Mission accomplished! Serving your institution’s strategic goals with your repository
“Our institutional repository provides an essential service that aids in increasing the visibility of our University scholars and encouraging collaboration with other researchers and institutions worldwide.”

—Willard Gingerich, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Montclair State University

INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions are looking for new, more effective ways to achieve the strategic goals most central to their individual needs — be the goal around student enrollment, grant-related research, accessibility requirements, open access initiatives or global profile and reputation.

In this paper, four institutions share their journeys in engaging key stakeholders using their institutional repositories to showcase strengths and meet institutional goals. To analyze how these institutions are successfully reaching these critical goals, the following examples delve into practices for connecting scholars and their achievements to the world while building a global reputation for the institution.
Meet institutional strategic goals

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- Fulfill accessibility requirements
- Raise reputation and global profile
- Publish grant-related research
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At Portland State University (PSU) their flourishing open educational resources (OERs) directly support their mission to increase student enrollment and success. PSU has set an ambitious goal to save its students 2 million dollars and engage over 200 faculty authors by 2021 — and they are well on their way with a successful open access textbook publishing initiative, PDXOpen. Their repository, PDXScholar, is the platform they use to support student educational opportunities such as PDXOpen. As Karen Bjork, Head of Digital Initiatives, explains, “The University’s strategic mission is to elevate student success and that’s what this program does. It improves access and equity as well as reduces attrition rates by appealing to the needs of our students.”

“Portland State University’s motto is “Let Knowledge Serve the City,” and our open access institutional repository is just one way we share the intellectual productivity of our scholars with the Portland community — and beyond. As a state university with a historical access mission, student affordability is a long-standing strategic priority.”

—Tom Bielavitz, Dean, Portland State University Library

Karen underlines that “we always go back to our motto in aligning the goals of the repository with PSU’s larger mission,” detailing the benefits of their open textbook program:

“Open access textbook publishing initiatives not only provide libraries the opportunity to recast their longstanding mission to facilitate research and remove barriers to information, they also impact student affordability efforts. When students are given free access to textbooks the first day of class, it makes their lives easier and supports their academic growth. They are participating in an organic pedagogy by providing feedback in real time to professors who can revise the textbook’s digital version. With this flexible publishing platform, texts are designed specifically for these students, many of whom are non-traditional students with financial constraints and varied backgrounds. Thus, we help address student retention with open textbooks. Higher administration stakeholders are seeing the value of open educational resources (OERs) and their part in increasing the student population, which is one of our administrators’ immediate goals.”

PSU’s 2019 student survey of their open textbook program came back with glowing comments from students, who especially appreciated being able to print a book chapter-by-chapter and take notes in the printed book to facilitate their learning process without the worry of having to resell it. They also loved seeing their feedback improve and customize textbook chapters as these are posted. This successful response resonates with the higher administration to help prove the value of this program in meeting PSU’s strategic goals.

Beyond these institutional goals, the repository also serves PSU by proving adherence to the state’s legal requirements regarding student affordability initiatives. PDXOpen is positioned to meet the laws of Open Oregon, a “Low Cost/No Cost” legislation to increase student savings and create open educational resources in four-year universities and community colleges. “This is an important collaboration because I learn so much from working with these universities, community colleges and colleagues at the state level,” Karen explains, adding, “We can help each other improve educational outcomes.” Karen underlines the importance of re-evaluating these programs as they unfold, citing the flexibility of a digital publishing platform such as PDXScholar that allows her to easily revise and improve them.

This year there are nine new Adopt/Adapt Creation Grants, funded by donors, to engage more PSU faculty. “The open textbook initiative also serves faculty,” Karen states, “by advancing the pedagogy of professors and promoting research that makes a global impact.” Currently PSU publishes 20 open textbooks used by over 2,500 PSU students and downloaded more than 180,000 times around the world. Global readership metrics for research centers, institutes, schools, colleges and departments at PSU total nearly 4 million downloads from 235 countries. Supporting faculty is strategically important for PSU’s institutional mission, and Karen explains how the repository’s adaptable features currently serve pressing faculty needs for language textbooks:

“A large number of our open textbooks are from the World Language Department. We started with Japanese, which really took off (over 100,000 downloads and counting), and we are currently supporting six core Spanish classes. The pedagogical nature of language texts has seen dramatic changes in the last few years, so those faculty are very grateful that we can support their creation of new textbooks to address that need, including audio and video files. The French textbook uses phonics and audio files, so we created a way for students to interact with that material online.”
The PDXOpen initiative serves many stakeholders who collaborate with Karen to further common goals — these include the Office of Academic Innovation and Student Government, as well as the library, bookstore, faculty, provost, library dean and the Oregon State Legislature. The university’s 2017 OER Symposium helps reach even more stakeholders and donors who now support faculty creation of resources through mini-grants. Karen’s dedication to furthering these strategic goals is clear: “At the end of the day, we’re saving students money, enhancing their experience and furthering pedagogy, fulfilling our institutional mission, and that’s what it’s about.”

Additional OER information:
- Karen Bjork’s faculty profile offering access to her extensive publications on open educational resources (OERs)
- Pacific University Press’s OER: A Field Guide for Academic Librarians, freely available in their repository, Common Knowledge
- Universidad de La Salle (Unisalle) gallery of open access textbooks published in Spanish in their repository, Ciencia Unisalle
- The Teaching Commons brings together high-quality open educational resources from leading colleges and universities. It is curated by librarians and their institutions, and includes open access textbooks, course materials, lesson plans, multimedia and more.

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1: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/pdxopen/
2: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/
3: https://openoregon.org/
4: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/oer_symposium/2017/
5: https://works.bepress.com/karen_bjork/
6: https://commons.pacificu.edu/pup/3/
7: https://commons.pacificu.edu/
8: https://ciencia.lasalle.edu.co/
9: https://ciencia.lasalle.edu.co/libros/
10: https://ciencia.lasalle.edu.co/libros/29/
11: https://teachingcommons.us/
Montclair State University: the role of the IR in achieving Carnegie's R2 high research activity status

Montclair State University (MSU) recently achieved Carnegie-designated R2 classification status of high research activity for a doctoral university, a coveted garland that many institutions strive to attain. They reported that a key to their success in proving the strength of their research mission was to showcase and share its impact through their institutional repository, Montclair State University Digital Commons.

This global dissemination of the full spectrum of their research turned out to be central to connecting their scholars’ achievements to the world and successfully raising their profile. Karen Ramsden, Research and Projects Specialist, Library Administration, elaborates, “By capturing the intellectual output of Montclair State University, our repository provides visibility and influence to a worldwide audience, which, in turn, opens up new avenues for further research, innovation and collaboration, and supports the University’s mission as a Carnegie-designated high-level research doctoral university and state-designated public research institution.”

From the beginning, Karen made sure that the repository’s goals aligned with the university’s strategic mission to promote the high quality of MSU’s research. Montclair State University Digital Commons, though less than two years old, already provides faculty such as psychology professor Jennifer S. Pardo with high readership numbers for her research collection, Montclair Map Task Corpus. Dr. Pardo is the Director of the Speech Communication Laboratory, and this set of conversational research data, including audio files, is openly available through the repository. Scholar profiles are other examples of the way MSU is using cutting-edge technology to build the reputation of their faculty through wide dissemination of the full spectrum of their work. Student research is also widely read — an undergraduate student’s English thesis “The Unwelcome Truth: Arthur Miller’s The Crucible as Satirical Political Allegory” boasts 1,687 downloads in its first year of publication, evidence Karen cites of the growing interest in accessing electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) across the globe.

Karen emphasizes the importance of understanding what diverse stakeholders need from the IR. She addresses their practical concerns, explaining, “I’m always reassuring stakeholders — faculty starting journals, for example — that there won’t be any hidden costs by publishing in the repository.” Karen leverages the visual metrics available for her repository to reach key stakeholders, such as faculty and University Leadership.

As Karen says, “What better way than showing them through the IR?” After seeing these reports, fundraisers in the University Development Division have shown interest in utilizing this information in presentations to show donors MSU’s research strengths. Karen continues to offer pain-free solutions for pain points on campus, ensuring that the role of the repository hits mission-critical university needs. When Karen spoke to the Alumni Office, for example, they were amazed at the student-run newspaper The Montclarion’s readership and saw an additional opportunity to keep their alumni community connected. The Montclarion has archived issues on the repository dating back to 1948, offering rich institutional history. As a result, the Alumni Office intends to grow their presence on the repository and use it as a way to keep alumni engaged with the University.
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The State University of New York (SUNY) is the largest comprehensive university system in the United States, comprising 64 educational institutions. When the SUNY system decided to implement an open access (OA) policy in 2018, the task required expertise and a sensitivity to the diverse needs of each institution. There was a call for collaboratively developing campus-level OA policies by defining a shared set of best practices. Binghamton University offered leadership and shared their experience in crafting their own OA policy, a process that began in 2015.

Binghamton University is a public research university in the SUNY system consisting of eight colleges and schools with 18,000 undergraduate and graduate students. According to Binghamton, “The Provost’s Office was charged with supporting campuses for searchable OA work with dissemination and sharing.” In 2017, The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB) was created to support this initiative. Amy Gay, Digital Scholarship Librarian, and Beth Brown, Director of Assessment & Scholarly Communications, lead the repository team and have been instrumental in helping the SUNY system draft its OA policy. They do extensive outreach to faculty describing the benefits of housing works in the repository, focusing on open access and greater visibility, satisfying funding mandates and providing reliable digital storage. Amy reports that the faculty are particularly interested in being able to publish supplemental files, datasets and research in a single location.

The library prioritizes supporting Binghamton University’s strategic goals around open access. As Amy explains, “The Open Repository @ Binghamton provides a place to submit research requiring open access publishing. Early on, we let the faculty know we are here to help and show them what their rights are. They don’t have to sacrifice quality to publish open access — faculty have publishing choices and flexibility.” The library offers language the faculty can use with granting agencies to convey OA compliance and they offer their deep expertise in verifying complex copyright regulations.

With knowledge gained from their ongoing work in open access publishing, Amy and Beth supported the provost’s OA initiative by collaborating on several drafts for the Faculty Senate to review. Between 2015 and December 2018, they carefully crafted Binghamton’s OA policy, focusing mainly on advancing grants and creative works. Amy and Beth emphasize that creating such a policy is an iterative process that takes time and involves partnerships with diverse stakeholders. They report that since the policy’s finalization, the library has been promoting its use across campus in numerous presentations. They’ve seen a variety of opinions about OA, noting that disciplines with a shorter cycle of research are often more motivated to publish openly in order to disseminate their research as quickly as possible.

Amy and Beth offer valuable insight on OA publishing to their SUNY colleagues, saying, “We are happy to help others discuss how to best support everyone’s needs around the OA policy, especially the smaller campuses who may have different requirements.” Both Binghamton University and the SUNY system as a whole agree that each institution’s OA policy must respect authors’ individual choices. One of the best practices Beth and Amy offer is in the respectful language they use to engage faculty. Beth explains, “We use the word “pledge” in our OA policy because we want faculty to take ownership of this. For some faculty, it’s a bigger leap beyond intellectual property rights to sharing their work openly. They’re becoming more aware of the library’s expertise in helping them navigate this transition.”

Beth and Amy regularly share the repository’s readership reports with faculty to underline the benefits of OA publishing. Beth reports that “it’s an easy way to show the impact of their work, which is an important criterion for promotion and tenure review.” She adds that graduate students also appreciate seeing the global impact of their work through electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) and unique material such as the student radio show Broadcasting World Literature, which is streamed and downloadable in the repository (over 200 downloads a week).
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18: https://orb.binghamton.edu/
19: https://orb.binghamton.edu/dissertation_and_theses/
20: https://orb.binghamton.edu/broadcasting_world_literature/
University of Montana: supporting grant-related research, promoting open science and accessibility

Wendy Walker, Associate Professor and Digital Initiatives Librarian at the University of Montana (UM), relates how the University’s strategic goal to support their faculty’s grant-related research dovetails with the commitment to making their scholarship openly available in their institutional repository, ScholarWorks.

As the University of Montana pursues its goal of increasing research funding for faculty, Wendy has seen the administration place a high value on open science as an answer to recent requirements from funding agencies that grant-related research data be open. In her role as Digital Initiatives Librarian, she can offer a solution to this compliance issue by partnering with faculty to put their data in UM’s ScholarWorks. As peer referrals spread across campus, faculty are coming to her with data, such as the Montana Climate Office, which needed to link its dataset to an article authored by several UM professors. Wendy reports that the flexible publishing structures their repository offers fulfill the needs of grant-related faculty research — they can publish a single record, or multiple records, linking datasets, articles and supplemental files that are easily searchable, depending on the scholars’ needs. This exploration of the adaptable features in their repository helped Wendy chart a course for the publication of scientific materials with widely divergent needs in order to provide the most searchable, well organized data.

Wendy underscores the importance of publishing open science, saying, “I’m pleased to see the recognition of datasets as part of the academic record to promote reproducible scientific research. For example, the faculty advisor for a recently graduated student contacted me to ask if I could link her former student’s newest dataset to his dissertation, already published in ScholarWorks — she was very happy with my answer ("Yes!") and for additional ideas to support this young scholar’s newest paper.” Wendy reports that the more than 11,000 electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) are among the most downloaded content in their repository, making student research, some with linked datasets, “incredibly valuable content to people all over the world. Our all-time downloads (over two years) are currently at 1,633,776!”

One of the first large data collections that Wendy and her team published in ScholarWorks was the Flathead Lake Seismic Survey, a dataset with images, audio, text and seismic files. In “Considerations and Challenges for Describing Historical Research Data: A Case Study” that Wendy co-authored with Teressa M. Keenan, they describe how “Creating metadata for datasets can be challenging, but it is crucial for discovery, access, re-use, reproducibility and preservation.” Wendy adds that the seismic survey data collection provides a unique opportunity for future researchers because so many new methods of processing the data have been developed in the intervening years — yet another critical benefit of publishing science openly.

ScholarWorks hosts diverse open science content including the environmental symposium Clark Fork Symposium Archives and a much-downloaded OA monograph, Lithics in the West, published in partnership with the University of Montana Press. Wendy also partners with Hannah Soukup, the library’s Archives and Special Collections Curator, to make their archival content open — no mean feat involving permissions for decades-old material. As Wendy says, “We saw the value of publishing archival material in ScholarWorks from the get-go. The group had a digitization program in place but were looking for more robust search functionality and customizations.” Wendy and Hannah published an extensive and popular collection of oral histories detailing various aspects of Montana history, from forestry to feminism. Wendy describes Hannah’s dedication to making this material as open as possible by offering text translations of audio files to make these accessible to readers with different needs.

“The University of Montana is committed to meeting accessibility standards and government mandates. It is an iterative process as it takes a great deal of time,” Wendy explains. An established open access advocate, Wendy is helping to expand the accessibility of UM’s research in an ongoing process to make it truly open — not only freely available, but accessible to those with varying disabilities. In 2014, Wendy and Teressa M. Keenan wrote, “Accessibility is a growing concern for universities and academic libraries as they create and provide more digital resources for their communities. The development of best practices for accessible web pages and documents is well underway.” They see ScholarWorks as furthering their mission to redefine access to their institution’s scholarship. As she puts it, “ScholarWorks is designed to make UM’s scholarship easy to find, share and use— for everyone.”
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21: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/
22: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/climate_data/1/
23: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/flathead/
24: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1031&context=ml_pubs
25: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/clarkforksymposium/
26: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/umpress-oabooks/1/
27: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/oral_histories/