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Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University, Mankato

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Two Repositories, One Strategy: Building Digital Collections

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Abstract

In 2014, Library Services at Minnesota State University, Mankato launched Cornerstone, an

institutional repository using the bepress Digital Commons® platform. In the same year, the

Archives and Preservation Area within Library Services launched a new, hosted platform for

their digital collections, ARCH, utilizing the open source software Islandora. In this paper, we

will discuss our decision to create not one but two digital collections on separate platforms and

the strategies that we embraced to develop, market, and move both repositories forward.

Keywords: institutional repository, digital collections, archives

INTRODUCTION

"We had that at my old university and people really didn't contribute to it, so why are you building one? How are you going to get faculty to submit items? It will never grow." This offhand remark came to me one day in early fall shortly after I had announced the creation of an institutional repository at Minnesota State University, Mankato. The sentiment was nothing that I had not heard before and did not surprise me. Whenever a new project begins, it seems like there are always a few lingering doubts that rise to the top. As I explained the benefits of an institutional repository to the faculty member, I knew that I had peaked their interest. Questions like these can lead to great conversations and discussion in starting any new project. The question that surprised me the most, however, with our new repository project came from other librarians. "Why are you supporting two platforms rather than one? Just pick one platform and move on." "Isn't it hard to have two platforms for your digital collections?" These questions point to a conscious decision that we made – the decision to support two platforms for our digital collections. At the same time, we worked under a common strategy to support and grow the collections. By having this shared vision, we were able to achieve success in our first few years. In this paper, we will share the story of how we created two separate digital collections rather than one to achieve what was best for our university.

Minnesota State University, Mankato is located 85 miles southwest of the Major Metropolitan Area in South Central Minnesota and is one of the 31 colleges and universities in the Minnesota State system. Founded in 1868, the University has over 15,000 students, 2000 faculty and staff and offers over 130 undergraduate programs and 75 graduate programs, including four doctoral degrees. The Library Services department oversees all aspects of the Library and is staffed by one Dean of Library Services, 19 faculty librarians, 26 technicians, three to five graduate student assistants and numerous student workers. In 2014, Library Services launched Cornerstone, an institutional repository using the bepress Digital Commons® platform. In the same year, the Archives and Preservation Area within Library Services launched a new, hosted platform for their digital collections, ARCH, utilizing the open source software Islandora. Both Cornerstone and ARCH are Library Services led and funded projects, but the foundation for Library Services' work with digital collections actually came much earlier.

STARTING OUR DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

The Archives and Preservation Area, led by Professor Daardi Sizemore, Certified Archivist, and Archives Technician, Anne Stenzel, laid the groundwork for our success in establishing digital collections. Since 2000, Professor Sizemore had been involved in the early work with the Minnesota Digital Library, which seeks to "support discovery and education through access to unique digital collections shared by cultural heritage organizations from across the state of Minnesota" (MDL, About). In 2006, Sizemore, Stenzel, and numerous archives student workers begin the process of digitizing and providing access to the University Archives photograph collection. This process ultimately provided access to almost 7000 photographs. Additionally, in 2010, the Archives received a Minnesota Historical and Cultural Grant to digitize 199 issues of the student magazine, the *Student* (later the *Mankatonian*) from 1888-1913 and 3009 issues of the student newspaper, the *Reporter* (as it is known today) from 1926-1975. These two early projects set the stage for continued work with electronic theses and dissertations in 2011 and converting oral histories on 16mm audio tape to a digital format in 2012. To host

these digital collections, the Archives used OCLC's CONTENTdm, managed locally by the Library Services Systems Unit. The result of this work was an increased emphasis on digitization and digital projects.

In 2013, I was hired as the Digital Initiatives Librarian to develop an institutional repository. This was in direct response to the increased emphasis on digital projects at Minnesota State University, Mankato as well as suggestions from our program review and emerging trends in academic librarianship. My background is in cataloging and metadata and I have been involved with institutional repositories since 2005. My first task, therefore, in fall 2013 centered around the creation of the institutional repository. Owing to the environment that I had entered into and because of the early work on digital projects, my task was greatly aided by the support of the Dean and the entire Library faculty. This support made my early days as the leader of the fledgling institutional repository project easier. This support has continued to this day and as a Library, we have made digitization and digital projects one or our strategic priorities for 2014-2017.

As we began to develop a strategy for building the institutional repository, Professor Sizemore and I had early conversations about the future of our digital collections platform CONTENTdm. In 2013, the Library had reached a point in which we had to consider upgrading our subscription level for CONTENTdm. Basically, our early success in creating digital collections and the subsequent large amounts of digital content combined to max out our subscription level. If we were to continue with CONTENTdm, we would not only have to pay more, but the demand on our Systems Unit would also increase in terms of time and effort to host and manage the new content. At this time an upgrade had caused considerable angst when we had to reload all of our content because of a new server, and we spent some time with OCLC's customer support trying to fix the situation. Also, as we looked to the future of our digital collections, we began to see limitations in our capability to work with various formats, such as streaming video, in our current configuration. All of these reasons caused us to pause and think about the future. It was beginning to look like CONTENTdm was not the right product for our growing situation.

We needed additional options. So, we formed a taskforce to investigate not only a solution for our institutional repository needs but one that could potentially support our growing digital collections as well. Luckily, the Library had established a team in 2012 when a taskforce was convened to discuss matters related to the creation of an institutional repository and the position of the Digital Initiatives Librarian. Now, existing team structure can be a good thing or it can be fraught with hidden agendas and expectations. An existing team can already have made its mind up before the project has even started. In this situation, the existing team operated like a blank slate on which we could further the work of the project. This Library Digitization Taskforce became affectionately known as the Digi-Squad.

INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORY BUILDING

The Digi-Squad consisted of representatives from Technical Services, Public Services, the Archives and members from Reference and Systems. This broad cross section of library personnel made it easier to plan and implement the institutional repository because each member understood and could represent all aspects of the Library. Additionally, the members also brought unique experiences and expertise to the table. As I was new to the campus, the Digi-Squad could also offer advice to me as to the organizational structure and climate of the campus,

and I could use them as a sounding board for potential clients and to find campus partnerships. This relationship between my position and the Digi-Squad has continued after the implementation of our institutional repository and our plans for fall of 2015 include initiatives to further our roles in scholarly communication on campus.

Beginning in fall semester 2013, the Digi-Squad's main goal was to have a recommendation for a product or vendor for the institutional repository by end of the semester. This at first glance may seem like a short timeline, but because a team was in place and had already been considering and discussing the institutional repository, it was feasible to examine and select a product in that time. To start the process, we asked ourselves several questions concerning the goals and objectives of the institutional repository and more specifically, what implications an institutional repository held for our campus. We identified two existing projects that we could use to quickly add to our repository: approximately 350 electronic theses and dissertations, which were currently stored in our CONTENTdm instance; and the Journal of Undergraduate Research, a multi-disciplinary peer reviewed undergraduate journal that Library Services had been working with since it began in 2001. We also began to discuss guidelines and developed an early mission statement which stated that we intended to create a "new digital home for the scholarly and creative achievements, research, and history of Minnesota State University, Mankato."

Additionally, we asked ourselves: what do we call our institutional repository? We knew early on that while it was important to define what an institutional repository is, we needed to develop a unique name to call the repository – something that distinguished it from all of the other products and services that we provided. The Digi-Squad could have easily come up with a name and moved on from there, but we felt that in order to assist in marketing the repository to the campus, we needed to first share and inform the entire Library Services faculty and staff of our project. To gain feedback and insight from the entire Library Services department, we hosted a brainstorming session to think of names for the repository. We also used that meeting to discuss possible names for our new discovery layer, Serial Solutions Summons, to be launched later that year. Out of this session and in further discussion with the Digi-Squad, we decided on the name Cornerstone. To us, Cornerstone fit our campus and the idea of an institutional repository. A Cornerstone can be defined as a basic element, the foundation, and one of our foundations was the research and scholarship of our students, staff and faculty. The name Cornerstone, therefore, fit in well with the ideas that we were promoting.

With a repository name in hand and a firm grasp of what we wanted to do with the repository, we began to consider vendors and products for Cornerstone. I had already compiled a list of different products and solutions to consider, but in discussion with the Digi-Squad, we quickly narrowed the list down to only three vendors that met our needs. The three products were: bepress Digital Commons®, Islandora (which is open source but was offered as a product hosted and supported by PALS, our consortium/support for libraries within the state of Minnesota) and Rosetta by ExLibris. Each of the three vendors were asked to reply to eight pages of questions, and along with price quotes, to provide either an in-person or a web based demonstration of their product. Ultimately, our decision, which fit our situation but may not fit others, was to opt for a fully hosted and supported service rather than one that was open source and required Library systems support.

In November 2013, we had the three vendors give a demonstration of their product for the Digi-Squad and several members of Campus Information Technology Solutions department. After the vendor demonstrations, we made the recommendation on December 16, 2013 to our Dean of Library Services, Dr. Joan Roca, to select bepress Digital Commons® for Cornerstone as the best fit for our needs and vision. Digital Commons® provided us a well-developed, professional, customizable, highly discoverable presentation and publication platform to serve as our institutional repository. Digital Commons® would be perfect for showcasing our intellectual output and had great potential for journal and conference hosting. Now, one will note that our decision to select bepress Digital Commons® was a relatively easy one and was the primary focus of our past four months' work. The conversations, however, that Professor Sizemore and I had earlier (along with additional conversations with the Digi-Squad) were not forgotten.

As Professor Sizemore and I watched and listened to the vendor demonstrations, it became clear that there was an opportunity to select a different product for our University Archives digital collections. At the same time, we made the recommendation on Digital Commons, we decided to cancel our subscription to CONTENTdm. In its place, we selected Islandora, hosted by PALS, as our new digital collections platform. Islandora better met our needs for our growing digital collections. In particular, Islandora would work perfectly for our large digital photograph collections and our digitized newspapers, and it had the capacity to work with and manage video files.

While one might think it strange to adopt two platforms for digital content, we felt at the time that each product offered unique options for our needs. Digital Commons® would work well for our scholarly output, but it was not as capable as other products in the display of photographs. Islandora, at that time, lacked the institutional repository structure and system that we quickly wanted, but it would be perfect for our displaying our digital photographs, newspapers and video files. While both products have since undergone upgrades that make it possible to do more with them, we have no plans to cancel one product in favor of the other. We are quite happy with the capabilities of each product. As we use them more, we may someday decide to make a change, but for now, we have the staff and customer support to manage two separate repositories.

CORNERSTONE'S LAUNCH

So at the start of January 2014 as we began to plan out the spring semester, we decided that we would concentrate on getting Cornerstone launched first and that the new platform for our University Archives' digital collections could wait until the summer of 2014. Our contract with CONTENTdm would not expire until December and so our content would still have a viable platform. Additionally, we had ready-made content to populate the institutional repository rapidly. As the semester began, I fully expected all the pieces to be completed in a relatively short amount of time, maybe a month or two weeks and that I could quickly load all the content. Things did not quite turn out exactly as I had planned. While one benefit of bepress Digital Commons® was the fact that we had a dedicated support person to help us set up the structure for Cornerstone, we soon realized that we would have to come up with our own front page design. Coming up with a design on our own, however, did not go as easy as we had thought. There were many elements that we had to consider, so we turned to a very important partner on our campus, the Office of Integrated Marketing, to help us design Cornerstone's front page.

The Office of Integrated Marketing and their dedicated staff worked with us to make sure that the design of Cornerstone fit the University's policies. They worked with us and brought in a graphic designer in the University's Printing Services to create a logo that we could use consistently through the design and in any marketing materials. Ultimately, in our work with them, we developed a wordmark rather than a logo to keep things simple and easily identifiable. They advised us on the correct shades of purple and gold and advised us on other matters (like ADA compliance) to consider and make sure we included in the final design. Because we were able to tap into campus resources in order to achieve a compliant design, we did not have to be experts in graphic design nor did we have to spend a lot of money. The only costs were $345.62 to pay the graphic designer in Printing Services for his time in developing the wordmark (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1. Cornerstone Wordmark

The Office of Integrated Marketing also worked with us to develop a formal marketing plan which would help us integrate Cornerstone into every aspect of the campus. Included in this formal marketing plan was a core message about Cornerstone. The core message summed up Cornerstone and presented its purpose in a single sentence. This sentence could then be applied to all marketing materials to ensure a consistent message. This core message also became my elevator speech that I used to start out all presentations that I made to the campus community. Additionally, the formal marketing plan contained strategies for effective marketing on our campus. These strategies included print publications, and it opened new paths for potential marketing opportunities. These paths included posting an announcement online on the University's homepage, submitting a story to the local city newspaper, working with the campus radio station to make a short announcement, a story for the campus school newspaper and targeting special events on campus, such as the Technology Fair, to make announcements. All these paths helped us to begin to spread the word about our plans.

While the Office of Integrated Marketing provided great assistance to our endeavors, this is not to say that everything went smoothly or as one had expected. To begin with, we had hoped to launch the repository in a relatively short span. We soon realized that to ensure compliance with University standards, we would have to delay the launch. While this is not a bad thing to have the colors the same as other University projects, it restricted our color palette to a small amount of colors. Ultimately, we liked our choices, but it was just one thing to keep in mind when designing the repository. Additionally, the Archives and Preservation Area team had spent

a couple of hours brainstorming ideas for a logo to market the repository. The University's Printing Services and the Office of Integrated Marketing, however, informed us that the University was moving away from logos and turning to wordmark icons to brand various projects on campus. The idea behind this move was to encourage simple design and avoid flashy distractions of a logo. While this made sense, we had hoped to have a little more flash for marketing.

Ultimately, our flashy design came in the form of our banner or header for the top of Cornerstone's main webpage. In this, we were able to work with the Office of Integrated Marketing to use a campus photo to create a nice, attractive design for the banner. From start to finish, it took six months to finish the design for Cornerstone, and we officially launched it on June 17, 2014. Because the launch happened over the summer and I wanted to add as much content as possible first so that everyone could see its potential, we held off on the fanfare and pomp until later in August 2014 when many of the faculty and staff would return and we could show off the new project.

MARKETING CORNERSTONE

Once August arrived, we began to work with the Office of Integrated Marketing to create printed marketing pieces. We created a double sided postcard (5 ½ x 8 ½) that we could mass mail to all faculty and staff at the beginning of the new semester.[1] This professional looking postcard generated immediate interest among the faculty and I received a phone call from an interested faculty member the same day the postcard was mailed. The only thing that cost in all this marketing was the printing of the postcards which came to $585.28. For our campus, we did not have to spend a lot of money to spread the word and we did not have to get too fancy. All we needed was a simple and clear message that we could spread by relatively simple means.

Additionally, we utilized social media to announce the start of the project and we used simple things like a display during Open Access Week, the Library Newsletter, and the news feed on the Library's homepage to spread the word about Cornerstone. None of these things had high cost, and we wanted to make sure that we utilized what we had in multiple formats to reach our audience and by using a campus resource, we saved money. According to Sara Gilbert Frederick, the Director of Content Marketing in the Office of Integrated Marketing, an agency would charge a rate that could be $100 or more per hour to provide marketing services. She went on to estimate that her office had spent about 20-30 hours working just on the Cornerstone materials. All told, by using an existing office and service on our campus, we saved $2000 to $3000.

Now, before we even had a full design or even content loaded, it was important to me to start talking about the project and to get a concise and brief message out to the campus. This marketing took me to various places across campus from a professional development day talk in January to a presentation before our Faculty Association. Within all of this, the key thing to remember is to never stop talking about the project. I talked to everyone that came across my path and I sought out opportunities to speak on Cornerstone everywhere I could on campus. In particular, I had the opportunity to give presentations to key members on campus from the college Deans and Directors to the Provost and the President of the University. These encounters with administration not only served to get the project noticed and to gain support for it, but it led

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[1] A PDF of the Cornerstone postcard is available at: http://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/lib_services_fac_pubs/18.

to further discussions and meetings in the fall in which I could talk with department chairs and individual departments on the benefits of Cornerstone.

LAUNCHING ARCH

All of the marketing tips that we did with Cornerstone helped to benefit the launch later in the fall 2014 of our new platform for University Archives digital collections, now rebranded with the name ARCH: University Archives Digital Collections. We mirrored the steps that we took with Cornerstone to assist in the development of ARCH. We had a great team in place to assist in the development of ARCH – the Archives and Preservation Area, whose members had not only been working with digital projects since 2006 but who also knew the archival materials we were seeking to make available through our digital collections. Additionally, we turned to the Office of Integrated Marketing and Printing Services to develop a wordmark for ARCH just as we had developed for Cornerstone (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2: ARCH Wordmark

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In the end, both wordmarks utilized the same color scheme, the same font and style. We consciously sought to mirror many things with the development of Cornerstone and ARCH so that when one thought of one product they would also remember the other. This is clearly evident with the design of ARCH. In particular, we chose a similar view of campus to appear in the banner of ARCH that we did with Cornerstone. While the image is not exactly the same, we wanted them to have a similar look and feel. We matched the color scheme between Cornerstone and ARCH with the lone exception being that we put the banner for ARCH in black and white to have people think of ARCH as the historical content of the University - hence the black and white photograph. The Office of Integrated Marketing helped us to create similar but slightly different sites that were in compliance with the University's policies and color schemes. Additionally, the Office of Integrated Marketing developed a formal marketing plan for ARCH just as they had done for Cornerstone. The formal marketing plan again contained a core message that we could take to the campus along with several strategic places to market the materials. Plans are currently underway to have a similar print piece done for ARCH that mirrors the Cornerstone flyer.

While the process to market ARCH has mirrored Cornerstone, the process for ARCH has also yielded new marketing strategies that we had not thought about when working with Cornerstone. For example, a very simple marketing tool for ARCH that we have since utilized for Cornerstone has been the creation of a business card with contact information. This business card not only has the email and phone number to contact for more information, but it contains the

URL as well. These business cards are small and easily handed out to potential partners and patrons. Instead of handing out a large print piece, a small business card can quickly disseminate the needed information and the cost was relatively small, $89.25 for a box of 500 two-sided business card. Tied into this, we are working on a small bookmark that contains the core message and URL for ARCH. A similar one for Cornerstone has already been printed at a cost of $306.89. These again are small simple things that can be easily handed out to quick provide information on the project. While the longer print pieces are nice for having space to give out more information on the projects, it is important to have shorter, smaller pieces of information to quickly spread the work. Short pieces by their nature are concise and help patrons and potential partners quickly find key pieces of information. In addition to these shorter print pieces, we also developed lengthier online sources of information through the use of LibGuides.[2] It is here that we went into more detail, providing additional information for our patrons.

Moreover, in the development of ARCH, we quickly realized that we needed to have a formalized plan for deciding where the content went, into either ARCH or Cornerstone. People who had heard about either project were asking if a potential project fit better into one or the other of the repositories. There was also confusion within the Library Services department as to what each project did. The simple solution was to create a collection development policy[3] that helped to define what types of projects went into either ARCH or Cornerstone. ARCH preserves and provides access to historical information about Minnesota State University, Mankato and South Central Minnesota. Cornerstone collects and provides access to the scholarly and creative output of Minnesota State University, Mankato. While this collection development plan does have some flexibility and some projects are left to the digression of the Archives and Preservation Area, this simple web page has been a great way to introduce the projects to the campus community.

CONCLUSION

Now at the end of year two with both Cornerstone and ARCH, we are just beginning to showcase the depth and breadth of our digital collections. Cornerstone contains over 3199 individual items from across the campus and includes not only textual documents but images and video as well. In our recent campus Academic Master Plan for AY2015-2018, one of the recommendations was to utilize Cornerstone to showcase research and scholarly output of the University. ARCH contains over 9000 images, 3000 newspaper issues, videos from homecoming and the 50th Anniversary of the Vikings Training camp, and so much more. Both collections seek to provide a snapshot of the research of our campus and the history of our institution. Now as we plan for the University's sesquicentennial, our digital collections will be in high demand.

So what did we do to achieve our success? First of all, it was not just one factor or just one person. It was a team of librarians and staff members representing a variety of backgrounds and areas that helped to launch Cornerstone and ARCH so quickly. If the infrastructure that I had was not in place, it would have taken longer to get the projects off the ground. Moreover, we had support right from the start. From the Dean of Library Services to the Provost and President of the University, both Cornerstone and ARCH have had the backing of some higher level

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[2] See http://libguides.mnsu.edu/cornerstone
[3] See http://lib.mnsu.edu/archives/diglib/intro.html

administrators who have embraced the projects. It was important to have them involved in the project right away, so that they could support us.

Additionally, good marketing is key to starting any new project and marketing has made ARCH and Cornerstone so successful. At times, it was not the flashy advertising that caught people's eye (although I will admit that a flashy postcard did help), it was the face to face conversations that had the most impact on our campus. We loved talking to people about Cornerstone and ARCH and we sought out every opportunity that we had to insert Cornerstone or ARCH into the conversation. Now that both repositories have attracted attention with our marketing campaigns, we would like to conduct more formalized assessment into which marketing materials were the most effective for our campus. In an informational survey that was conducted in spring 2016 to better understand and assess practices in scholarly communication on our campus, we included a question to see if faculty were utilizing Cornerstone and a question on how faculty wanted to learn more about what our digital collections could do. While results indicate that we need to continue to do effective marketing (and do a lot of it), we found that faculty would like to learn through a series of workshops or with one-on-one consultations with a librarian rather than through email or newsletter articles. As a result of this feedback, we are making plans to create a series of workshops on various topics in scholarly communication and our digital collections

In the end, yes, we have two different platforms for our digital collections, and we acknowledge that there might be some confusion as to what goes where or who does want. That is one thing that we can work on and investigate as we move forward. Two platforms, however, is working rather well for us and we have no short term plans to change. In our journey to grow both Cornerstone and ARCH, by adopting similar development strategies and learning from what worked for one repository and applying it to another, we feel that we have had tremendous success with our digital collections and that we can only continue to grow.

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