
Abstract:
The Libraries at Southern Methodist University, in Dallas, TX, are not unusual in looking to develop digital strategies to manage their research collections. Although the Libraries had long seen the potential of digital technology for harnessing and organizing the intellectual capital of the University, it took several years for the efforts to gain critical mass. This case study documents a four-prong strategy that has been used to manage collections as diverse as nineteenth century photographs, early twentieth century regional art, faculty conference papers, church history and student engaged learning initiatives. Broad topics discussed include organizational culture, faculty and staff readiness, national developments and internal politics.

Gillian M. McCombs is currently Dean and Director of the Central University Libraries at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX, USA

Print is not dead. We librarians know that, many of our library users know that. Print, particularly in its most well-known collated iteration, the book, continues to be one of the most “inclusionary, transformative and innovative” apps ever developed. But at the same time, our profession needs to demonstrate that we embrace digital technology and are leading the information revolution in our various library communities. All types of libraries are being pushed to show the return on investment (ROI) to their larger institutions, and to work in an environment of heightened accountability and assessment. Some in authority are even questioning whether there is still a need for physical libraries.

This new climate requires us to be strategic in our vision and politic in our alliances. We need to create a bold roadmap that will demonstrate how we enable our institutions to achieve their missions; that will position us in the mix as innovative, fearless leaders, and help us engage our constituencies to make the case for us in our blended digital/print world.

This presentation will document the path taken by one institution in its quest to manage its collections more efficiently while using digital technology. The four pronged approach shows how digitizing sampler collections from an outstanding special collections library led to the creation of a digital repository to harness the intellectual capital of the institution. At the same time, a grants program was created to digitize born-analog research papers and conference materials. The Libraries are also looking to partner in consortial efforts to provide online access to pre-1975 government documents, and to engage in joint initiatives with local institutions.

Libraries are looking for ways to retain the sense of their original mission to collect, preserve and provide access to the record of human civilization, but at the same time, show that they are ‘in the mix’ and leading their institutions in technological initiatives.

Southern Methodist University (SMU) is a medium sized (use official description), Welcome to SMU A nationally ranked private university with seven degree-granting schools, SMU is a distinguished center for teaching and research located in the heart of Dallas. SMU’s 11,000 students benefit from small classes, leadership opportunities, international study and innovative programs.
SMU is celebrating the centennial of its founding in 1911 and its opening in 1915. As SMU enters its second century, the University continues to rise in national prominence. The University prepares students for leadership in their professions and in their communities. Our location in the heart of Dallas – a thriving center of commerce and culture – offers students challenging experiences on campus and beyond. Relationships with the Dallas region provide a platform for launching careers throughout the world.

SMU was founded by what is now The United Methodist Church, in partnership with civic leaders, and was shaped by the entrepreneurial spirit of the region. The University is nonsectarian in its teaching and committed to academic freedom and open inquiry.

Today the University provides a strong liberal arts foundation through the humanities and sciences and professional and graduate programs through seven degree-granting schools. located in Dallas, Texas. Although not know for being on the cutting edge of technology, it has pockets of innovation and energy. SMU’s Central University Libraries (CUL) have taken it upon themselves to play a leadership role in the use of information technology on campus. Occasionally, CUL founds itself ahead of its constituents, and – very rarely – behind, but in 2012, it looks as though we are just where we should be just ahead of the user base and leading them along gradually. However, it has taken several years, and numerous false starts to build the current momentum.

In 2000, CUL was fortunate to hire a young government documents librarian who singlehandedly set the digital ball rolling. He set out to digitize some of the intriguing government documents in his collection, focusing specifically on those related to WWII. His database was separate from the library catalog, but available from the library’s web page, and it soon built a devoted cadre of off campus users. And as often happens, these users gave back to the collection with their own collections. CUL became the owner of 2 (or 3) personal collections of photographs from WWII army photographers – and in some cases they had already digitized their personal collections. [note to self – any point doing any more wwii docs?]

Although this librarian left the university in ???, it was clear that the future was going digital. Accordingly, the CUL Dean sought funding to create a digital content manager position to solidify and broaden digital initiatives. CUL is rich in special collections, but for most people there was not access to them unless one came on campus. The funding initiative was successful in that funding was allocated from the administration for two years – a digital content manager was hired, and the initiative began. [Maybe I can pull in from the article I wrote with Joe?]

Tower papers story
Development of the sampler approach – used successfully for ... be specific on the ETArtists. Led to grants written with other institutions, led to more funding, led to interest by bigger funders, and led to Dorothy and Ray.

Describe how this is now a solid process.

Beginning of the DR –

The final project during this period was the creation of a digital repository to house and provide access to SMU’s research output. Although the Libraries had initiated a number of digital ventures over the years, and had created a very successful digital library that held over 9,000 images from CUL’s special collections, there had not been much enthusiasm on the part of faculty for what is known at many institutions as an institutional repository. However, the global open access initiative combined with the U.S. Federal Research Public Access (FRPAA) and America COMPETES Reauthorization Acts created a more auspicious climate for a new initiative. Together with the AVP for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies, a tripartite partnership was created. The CIO found funds to underwrite the software purchase for a three year license, the Libraries developed a staffing/equipment/implementation plan and the AVP for Research promised funds for an in-house digitization grants program. The Digital Repository is currently under construction and being populated, outreach efforts are underway, and it is anticipated it will go live in January of 2012.

Creation of the grants program

New Consortial opportunities on the horizon with joining GWLA.

VISION STATEMENT FOR AN OPEN ACCESS DIGITAL REPOSITORY AT SMU

PARTNERS: - OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES, OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, CENTRAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

PROPOSAL

A pilot project to create an open access, SMU-wide digital repository that relies on internal grant funds to support the digitization of faculty projects that are not primarily born digital. The three partners are the Office of Research and Graduate Studies, the Office of Information Technology and the Central University Libraries. The plan is to create the infrastructure that would allow for a call to faculty to submit research outputs that are currently digitally inaccessible. The digital publishing component allows for the ability to pull together various initiatives scattered across Schools.

NEW FUNDING REQUESTED: - $30,000

BACKGROUND
We have long been aware of the need to create a digital depository to house and provide access, collectively, to SMU’s research output, and to create a university-wide digital publishing outlet. CUL has explored a number of different options over the last five to ten years, and kept a close watch on other university efforts across the nation. As SMU ramps up its efforts to become a top 50 institution, this need only becomes more critical. The challenge has been, where to start, and how to combine varying needs and current initiatives across the campus?

In 2008, Central University Libraries (CUL) and the Office of Information Technology (OIT) partnered to enter into negotiations with the Texas Digital Library to create an SMU institutional repository. However, subsequent exploration of the product and services offered deemed it not suitable for our needs. In 2009, CUL purchased ContentDM, an out of the box product that allowed for the creation of a digital repository for special collections materials such as rare photographs, artists’ sketchbooks, 16mm films etc. Today there are over 8,000 digital objects in these collections which are accessed both locally and all over the world. This successful initiative led to CUL’s acceptance as a member of the select Flickr Commons consortium. However, this product is not suitable for an open access institutional repository that would provide access (at varying levels) to SMU’s collective body of research – either born digital or needing conversion.

In early 2010, CUL and OIT partnered again to assess one of the preeminent locally hosted products available – D-Space. OASIS (the name for the temporary database) was created and tested over 6 months. However the verdict was that D-Space was not a suitable product for SMU. Although the software is free, this would be more than made up for with time in software support staff working to develop and customize the product.

In 2010, a new hosted solution, bepress’ Digital Commons product, was tested and compared to D-Space. This product was much more favorably reviewed and a cost estimate solicited. However, at the time, all units at SMU were going through a variety of 2% cutbacks, and other funding needs had priority. There was also concern in how to engage faculty who, in many cases, have been slow to adopt new technology, and the need to be prepared to address a variety of copyright concerns. We cannot afford the ‘build it and they will come’ approach. [This was tried in 2005 when CUL created a Digital Content Manager position, but was not able to build faculty interest in the project.] It was felt a more suitable technical solution would be to use an outsourced, simpler software/hardware solution such as bepress. However, the cultural issues still remained.

This spring, learning from our colleagues in Canada, we have developed a very different approach. Instead of starting with the research gold standard – born digital objects – we would like to create a pilot project which begins with digitizing print faculty research objects for which there is no digital access, generates a familiarity and comfort with the process/system, and gradually moves to include born digital objects and digital publishing. Our proposal is to build the technical and administrative infrastructure for an open access digital repository, and then have faculty apply for grants funding (that would be supplied by the Office of Research and Graduate Studies) that would enable us to digitize their work. The projects would be vetted and approved by a combined faculty/library/OIT board, which would
have the right to deny any projects deemed not meeting the pre-determined criteria. Success in this venture would determine the need to continue and/or expand.

All three partners are willing to underwrite portions of this project, with support requested to license the initial software to create the digital repository from University technology funds (approximately $30,000.) A tentative timeframe would use the summer to license software and create the technical infrastructure; draft the procedures and project criteria and create the review board in early fall; send out the first grant solicitations to faculty late fall; review and make the first grants to start digitization at the beginning of the spring semester. It is anticipated that three years funding would be needed to ascertain the success (or not) of the initiative.

SMU is already behind its peers in this area. We have to start somewhere. We believe that this would be a fairly low cost initiative, with buy-in from three major players who have the expertise, infrastructure and commitment to make it succeed.