

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Faculty Senate Endorses Open Access

On April 6, 2010, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Faculty Senate approved a "**Resolution on Digital Commons Institutional Repository**," formally endorsing the open-access online archive for faculty scholarship and research managed by the UNL Libraries' Office of Scholarly Communications.

Nebraska's **UNL Digital Commons** (<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu>) was established in 2005 and has grown to become the second largest institutional repository for faculty research in the United States (trailing only Michigan's Deep Blue). It currently hosts more than 40,000 documents, including 11,000 dissertations and 29,000 faculty articles, monographs, reviews, white papers, technical reports, conference presentations, musical scores, and creative works. The repository currently furnishes around 7,000 downloads daily, with the largest sources of traffic being Google (55%) and Wikipedia (10%).

More than 500 active and emeritus faculty currently have contents in the repository, and they receive monthly reports by email of how often their works have been downloaded. The faculty author with the most articles (currently 436) is **Terry Klopfenstein** of the Animal Science Department; the author who gets the most downloads is **Robert Katz** (emeritus, Department of Physics & Astronomy), whose 203 articles were downloaded 17,945 times in 2009. What all faculty seem to appreciate most is the feedback they get through the monthly download reports: to see that 10, or 50, or 150 people have downloaded your article in the past 30 days is a tremendous incentive to write more articles and get them into the repository.

Paul Royster, UNL Libraries Coordinator of Scholarly Communications and manager of the UNL Digital Commons, attributes the repository's growth to two factors: 1) the productive research output of the UNL faculty, and 2) the repository's determination to make participation as easy as possible. To this end, they have adopted a "Send us your vita and we'll do the rest" policy, providing services that he describes as: "permissioning, hunting and gathering, scanning, typesetting, metadata-ing, uploading & posting, usage reporting, promoting, and print-on-demand publication."

While many universities have resorted to "mandates" that require faculty to put works into their repositories, the UNL Digital Commons has successfully developed on a strictly voluntary approach. The ease of participation, the expanded dissemination offered by open access, and the added gratification of getting reports on readership have helped build faculty participation to unprecedented levels. Comments Royster, "Word of mouth has become our best recruitment tool—faculty telling other faculty this is something they ought to do." To this end, the Faculty Senate resolution marks an important step: it is an endorsement and an encouragement, but not a mandated requirement. Royster, who gave an invited presentation to the Senate when the resolution was officially introduced on March 2, reports

that over the next 24 hours, twelve new faculty participants contacted him with publication lists to be included—a “tsunami” of new enrollments for the repository’s staff of 1.5 FTE and 4 work-study students.

"Since UNL's Digital Commons has been developed on a voluntary basis and by word of mouth, the Research Council thought that a resolution approved by the Faculty Senate would encourage more UNL faculty not currently participating to submit their vitas and papers," stated Tala Awada, Associate Professor, School of Natural Resources. Awada is the Chair of UNL’s Research Council and assisted in bringing the resolution up for the vote.

The UNL Libraries are also moving ahead with plans to establish an open-access electronic imprint for developing and publishing original monographic works as well. The repository already hosts a number of such works that represented first-rate scholarship but failed to match the packaging requirements of the conventional “dead-tree” publishers. Having a separate and recognizable imprint for original scholarly works will give the repository another outlet for providing needed services to the faculty and perhaps help set further trends in the evolving world of scholarly communications.

[Text of the UNL Faculty Senate resolution]

Resolution on Digital Commons Institutional Repository

The Research Council to the Faculty Senate:

Whereas — Many members of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln faculty from every college have taken advantage of services offered by the Libraries to create and populate a very successful institutional repository, the UNL Digital Commons, now containing more than 27,000 open-access items of faculty and student research, including articles, original monographs, and journals, as well as more than 11,000 dissertations, and

whereas — this repository is one of the largest academic institutional repositories in the United States, is accessed from more than 150 countries, and is indexed by Google and other major search engines, and

whereas — online open-access electronic dissemination of scholarship is an extremely effective way to enhance the visibility, recognition, and reach of faculty research,

be it resolved — that the participating faculty are to be congratulated for their support and use of the institutional repository and that all faculty are to be encouraged to take advantage of these services.

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