

OR2015 | 10th International Conference on Open Repositories

June 8-11, 2015, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

We Don't Make Your Preservation Program, We Make Your Preservation Program Better

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Session Type (select one)

- Panel
- Presentation**

Abstract

The Connecticut Digital Archive (CTDA) <http://ctdigitalarchive.org> is a preservation repository open to Connecticut-based non-profit archives, libraries, cultural, educational, and memory institutions. A service of the University of Connecticut Libraries in collaboration with the Connecticut State Library, the CTDA has adopted a service catalog, use-only-what-you-need approach to providing repository services. Participating institutions may use as few or as many CTDA services as they see fit. With a low barrier to entry and no up-front repository costs, both small and large institutions are able to participate in digital preservation as well as larger presentation and discovery services. The CTDA's approach is built on developing flexible and extensible services driven by participants' needs. A continually evolving dialog between repository staff and participants means that repository staff work to tailor services, training, and documentation for participants, keep documentation current, and continually develop on a number of fronts simultaneously. By dis-integrating repository services, we allow each institution to create its own version of perfection.

Conference Themes

Select the conference theme(s) your proposal best addresses:

- Supporting Open Scholarship, Open Science, and Cultural Heritage**
- Managing Research (and Open) Data
- Integrating with External Systems**
- Re-using Repository Content**
- Exploring Metrics and Assessment
- Managing Rights
- Developing and Training Staff**
- Building the Perfect Repository**

Keywords

List 3-4 key terms or phrases that describe the subject of the proposal.

Repository services

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Modular repository services

Consortial repository services

Audience

Tell us in a sentence or two who is the likely audience for this (Some examples might be repository managers, developers, data producers, librarians, etc.)

The primary audience is repository managers and administrators: people who are responsible for building a successful repository program and who are interested in exploring alternative service models for digital repositories.

Background

How does your submission address the conference themes or the overarching topic of open repositories?

The CTDA is built on a Fedora/Islandora platform, and leverages the potential of Fedora as a generalized repository architecture with no required catalog or organizational scheme. Our presentation explores what that idea means in practice and how it supports digital repositories as a set of services assembled from open source options.

Presentation content

Tell us what you will (and won't) cover in the presentation. Why will your topic be of interest to the intended audience? Include figures and images if they will help reviewers evaluate the proposal content.

We will cover the history, mission and vision of the CTDA, how our services are developed, the successes and challenges of providing a-la-carte services and how our experience influences how we define a perfect repository. Since we don't believe that repository perfection is based on homogeneity, we will not talk about required metadata schemas, file formats, or about the technical details of scanner settings.

We will explain how and why the CTDA presents itself not as a monolithic solution but as one set of tools that institutions use when they build their own preservation programs and presentation services. Separating the different aspects of repository services (preservation, management, presentation, reuse) and presenting them as a-la-carte options in a service catalog rather than

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an integrated system makes the repository service more useful and effective for our varied audiences and therefore more successful and sustainable.

The service catalog approach required us adjust our thinking about repositories in important ways. We had to let go of our own sense of ownership of the content in the repository and allow participating institutions to make their own quality decisions. Rather than imposing our ideas about content and metadata on participants through repository requirements, we seek to educate them about the value of high quality digital assets. This makes our training and documentation an even more important part of the program. By allowing any digital file format we also have to address how to preserve access to these assets over the long term with limited resources. Again, education and training—plus a little policy—makes it possible to encourage participants to use industry best practices for creating digital assets. The repository service takes responsibility for migrating forward a limited set of file formats to preserve interactivity while promising to preserve the bits of all ingested files of any type. As a Service Hub of the DPLA, the CTDA also normalizes metadata to DPLA standards for harvesting. This encourages—but does not require—participants to choose migration-supported file types, and common metadata schemas and content standards when creating digital assets.

Another significant change in thinking was the decision to push the CTDA into the background as far as possible—at least to the ultimate end user. This may seem counter-intuitive as publicity is often seen as a means of securing funding. We believe that our success lies in the good service that we provide that then makes all the participating institutions more successful and able to participate to an even greater degree in repository programs and services.

On a somewhat more technical level, we will explain how we leverage the openness of Fedora to allow heterogeneous ingest, management, and presentation tools to interoperate in the CTDA environment and how this approach makes each institution that so desires in charge of its own program while leveraging the resources of the whole. Again, the dis-integrated approach does not require everyone to participate in the same way. The CTDA supports a limited set of tools, but participants are free to write their own interfaces to the repository, or connect their own software services to the repository system. CTDA staff consult on these projects and help develop processes that can be shared back to the open source community.

One of the most difficult problems repository managers face is serving diverse user needs with limited available resources. Focusing our attention on user needs first helps define the shape of the repository service rather than forcing participants to shape their needs to the repository.

Conclusion

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Summarize the take-home message from the presentation. What are the main points? It would be great if this were a part of the conversation around the conference theme.

Repositories that are user-centered rather than prescriptive will be successful and sustainable. As long as a repository service enhances participants' abilities to pursue their own interests it will be attractive and successful. The low-barrier to entry combined with the service catalog approach makes the CTDA—or any similarly organized repository—and attractive option for institutions of any size that want to preserve and re-purpose their digital assets.