Building a Framework for IR Success

A Case Study on the Development of
Scholar Commons at the University of South Florida
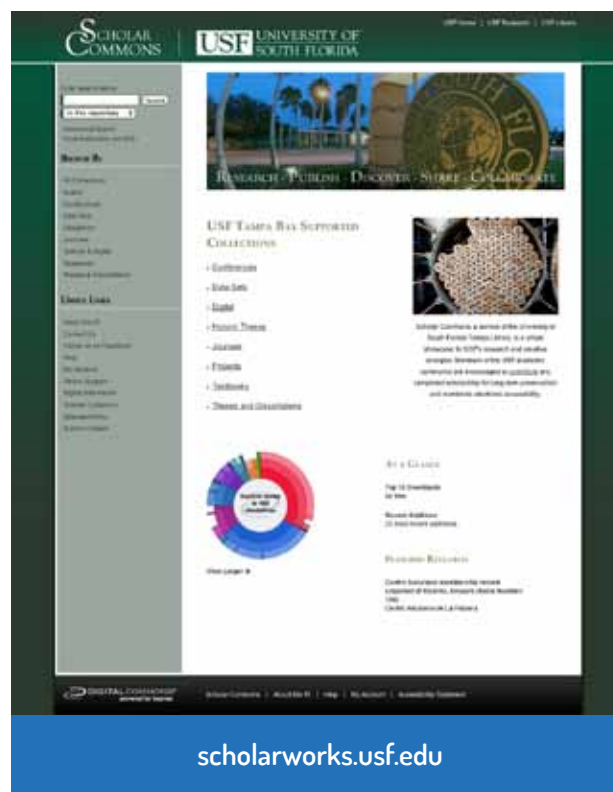
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■ About the University of South Florida and Scholar Commons

Located in Tampa Bay on Florida's west coast, the University of South Florida (USF) is one of the largest public universities in the nation. With eighty-six under-graduate majors serving thirty-eight thousand students and one hundred and fifty-two programs serving nearly ten thousand graduate students, USF offers an exceptionally diverse campus experience. It is classified as being in the top tier of research universities by the Carnegie Foundations for the Advancement of Teaching, a distinction attained by only two point three percent of all universities.

In 2007, the University of South Florida Libraries began supporting open access journals using bepress's journal management software. In 2009 Todd Chavez, Director of Academic Services, and his new dean, William Garrison, determined that in order to effectively scale the journal program from an existing two journals to a predicted ten-plus, the library would need to migrate each individual journal to a single integrated journal management and publishing platform.

In late 2010 the library launched Scholar Commons,* USF's institutional repository and publishing system built on the Digital Commons** platform. Housed under the USF Libraries Academic Resources, Scholar Commons quickly took off. The number of objects in the repository grew from forty-seven at the start of 2010 to over thirty-five thousand by mid-2014, and the number of open access journals published by USF expanded from two to fourteen and counting. Scholar Commons is now an integrated, high-profile service of the library that contributes significantly to the support of open access publishing at USF and in higher education overall.

This paper is a summary case study on the development, launch, staffing, and ongoing management of the University of South Florida's thriving repository and publishing program.

scholarworks.usf.edu

■ Identifying Needs and Setting Goals

Scholar Commons expands organically from OA journal support to a full suite of scholarly communication services

In 2007 USF began offering support for open access journals with the creation of Numeracy: Advancing Education in Quantitative Literacy,*** which grew out of a collaboration between Todd Chavez and Geology Professor Len Vacher. The launch of the journal, a publication of the National Numeracy Network supported by USF Libraries, was proposed as a first step in a strategy predicated on the library's mission to support global, interdisciplinary research targeting social or environmental challenges.

Originally, Chavez said, "the journal path was connected to some of our other projects and I was only intending to [provide publishing support] for environmental sustainability research." But the needs of other departments was bigger than expected and demand for open access journals supported by the library quickly grew. With the addition of two more journals, Studia UBB Geologia* and International Journal of Speleology,** the library decided to integrate the journals onto one platform, Digital Commons, so it could effectively scale its support in the future.

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In part, the library initially focused solely on journal publishing because there wasn't an existing cultural predisposition to build repository services on campus at the time. "When we acquired the Digital Commons platform the initial stimulus to even look into it was the desire to grow the journal content," Chavez explained. "But once we looked into Digital Commons, we thought, 'why are we not looking at this as an IR option?' One of the things that became pretty clear was that as requirements to make OA content for federally-funded research increased, people [would] need a way to do it [and at that point they didn't have one]."

Chavez noticed a significant duplication of efforts across the university as departments and centers worked to comply with the open access mandate by self-archiving, publicizing their research, and/or making grant-funded research results publicly available. "I would find multiple websites for one project. [People] would be paying graduate students to maintain each individual website, there was no archival strategy, and they didn't optimize the websites for discovery purposes. There was a lot of replication of effort at high cost for minimal or

Office of Sponsored Research publicized Scholar Commons as a solution for grant compliance

An important and early partnership in the establishment of Scholar Commons involved the Office of Sponsored Research and, specifically, with a grant management group it coordinates. The group, made up of associate deans from all the colleges, is tasked with figuring out how to get more researchers to submit more grant proposals and to support department chairs in those efforts.

Chavez has been a member of this group for several years. During his tenure, he worked to create a template to help with grant proposal conversations. Crucial to increasing awareness and use of Scholar Commons was an item in the template that advised readers not to assume the dissemination requirement of a grant would be satisfied just by publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Often, funding agencies would require more open and permanently accessible solutions. Not coincidentally, the template offered an open and long-term access option right there on campus: Scholar Commons.

Chavez says, "Great collaborations came once we made it clear we were the mechanism to help people comply with mandates. One collaboration led to involvement in the largest grant awarded to the library and participation in a highly visible research project targeting the Gulf oil spill."

confusing output. My concern was both for the quality of work and its sustainability."

It became clear to Chavez and the library that there was a definite need for repository services on campus in

addition to the publishing services they were already offering, and that Digital Commons could provide the solution.

■ Seeking Out Collections and Building Support

Early content building and outreach to key groups on campus helps generate excitement for Scholar Commons

In early 2010, USF established Scholar Commons as an integrated open access platform for journal publishing and repository services. Existing open access journals were added to the platform and several new journals were launched. During the 2010 – 2011 academic year, Academic Resources began to allocate time and staff to increasing OA journal support and building repository services. To aid in populating the repository with several collections before officially unveiling Scholar Commons campus-wide, the library signed on for a bepress Digital Commons Kickstart. As part of the Kickstart service, bepress staff and the USF team worked closely to conduct an environmental survey of ten strategically-chosen departments, pre-populate some departments with faculty publications, build individual scholar pages with the bepress SelectedWorks* component, and batch migrate a collection of nearly three thousand theses and dissertations to Scholar Commons. The project culminated in an on-site training where the Scholar Commons service was introduced to library faculty and staff.

This work helped set the stage for the official launch of Scholar Commons in the fall of 2011. "Having content there ahead of time with some statistics was a good thing," said Rebel Cummings-Sauls, who was brought on in the summer of 2011 as Library Operations Coordinator and now manages the day-to-day repository operations. "It helped to show faculty what could potentially come from Scholar Commons… [It was] particularly

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Scholar Commons leads to partnership on large grant and renewed relationships

The Digital Commons Kickstart in early 2011 included the College of Marine Science. Through the Kickstart, several college collections were identified, and many faculty publications were discovered and added to Scholar Commons. Soon after, Chavez met with the College to discuss the results of the early work, and their representatives voiced excitement and applause. They inquired about hosting events with Scholar Commons, and requested data management support from the library.

Soon, Chavez and his colleagues were undertaking the data management planning portion of an $11+ million grant application. The grant was awarded to the college and the library has renewed a relationship with a college that had, several years before, said the best thing the library could do for them was leave them alone. Today, the library provides the college scholarly communications and open access publishing support as well as data management of GIS collections through its GeoPortal.

"I don't personally have direct training in data management," Chavez said, "but a couple guys on my team do. The reason we were able to engage properly is that all of us have training with GIS… the partnership began because we started working with them early on in Scholar Commons."

* http://digitalcommons.bepress.com/repository-software/faculty/

useful in showing faculty members the potential–even if it is the example of just one person–on how the IR could upkick their research as far as where they fall in a search results list, citation counts, and more."

Once the Kickstart was complete, Cummings-Sauls set to work solidifying the vision and mission of Scholar Commons as a guide for measuring its success. Additionally, the look, feel, name, and policies and procedures were created or updated as part of a final "rebranding" before the formal launch. In order to effectively build support for Scholar Commons, the library took a two-pronged approach to publicity. Chavez and his dean, William Garrison, focused on building awareness of and support for Scholar Commons among the Deans Council and department chairs, while liaison librarians and Cummings-Sauls focused on promoting Scholar Commons to the campus.

Before the hard launch, several faculty members and departments had already expressed interest in Scholar Commons. They often heard about the new project from Chavez or Garrison, usually informally in the course of other committee work, events, or presentations. Those who expressed early interest were shortlisted and approached as Cummings-Sauls and Chavez had capacity. With the formal launch of Scholar Commons in the fall of 2011, the Academic Resources team–including Cummings-Sauls and Chavez–took the message to campus. Their approach included the following efforts:

- Cummings-Sauls arranged a press release with the library's Communications Director, to be released the day after Garrison and Chavez's meeting with the Dean's Council

- Chavez and the Communications Director developed an informational brochure* to be used with the press release and in all presentations
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- Chavez and Cummings-Sauls began to present to departments and centers that had expressed interest prior to launch
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- Liaison librarians began to set up meeting for Chavez and Cummings-Sauls with their departments

In addition, at the same time they were engaging existing stakeholders on campus, Chavez and Cummings-Sauls also began to work forward, targeting new faculty and grad students through the mandatory orientations each semester. A key objective of this initial push was to ensure that the campus and the library understood Scholar Commons as a crucial and reliable service that supported many university and library goals. These included improving the visibility of university research, saving money by decreasing the duplication of efforts across campus, supporting open access journal publishing, and developing high-level research services for campus that match or exceed the standards set by USF's peer institutions.

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■ Staffing the IR and Involving the Rest of the Library

Liaison librarians are a crucial part of the Scholar Commons team

In the summer of 2011 the library brought on three Library Operations Coordinators, including Cummings-Sauls, who would be responsible for managing Scholar Commons as part of her duties. In interviewing for the

Cummings-Sauls coordinates outreach, collection building, and systems administration for Scholar Commons, and she does most of the direct uploading and publication work whenever possible. At a university of over 50,000 FTE, the library knew it was crucial to distribute this work amongst the departments, centers, and other units participating in Scholar Commons.

The library tends to manage the one-time ingest project, usually large archival collections that can be batch uploaded. If the collection or publication will require ongoing management, Cummings-Sauls works to identify a local administrator who will responsible for gathering and adding the content. Chavez pointed out that administrators "have a personal stake in the matter so mistakes would reflect poorly on them," and reported that he's seen no quality control issues and only one take-down notice, which had actually come from an article a professor had uploaded himself.

Cummings-Sauls gives administrators as much training as they feel they need. She usually only needs to meet with the administrator once or twice, and does so in his or her own office. That way, the training happens in the same place the administrator does his or her work and can do things like put in bookmarks or save passwords when necessary. In addition to in-office administrative training, Cummings-Sauls is available to administrators whenever they have a question. Generally, she said, "the system is easy enough for them to use that once they're trained they don't have a lot of questions."

position, Chavez said he looked for "a high-level of technical competence–someone who looks at problems in a systematic, programmatic way and applies the technology to solve those problems." But that wasn't all. He also needed someone who felt comfortable reaching out to faculty and other groups on campus. "I also looked for someone," he says, "who was going to be able to talk to the faculty in a way that would give faculty confidence that what we were going to do for them was something they could commit themselves to."

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Cummings-Sauls coordinates library-internal outreach, external marketing and outreach materials, and follows up with interested parties, but she is not always the first to reach out to a new department or professor. Instead, the USF team does what many at universities of their size are doing by empowering the liaison team to work as the frontline of outreach for the IR and publishing programs. Cummings-Sauls views the team as crucial to increasing awareness, encouraging participation, and connecting interested professors with the right parties at the library.

"I wanted the liaisons to be able to say yes when someone came to them and asked a question like 'Can you do this for my journal?'" she said. So, in preparation for the formal launch, she conducted two training sessions with the liaison team, addressing both the big picture issues—like Scholar Commons' role in the library and university's strategic goals and initiatives—and the nuts-and-bolts of how managing the IR actually works. "Going through training and internal oversight of what we could and actually would do, helped the liaisons to go out and say yes." Of course, there was concern about the

prospect of adding more work to already busy schedules, but Cummings-Sauls said, "I reassured them, you can do as much as you want." Generally, the liaison team connects interested users with Cummings-Sauls, who either does the ingest work or identifies a collection manager who will.

Today, USF's scholarly communications team provides a suite of services managed through Scholar Commons using the Digital Commons platform and the library's in-house GeoPortal. The library breaks the services into four components and has a team of five and a half that works across those service areas. "Organizationally, we treat our Scholar Commons platform as the face to a suite of services that support research and learning across the campus," Chavez explained. "That means the staff who work in each area work and coordinate heavily across the service 'boundaries.'"

■ Developing a Marketing and Outreach Strategy

Ongoing outreach to ensure the success of Scholar Commons happens at all levels, all the time

Marketing and outreach for Scholar Commons is a library-wide effort, happening at multiple levels and by all parties. Early on, library leadership made great efforts to discuss Scholar Commons with senior leadership and key offices across campus. At the time of the hard launch, Chavez and Garrison introduced Scholar Commons to the Council of Deans.

That presentation focused on two issues: getting USF researchers more visibility and saving the university money. Chavez said they started by answering the question: "How will this benefit my college?" From there, what was originally slated to be a fifteen minute presentation turned into a ninety minute conversation. Three deans made appointments to discuss needs

Long-standing partnership with journal editor continues to reap rewards

In 2007 Len Vacher, a professor of Geology at USF and the winner of numerous teaching awards, and his colleague Dorothy Wallace, professor of Mathematics at Dartmouth College, launched the journal Numeracy* in conjunction with the National Numeracy Network (NNN), where Vacher is now Director Emeritus.

The NNN and its flagship journal represented the next step in the study of quantitative literacy, a field of inquiry that seeks to address and improve the ability of all citizens to understand, manipulate, and reason with numbers and data. Chavez describes the launch of Numeracy in 2007 as a project that came out of his support, as a member of the library, for environmental sustainability research. Over time, the partnership with Vacher has developed and has included work on open access publishing.

Readership numbers have been instrumental in advancing Vacher's own collection of OA works and in advancing his outreach to colleagues. He has used readership reports to begin to analyze the utility of articles in Numeracy, began talking to his colleagues about his individual download numbers and Numeracy's download numbers, and he and his colleagues have started including reader-ship numbers in their annual report of work.

Looking back, the early journal support paid off in spades for the library. Numeracy has advanced global, interdisci-plinary, solution-based research supported by USF Librar-ies, and, Dr. Vacher has become a great proponent of the library and the advancement of open access research. "My work with Dr. Vacher is predicated on a long-stand-ing relationship that started with the Numeracy journal," said Chavez. "From that, he became a proponent of open access publications, of making sure digital repositories contain his information, and of sharing these benefits with his colleagues, thus inspiring them to act too."

that they had and that Scholar Commons could meet, Chavez received invitations to speak with several academic departments, and the Provost directed the Office of Decision Support to work with the library to import a publicly-inaccessible CV database into Scholar Commons. "We never asked them to step up and ask their faculty to do something," Chavez said. "We went with the message, 'Here's a nice thing we're doing for you.' We weren't asking for support but they supported it because they saw an opportunity to address this issue of local archiving and local dissemination."

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Another important part of USF's marketing and outreach plan involved building a strong reputation for support and a collection of promotional materials. Cummings-Sauls and Chavez have built a system of communication that strives for efficiency and expansion. They created a collection of email responses to commonly asked questions or common misperceptions about Scholar Commons, often using these pre-written responses when constructing follow-ups to questions from faculty or administration. Chavez explained that being able to respond within minutes of a phone call or email is a boon for the library: it exceeds the user's needs and expectations, thereby creating goodwill and word of mouth; it decreases repetition and saves staff time; and it ups the library's credibility by demonstrating efficiency and organization.

Additionally, the team tries to make sure responses to questions don't become siloed with the individual who originally asked. When Chavez or Cummings-Sauls is on the phone or emailing with a professor, they'll also ask who else might benefit from the information and whether they can send the response out more

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widely. Often, this results in improved dissemination of the message to a larger group of colleagues, or even to a whole department.

The team has also found that when managing such a large set of potential contributors, clear and easily-available print and online materials matter. When she first came on, Cummings-Sauls wrote USF-specific procedure, policy, and FAQ pages* for Scholar Commons so that anyone visiting knew how and why to get involved. The team also created a print brochure** with similar information as well as the high level benefits of participating in Scholar Commons, making it easy for a liaison librarian to grab a handful on their way to a department meeting. Additionally, online tools provide for more immediate creation of promotional material. Cummings-Sauls recently created a short, online promo video*** that prominently features a list of all contributors to Scholar Commons, thus advertising the reliability and success of the service for those who haven't yet gotten involved.

■ Reporting Successes and Planning for the Future

Cost-saving argument is hugely persuasive to senior leaders and faculty are happy to let Scholar Commons take over their promotional work

Though the Scholar Commons team has worked hard to build support and excitement for the IR and publishing services from the very beginning, they know how important it is to continue building the case for Scholar Commons to ensure its future success as well. As part of this effort, every fiscal year Cummings-Sauls prepares a short document featuring the highlights from Scholar Commons and the library's scholarly communications support. This document includes quantitative

results like most downloaded articles, departments with the most documents, and the highest faculty participation rates. She also adds in qualitative and anecdotal information that helps to round out and give personal perspective to the numbers. Chavez shares this report yearly with the library management team and the dean, and the dean then takes it to the Provost. This type of continued reporting, along with other work, has contributed to the Provost's support in the form of a mandate for departments to participate in Scholar Commons.

Additionally, Chavez and Garrison have continued to make a financial argument for Scholar Commons to the Provost and Provost's council. Based upon various studies Chavez determined that on average, professors spend seventeen percent of their time on self-promotion—for themselves as individuals, for their departments, and as a way to secure grants. Chavez then translated that seventeen percent into an average dollar figure which represented the cost of this de-centralized, ad hoc promotional model.

"Imagine," said Chavez, "when you multiply that figure out over 62 departments!"

It was clear that the cost of having professors do this work was significantly higher than it would be to centralize the management of university-wide scholarly promotion with the library, under the auspice of Scholar Commons. The cost-savings case has gained traction. In the last year, the provost has mandated that the previous faculty productivity database, VitaBank, be migrated to Scholar Commons. The previous system cost twice as much per year to simply maintain as Scholar Commons does for full support and maintenance.

While the import of citations is under way, the library is hard at work building fuller collections, department by department. The library started with departments that

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proactively approached the library after the provost's announcement.

"I've been sort of surprised at how interested people are in getting their work up," Chavez said. "We start working with a department, cull the website and university-mandated pages, put up what we can in Scholar Commons and immediately start getting emails from people saying, 'Wait, that's not all I have.'" Often, Chavez explained, people are motivated to write because they're concerned their full body of work is not represented. Now, Chavez said, "They just email me and say something like, 'Hey I got a paper published and here's the DOI.' We take it from there. No one has ever suggested that they prefer to go it alone and all have been very appreciative."

As the library continues to build support for Scholar Commons, effective messaging is at the foundation of their success. Before any meeting or presentation, the library makes sure to do research on a department or center's publishing practices, the general publishing environment of the discipline, and the current ways the department/center manages its scholarship and online presence. Each message from the Scholar Commons team is consequently unique, but adheres to core messaging principles of value, visibility, and viability. Today,

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the library thinks about Scholar Commons as an umbrella for journal publishing, data, and repository services. Of its 29000+ items, some are original content, some are previously published, but all are open access. Moving forward, Cummings-Sauls and the scholarly communications team plan to focus on several initiatives. Currently, the library is working with the Graduate School to test the Digital Commons platform for direct submissions of ETDs. The team plans to use a sample of student submissions to begin with before transitioning to full deposits beginning in fall of 2014. The library also plans to begin promoting

"Today, the library thinks about Scholar Commons as an umbrella for journal publishing, data, and repository services."

Scholar Commons' services and support for conferences and events on campus. A third upcoming initiative is their participation in the bepress Digital Commons Data Pioneers Program. As part of this, the USF libraries will continue its strategic push to identify and support data needs on campus and review and update library services to better meet those needs in the future. Most importantly, they plan to continue to develop and offer their scholarly communications services, including open access repository publishing opportunities, to meet new needs as they arise on campus. ■