ARROW, APSR, FEZ, FEDORA, MAMS, OAI-PMH.....

Once I got the hang of these acronyms and what they mean, I was inundated with more for the hardware and software issues: evaluation, metadata, handles, DOI, harvesting, OAIster, MODS, MARCXML....

We were helped along the way by the technical advice RUBRIC Central provided. The institutions which already have a repository were of great help in sharing their knowledge.

As this was a new area of technology in our Library, I worked pretty much on my own locally. RUBRIC Central and the Project coordinators became my close working colleagues, speaking the same language and having a similar goal.

Progress on the Pilot

We set up our pilot repository in November 2006. The server was housed at USQ and I remote access it so I could test the various functions. The RUBRIC Central technical team helped me with the formatting and configuration, set up the indexing, handled the test ingestion of data from our Research system and the ADT system.

It was exciting for me, after almost a year working on the Project, to finally have something to report to my colleagues. I gave several information sessions to the Library staff and also to the staff from the Office of Research & Development and IT Services.

Our decision on the software to be employed was in a way decided for us. The Project funding included the purchase of the VTLS Software and we took this option. Right from the beginning, in all the meetings/conferences that I had attended, we were made very much aware that regardless of which system we choose, we should have an exist strategy i.e. the capability to change to another system further down the track. Our exist strategy is to make sure that RUBRIC Central tested the capability of data migration from VTLS to other systems like FEZ and DSpace.

Staffing Structure

In this Project, I initially reported to the Director of Library Services but the reporting

structure was changed towards the end of 2006 to the Manager of Collection Services. The reasoning behind this was that repository collection is considered to be a collection development issue, thus residing with Collection Services.

As a Project Coordinator, I had control of the progress of this project until the implementation stage. The implementation stage needs the involvement of the IT Services and the Library IT Coordinator. There are many technical issues that need to be resolved. IT Services have agreed to take the initially step liaising with the vendor and setting up the server. Once this is done, technical tasks such as harvesting, authentication, implementation of handles, file names, indexing, etc. needed to get the server running to comply with the RQF/Open repository systems will have to be carried out. It is not clear who is responsible for these tasks. Although I am aware of what needs to be set up, I do not have the technical know how to carry out the work.

Unfortunately our Library IT Coordinator left for another job just before implementation. The new Library IT Coordinator is still coming to grips with her new role and has to grapple with many other new technical issues and systems. I am aware that I have to keep the Library IT Coordinator informed of all the technical issues that have been brought up in the various discussion groups and teleconferences.

Implementation

In the first quarter of 2007, the proposed implementation of RQF by DEST gave the repository a renewed impetus. Up until then, I have been working quietly on my own and reporting fortnightly to the Manager of Collection Services but, suddenly, the RQF Officer and the Data Officer from the Office of R & D were interested in what we were doing and what we were up to for the RQF Reporting. We now have a once a monthly meeting with these Officers to keep each other up to date with developments on both sides. IT Services are now beginning to be involved in helping to set up the server and looking at the type of data collected by both the Research System and the Repository. We have discussed about data migration and workflow issues.

At the time of writing, we are just about to install our VITAL server. This has been a long time coming. The other partner institutions that have VITAL software have had their servers installed for at least three to four months. We are the only institution that still does not have a server and because of this I have found it difficult to join in the issues discussed at our weekly teleconference. On the other hand, I am hoping that as a late comer, we could benefit from the work done before us, in the truly RUBRIC collaborative manner.

Conclusion

There is still much to be done once we have our repository. I will have to train a fellow colleague who has been recruited to ingest data into the repository; oversee the working of the system; maintain continuous liaison with the RQF/Data Officers, IT Services, the Library IT Coordinator and the IR community; and present information sessions to the Library and University communities.

The works go on!

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1

2

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