Building a Framework for IR Success

A Case Study on the Development of ValpoScholar at Valparaiso University

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▪ About Valparaiso and ValpoScholar

Valparaiso University, called "Valpo" for short, is located in the greater metropolitan area of Chicago, in the town of Valparaiso, Indiana. A regionally-accredited, four year private institution, Valpo boasts around 4,500 students and 250 full-time faculty in its undergraduate colleges, graduate college, and law school. With 70 undergraduate majors, 40 masters programs, 2 doctorate programs, and a law school, Valpo packs a large variety of specialties into a small campus.

The school has two libraries: the main library, Christopher Center Library, and the Law Library, which have about 30 full-time staff and faculty between them. When the Valparaiso Libraries launched ValpoScholar in March of 2011, the management of the IR fell within the "other duties as assigned" component of librarian Jonathan Bull's position, with no more than 15% of his time allotted to its development. As of fall 2014, the repository has grown to over 4,000 open access objects that have attracted over 1,100,000 visits from more than 135 countries. It serves as the publishing platform for two peer-reviewed journals, two law reviews, three student publications, and three major scholarly conferences hosted by the campus.

Today, Professor Bull serves as the Scholarly Communications Services Librarian, manages several part-time students and staff who work on ValpoScholar, and spends nearly two-thirds of his time developing scholarly communications support, including the campus's IR. ValpoScholar is now a service recognized by offices across campus, and is considered an essential tool in supporting the university's increased research focus and global visibility goals.

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

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▪ Identifying Needs and Setting Goals

Early conversations develop a broader vision for the IR

Initially, the library was looking at an IR to solve the archival challenges associated with the institution's research output. At the time, the university archivist had to track down print versions of faculty and campus publications for archiving, an often-onerous task. She had identified an IR as a solution for archiving Valpo-produced scholarship, and many others in the Christopher Center Library were also interested in the possibility. The IR went onto the library's "wishlist," but as a significant investment, they wanted to give due diligence and examination to all the options.

A presentation from bepress expanded the conversation to include scholarly communications and publishing. As Jon puts it, until then "Many people here had imagined scholarly communications to be something that only happened at larger schools." The library team started to see a repository as both a way to solve the archival issues and a way to support a crucial and emerging university goal: to increase Valpo's research opportunities and output, particularly for students. After evaluating local and hosted options, it became apparent that a hosted IR was the best choice for Valpo. Because bepress provided unlimited hosting and technical support for Digital Commons, Valpo staff would be able to focus wholly on the service-side of repository development and management rather than splitting time between that and technical infrastructure.

During this time, the law library had also been evaluating bepress Digital Commons. For them, it was a solution for

getting their law reviews online and open access. This convergence of needs across campus was the ultimate catalyst for IR adoption. In March 2011, the Valparaiso University Library and the Valparaiso Law Library launched ValpoScholar, the university-wide repository hosted on the bepress Digital Commons platform.

■ Seeking Out Collections and Building Support

Strategic choices early on lead to increased resources for ValpoScholar

With experience building a subject repository during his graduate studies, Jonathan Bull took on the management of the new ValpoScholar. Jon had long studied scholarly communications and had a deep belief in the value of open access and the transformative role an IR could play on campus. He cared greatly about the success of the project and knew he needed to demonstrate value quickly or risk having the project cut.

To do so, Jon decided to spend his limited IR-related time on strategic collections that would show immediate results. This included small, discrete collections that would garner lots of visitors, select publications for departments that wanted to see greater research support for undergrads and grad students, and key digital projects with friendly stakeholders.

These early choices enabled him to demonstrate success and value, which led to an increase in both time and staff/student support for ValpoScholar and scholarly communications on campus in general. But it didn't come immediately. Jon reports that he consistently engaged in conversations about these early successes, and made sure to publicize data and stories about ValpoScholar services at every opportunity. With that groundwork in place, it became easier to have the conversation about moving resources from old or ineffective library services to the growing set of valued scholarly communication services the library offered.

Providing Support for NSF Grants: U.S. – Japan Bilateral Workshop on the Tropical Tropopause Layer

When Gary Morris, Associate Professor of Physics and Astronomy at Valparaiso University, needed a data management plan to accompany an NSF grant proposal he and his colleagues (an international group hailing from University of Hawaii, Hokkaido University in Japan, NASA, and NCAR) were working on, he approached Jon. Not only did Jon write the data management portion of the grant proposal; he also volunteered Valparaiso University to do the virtual hosting of the proposed workshop's output. He then accompanied Dr. Morris to the workshop to record and upload the data generated directly to Valparaiso's repository, ValpoScholar. There, the videos, slide presentations, poster sessions, and discussions, all on atmospheric science topics, including climate change, received customized metadata and permanent URLs, and became openly available to anyone in the world almost immediately after presentation.

Global availability of the data was very important, as the topic, the current state of the tropical tropopause layer, has international significance, and workshop attendees came from universities and agencies all over the world. Additionally, Jon's partnership with Dr. Morris and his colleagues on the project ensured fulfillment of the data management portion of their NSF grant, and that the data would not be lost as the participants scattered back to their respective countries. He has since partnered with other faculty members to provide data management solutions for their NSF grant requirements and offers ValpoScholar as an option for data storage.

"Jon decided to spend his limited IR-related time on strategic collections that would show immediate results."

■ Staffing the IR

Jonathan Bull makes a compelling case for more staff time

When Jon first took over ValpoScholar he was the Marketing and Publicity Librarian and an Assistant Professor; the role of IR administrator fell within the "other duties assigned" component of his job description, and he was asked to limit work to 15% or less of his time. However, Jon's early work on the IR had effectively developed him into the resident expert on scholarly communications issues. Since he had been actively and consistently sharing early successes with the library and campus, when the time came to shift resources to scholarly communications work he was able to work with his administration to incorporate scholarly communications and ValpoScholar into a new position: Scholarly Communications Services Librarian.

It took about a year for resources to be allocated. In that year, Jon says, "I went to my AD [Associate Director] over and over to say 'I could do more if you gave me more time.'" Today, scholarly communications work is Jon's primary responsibility. He estimates he spends 50-60% of his time there. Whereas he started in research services, in a position he describes as part of the "old reference librarian mold," he now reports to electronic services, liaises regularly with the Associate Director of the library (whose interests also lie in Scholarly Communication), and works with one or two staff members (at 3-8 hours a week), and two to three students (at 2-5 hours a week). Jon is also the designated copyright contact in the building.

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■ Developing a Marketing and Outreach Strategy

Positioning the library as a service for everyone

From the beginning, the library envisioned the IR as a pro-active, beneficial campus-wide service. "It's not just something the library starts and five people are interested in," Jon says. "[It] is a positive for every person on campus." This differentiated it from many software tools on campus and implied an active support role from the library. The outreach for the IR centers around "ease" and "benefit," and keeps the language about the IR in non-technical terms that are easy for any stakeholder and user to understand, crucially facilitating word-of-mouth referrals. To help the message spread, Jon and his colleagues shaped a short, easy-to-remember elevator pitch for ValpoScholar: "Our goal is to be the one stop shop for every piece of scholarship Valpo puts out. Anything you consider scholarship, we can fit it in somewhere."

The library also ensures that its support is visible: all publications in ValpoScholar include the "Christopher Center Library" or the "Valparaiso Law Library" in their design. This helps other interested parties to know whom to contact for similar or related service inquiries. During a meeting or presentation with a group or individual, Jon makes sure to identify how ValpoScholar can help the user improve what they're already doing, and he makes sure to stick to the big ideas. He reports that one of the most important things he can say is, "You'll have a stable, persistent URL." Jon stresses that doing your homework so you know how to explain the benefits of your services to a given group or individual is crucial. Two key ways to do this include understanding the basic publication practices in the discipline, and investigating the person or group's current online presence before you meet.

Jon wagers that ValpoScholar has expanded undergraduate publishing opportunities for individuals from less than ten to upwards of thirty. "These are commonly only experiences available at the Master's level," he says, "And now we're able to bring them to undergraduates." These experiences help to support the university in providing student research opportunities and enrichment of the student learning experience. *A Common Thread*, a new student-run literary journal started as part of an English class, is one of these new research and publishing opportunities.

Jon's involvement in *A Common Thread*, as for most ValpoScholar publications, was heavy at the start, then lightened as an editorial board took over. Early in the process, Jon helped the professor develop the vision for the journal, he liaised with bepress to design and build it, and he visited the English class to give three lectures – one lecture was technical, another was on scholarly communications, IP and authors rights, and the final lecture was to troubleshoot any questions or concerns from the class. "Several students came to me after to express surprise at the state of affairs in open access," Jon reports. "Three students requested a whole course on scholarly communications."

One student editor's work on *A Common Thread* was so impressive that she has been appointed Jon's editorial assistant for the *Valparaiso Fiction Review*. Jon calls these undergraduate-run publications "great experiential learning opportunities for students." And, this editorial experience as undergrads gives students a boost in their later careers. Students report that editorial work for the VFR always goes high on their resumes and, recently, two Valpo alumni scored positions in grad school (editorial and TA) thanks in part to their undergraduate experience as assistant editors for the *Valparaiso Fiction Review*.

Now, as campus parties see and experience the value of ValpoScholar, they promote it too. At a campus-wide faculty workshop on scholarly publishing in August 2012, Jon sought out "faculty all-stars," whom he had partnered with on IR-related projects, to discuss their experiences to the rest of Valpo's faculty. He had no trouble finding six faculty from different subject areas to contribute to a panel discussion on how the IR has benefited them. After two years, the ValpoScholar brand is widely recognized and valued. The president commended the initiative in his 2012 State of the Campus Address.

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Jon says, "[All of this has] really helped to position the library at an essential spot in the research process."

■ Reporting Successes and Planning for the Future

Putting a human face to the IR's success

"Assessment" is often viewed as a bad word when budgets are tight, but Jon doesn't believe this has to be true. "Good assessment reports are a marketing tool," he says. "The sooner you can give your users data that shows value, the easier it is to get buy-in. Data can speak volumes."

"What's important," he adds, "is to not just put in the numbers. My Dean always says, 'You have to put a human face on the stories too.'" For ValpoScholar, Jon does this by focusing on specific authors and faculty

The nursing program at Valpo is a recently established distance program that brings most of its students to the campus several times a year, with the rest of their time spent working in the field. Students submit an evidence-based practice project report in culmination of the DNP degree. Each year, current students go to the project report collection before they embark on the year-long process of writing their own. This means the work needs to be made available quickly after submission, and easily accessible for the distance students.

For many years, the program traded only in print copies: thus, students had to come to the library when they were in town, the reports they needed were often already checked out, and those at a distance would get frustrated requesting document delivery from the library. The limited access created a barrier for the collection's users. In 2011, the Christopher Center Library piloted an open access, electronic collection of the evidence-based practice project reports – just eight in total. But after a couple of weeks and several hundred downloads, the rest of the Christopher Center faculty, including the Associate Dean, all wanted in. She asked why the students and administrative staff were going through the hassle of printing and checking out when they could simply be submitting and storing the reports electronically.

The project reports are now deposited electronically with the library in the later half of May. The next year's round of students will come in to start reviewing those as early as June. Jon reports that electronic submission has greatly eased the cataloguing and turn-around time on these reports and has facilitated the review process for many students across the globe. The 2011, 2012 and some of the 2013 reports – thirty-five in total – have been accessed over two-hundred and fifty times in its time on

the ValpoScholar "shelf," and everyone in the library and the College of Nursing is sold on the ease of electronic, open access archiving.

The main challenge now is the students' use of copyrighted material. Some have included so much – say, a full page quote – that the work cannot be posted online. On the bright side, Jon reports, this has prompted the library and the faculty to educate students about fair use and copyright.

in stories submitted to the library news blog, library newsletter, and campus newsletter. "We try to create a cumulative effect of showcasing the faculty, staff, and student work, while also showing the supporting data," Jon says. "Once you have this, the hard parts of creating partnerships across campus are done."

At Valpo, the scholarly communications committee and library administration have also been critical to building consistent, baseline support at many levels and in many venues. For instance, the scholarly communications committee includes the Director of the Office of Sponsored Research, who makes sure to discuss the IR in relation to data management when working with researchers on grants applications. Library administration keeps the IR in the minds of senior university leadership and at faculty meetings. Jon says, "It certainly helps when your Library Dean can tell the President, 'This is some of the infrastructure we'll need if we want to showcase our research and creative work to a greater audience.'"

The development of ValpoScholar, its services and its vision, have grown over time and with Jon's leadership. Initially an archival solution, the library early on also began to conceive of ValpoScholar as a tool and service for supporting research and publishing on campus. ValpoScholar has also helped to highlight signature/prestigious college activities, expanding the college's readership and recognition outside the Chicago market. This

work on dual fronts has ultimately contributed to the larger university goals of increasing research support, especially for students, and improving the university's visibility nationally and internationally.

After four years, ValpoScholar has made it clear: scholarly communications support has a place at a small university too. As the library begins to move into its fifth year of repository development, ValpoScholar continues to support and expand research and publishing oppor-tunities for both students and faculty, especially within the university's curriculum. This publishing service has become a core component of the library's expanding scholarly communications support.

Jon also hopes to further investigate the role of reposito-ries in internationalizing the university's readership and audience. "Maybe," Jon says, looking to the future, "we can actually break out of a regional position and make a dent on the international map."

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