

Developing an institutional repository at Moi University Library : challenges and opportunities

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Abstract

It is widely acknowledged that building an institutional repository (IR) for a university is very challenging, involving as it does attempts to convince generators of research material - scholars - that such a repository is vital in advancing their scholarly practices through effective and efficient collection, preservation and provision of access to the research output of the university concerned. In particular, the technical infrastructure and types of materials collected into an IR present new challenges and extended responsibilities for the traditional library. Yet, one of the critical roles facing the university library today is that of developing and managing an IR in order to provide an opportunity for knowledge exchange and scholarly communication. Moi University Library (MUL) is at the nascent stage of developing an IR. This article explores the strategies critical to implementing and managing the successful long-term growth of the IR and the challenges that MUL has encountered and is likely to encounter in this endeavour, and how those challenges can be addressed. The impact of such an IR among the academic and research community is also discussed. The article adapts Johnson and Copeland (2008)'s methodology of principles that should underpin the development of an IR (visibility, sustainability, quality, and findability) and some technical and financial implications that should be considered. The results reveal that professional librarians have taken the initiative of establishing an IR for Moi University, and have defined some policy issues especially regarding collecting the intellectual output of the University, and the limited use of DSpace, a MIT/Hewlett-Packard-created repository software. Major shortcomings of the initiative include: lack of specific strategies, and a university-wide committee to spearhead the process. The article provides insight into the development of IR in universities, showing the possibilities and challenges to full implementation of such projects.