

REFRESH, RENEW, & REALIGN

How LIRA @ Boston College of Law's migration to]u[Ubiquity Repositories platform provided space for improvements

THE LEGAL INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORY & ARCHIVES (LIRA) was set up at Boston College of Law around 10 years ago. It was originally called Digital Commons at BC Law, and was hosted on the Digital Commons platform by bepress. When Digital Commons was acquired by Elsevier in 2017, the repository team knew that migrating to another platform was necessary in order to ensure the repository stayed aligned with the institution's open values. The]u[Ubiquity team spoke with Avi Bauer, Digital Initiatives and Scholarly Communication (DISC) Librarian at Boston College Law, and Seung-hwan Leo Kim (Leo), Digital Initiatives & Scholarly Communication Specialist, to discuss the repository's migration to the [\]u\[Ubiquity Repository platform](#), and how it has presented a fresh and improved start for the repository.

BACKGROUND

LIRA, formerly known as Digital Commons at BC Law, was set up at Boston College Law School (BC Law) around 10 years ago. It was initially set up for two primary purposes; to collect, preserve, and promote the school's scholarly output, and to support the faculty's law publication, the *Boston College Law Review (BCLR)*. At the time, BCLR existed as four separate journals, so the repository would provide a location for them to coexist.

In the last decade, the concept of freely available scholarly material has become far more commonplace, owing to the huge acceleration of the open access movement in general. When LIRA was first set up, Avi noted, having free access to such material, particularly in the law sector, was far less ubiquitous than it is now. The founding of the repository was rooted in a larger movement toward making American legal publications more readily and widely accessible, having an institutional repository seemed like the ideal way for BC Law to contribute to this mission, whilst giving the faculty the opportunity to showcase their own intellectual output, and give it a stable, permanent home.

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It was therefore crucial that the repository was hosted on a platform that was both high quality, in order to enhance the profile of the institution and the content it housed, and that represented the values of openness and accessibility that underpinned its founding. LIRA was set up under the name Digital Commons at BC Law and hosted on bepress' Digital Commons platform, which at that time reflected these values. However, when Digital Commons was acquired by Elsevier in 2017, the team felt that these values could potentially be at stake in the future.



WHY]u[UBIQUITY?

Post-acquisition, the team knew that migrating to a different platform was non-negotiable, and were keeping an eye out for potential solutions.]u[Ubiquity was a name that had been in the team's periphery for a while, having come up in conversation with [NELLCO](#), a large international law library consortium of which BC Law is a member and]u[Ubiquity is a partner vendor.]u[Ubiquity had done presentations to the NELLCO community about their repository service, and there were several elements of it that had caught the team's eye.

OPENNESS

As the team's decision to migrate platforms was primarily based in concern surrounding openness,]u[Ubiquity's general alignment with the team's values was very attractive.]u[Ubiquity repositories use the open source software Hyku from Samvera, and]u[Ubiquity is a Samvera partner and dedicated member of the Samvera development community. This means that the]u[Ubiquity development team is constantly working to improve the platform, and contributing these improvements back to the original codebase for the benefit of the entire Samvera community.]u[Ubiquity's active involvement in the open source community assured the BC Law team that]u[Ubiquity was not only committed to openness in all aspects, but also that they were dedicated to proactively improving the platform.

NO LOCK-IN POLICY

Moreover, the fact that the]u[Ubiquity Repositories platform had no contractual and technological lock-in assured the team that should they be in a position in the future where they wanted to migrate platforms again, they would be able to do this easily, whilst remaining in full control of their data.

USER EXPERIENCE

The LIRA team felt that the user experience of the]u[platform offered a significant step forward from their previous platform, and provided a much improved user experience. Both the front-end and the back-end interfaces were greatly improved, and far easier to navigate, for both repository administrators and general users.

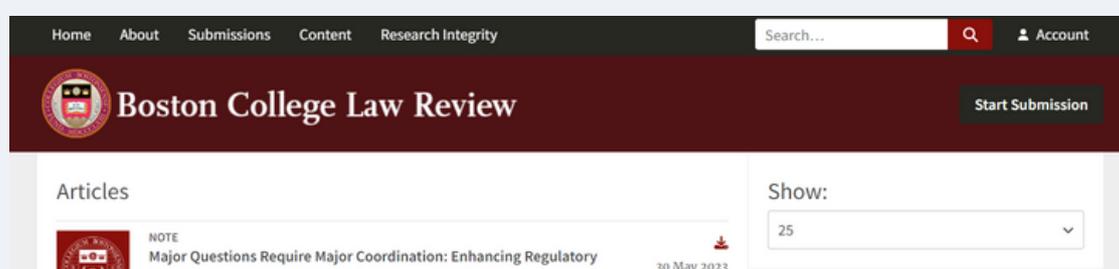
BRANDING

The ability to customise the front-end of the repository was far more developed than on LIRA's previous platform. The team particularly liked how customisable it was in terms of branding; the institutional repositories that were already using]u[Ubiquity Repositories all looked distinctive with clear institutional branding, including branded headers, logos and domains. This is a particularly important feature for an institutional repository, where part of the impetus behind its establishment is to showcase a strong institutional identity and to promote the institution's own research output.

JOURNAL HOSTING

Another huge benefit for LIRA was that]u[Ubiquity provided a qualitative journal hosting solution. The team knew that if they were migrating the repository, *BCLR* (by now one singular journal), would also have to be migrated, which also existed as a collection within the repository. But journals and repositories, Avi noted, obviously have very different structural needs. The fact that]u[Ubiquity could provide a dedicated journal service alongside the repository service really appealed to the team, as it was rare to find a provider who could cover both services to a high standard.

Migrating *BCLR* to]u[Ubiquity offered the potential for the journal to be set up as an separate entity to the repository, with an independent website and with the best standards academic publishing can offer, including Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs), which was not possible on the previous platform. DOIs provide a permanent and unique identifier for each paper, making it easy to locate and access them even if the original URL changes. Additionally, DOIs enable articles to be tracked across multiple platforms, which can greatly enhance metrics; properly tracking each publication provides valuable information about the reach and impact of scholarly content, such as Twitter mentions and Wikipedia entries alongside citations, views and downloads. Consequently, the journal is more likely to be indexed in numerous places, hugely increasing the journal's discoverability. The LIRA team felt that having *BCLR* on the]u[Ubiquity platform would be greatly beneficial for the journal.



COST EFFECTIVENESS

Whilst pricing was not the most pressing factor in LIRA's decision to migrate platforms, the team found the price offered by]u[Ubiquity - particularly the consortium deal they had access to via NELLCO - was very appealing.]u[Ubiquity offered a far more competitive rate than the team were previously paying for their bepress platforms. Moreover, they were offered a 'very generous' deal and reduced price for the *BCLR* journal website as a]u[Repository customer, which Avi said helped the team feel confident that the move really was the best option for them.

"After considering migrating platforms for some time, we felt that the timing was right, and that we were ready to tackle the challenge and that]u[Ubiquity was the right partner to help."

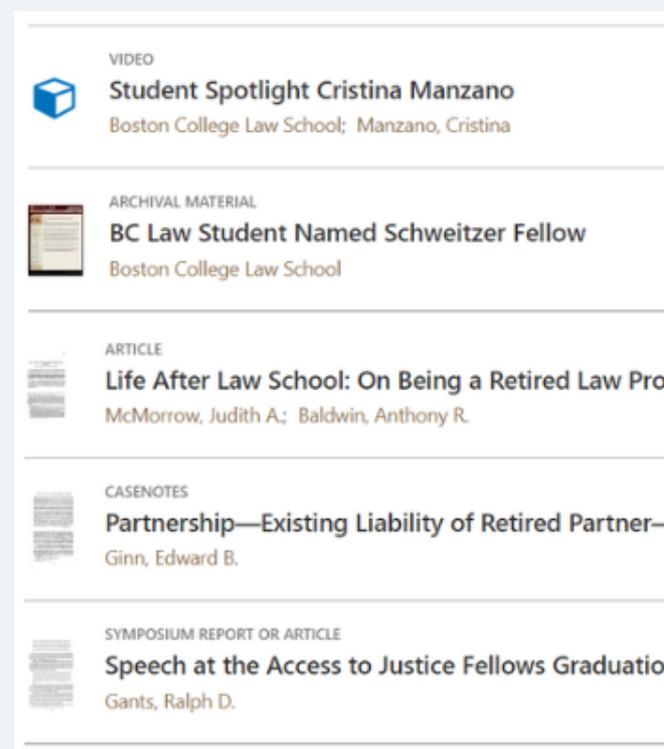
Avi Bauer

MIGRATION GOALS & DESIRED FEATURES

Beyond ensuring that LIRA remained aligned with its institutional values, the LIRA team had specific goals they wanted to get out of the migration, and specific features that they wanted to be able to incorporate to upgrade their institutional repository experience.]u[Ubiquity's modern repository platform had these features, enabling LIRA to meet these goals.

COLLECTION STRUCTURE & METADATA

One of the main problems that concerned LIRA's team was the taxonomy of collections. On the Digital Commons platform, collections were each tied to a specific type of metadata, so the team was limited to submitting only that type of metadata per collection. They wanted to be able to create more diverse collections, and group different work types, such as books, images and other materials, together within a collection, with each material having its specific metadata fields matching its content.]u[Ubiquity Repositories provides this flexibility; multiple files in different formats can be associated with any work, and collections can include any type of work, with metadata fields that are specific to its content.



FACULTY PROFILES

The LIRA team also wanted a way to identify and promote faculty authors, and group together each individual author's works and contributions, in order to enhance their professional profile.]u[Ubiquity Repositories provides this functionality with]u[Ubiquity Repositories Profiles; this is a functionality that is built into the system, and which can be activated and deactivated based on the wishes of the institution. The LIRA team can now also manage and populate their faculty's author profiles with details such as a biography, contact information, alongside an automatically generated of all authored works deposited in the repository.

PREPARING FOR MIGRATION

Avi highlighted that one of the major initial challenges faced by the LIRA team was being able to work collaboratively to plan a roadmap for the migration; working across a large team of people efficiently, especially for strategic planning of a task as momentous as a platform migration, is nearly always a steep learning curve.

However,]u[Ubiquity has a wealth of experience migrating institutional repositories from other platforms, including Digital Commons. Before the migration even started,]u[Ubiquity provided a roadmap of the full migration process, which was originally projected to last 14 weeks, in the form of a Gantt chart. The LIRA team therefore had a clear overview of the entire process, knew what was due to happen and when, and which migration milestones to look out for. They found that the]u[Ubiquity team was very responsive and communicative, quick to resolve any issues that arose from their end. This, combined with their flexibility, really aided this planning stage.

THE MIGRATION PROCESS

When it was time for the migration to take place, the LIRA team found the process much smoother than anticipated, thanks to several key aspects of]u[Ubiquity's process and team.

EXPERIENCE & EXPERTISE

]u[Ubiquity's expertise and prior experience migrating journals across to their platform from Digital Commons meant they had not only a good knowledge of the process and the potential challenges it could entail, but a pre-existing operational template for performing the migration procedures. Obtaining data from Digital

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Commons and transferring it to the]u[Ubiquity repository platform was also not complicated - the LIRA team worked with Digital Commons to download all their content, which Avi noted was a smooth process, and then were able to easily transfer this content across to]u[Ubiquity. Overall, this made the actual process of migrating the data from one platform to another a much simpler task than the team expected.

EXCEPTIONAL COMMUNICATION

The]u[Ubiquity team's communicativeness was a huge asset during the migration.]u[Ubiquity kept the LIRA team regularly updated on the progress of the migration, and were always happy to meet ad-hoc when necessary to address any issues that arose. The]u[Ubiquity team were not only quick to resolve any issues that LIRA raised, but actively tested for, identified, and solved other potential issues on their own initiative. This proactiveness really assured the LIRA team, once again, that]u[Ubiquity were truly committed to making the platform as high-quality as possible.

The two teams also worked together across Google Drive and a Slack channel, meaning they had many lines of communication open at all times. Avi noted that Aaron McCollough,]u[Ubiquity Repositories's Product Manager, was excellent at keeping everyone at LIRA in the loop about how the migration was progressing.]u[Ubiquity's ethos of openness really came through in the transparency with which Aaron discussed the migration, something which really impressed the LIRA team.

FLEXIBILITY

From the very beginning, the]u[Ubiquity team was willing to be very flexible in working with LIRA to address their specific needs, and to work with them to customise their repository according to their goals. For instance, alongside ensuring all the features mentioned above could be met, the]u[Ubiquity team worked hard to create brand new metadata fields which were niche to the legal field.

POST-MIGRATION

Post-migration, the LIRA team has seen notable improvements in the platform. The user experience in general is greatly improved; Avi noted that information in general is visually presented and organised much more efficiently and professionally on the]u[Ubiquity platform, and the repository as a whole is far easier to navigate. It is not only the front-end of the repository that has improved - the LIRA team have found that the new submission process and system is also far more straightforward to use, both for individual and batch submissions.

Having more freedom with collection structure, as the team was so keen to do, is definitely a huge bonus, and has greatly improved the functionality of the repository. Being able to submit any file format, and to add multiple files and file types to a single item has also been a huge improvement - not having this feature before was quite a major limitation, Avi pointed out, given that the point of an institutional repository is to be able to maximise content.

CONTINUED SUPPORT

Ju[Ubiquity continues to assist the team at LIRA on a daily basis with the running and upkeep of the repository. The turnaround time for resolving any problems that come up, Avi said, is very rapid, thanks to the continued open line of communication between the teams at LIRA and Ju[Ubiquity. The Ju[Ubiquity team's relatively small size allows it to be dynamic and responsive, and having individual staff members like Aaron to reach out to and build a substantiated working relationship makes all the difference.

Avi has even been able to meet Aaron in person on several occasions at various conferences, and noted that it is always great to chat with him about what goes on behind the scenes in repository development, and to hear about upcoming plans for the repository platform. Avi noted that it is encouraging to see how committed Ju[Ubiquity is to continuing to improve and grow the platform. This is also evident in the recent expansion of the repository team, with Heather Harvey joining the team in February 2023 as Ju[Ubiquity's Repositories Account Manager.

CONCLUSIONS

Though performing a full repository migration is no small feat, Avi noted that for LIRA, the outcome was without a doubt worth it. Beyond the improved features that the Ju[Ubiquity platform provides, he believed that process in itself proved valuable in a number of ways.

QUALITY CONTROL

The migration process offered the team the opportunity to become better acquainted with the content of the repository, and to give it much needed 'spring cleaning'. Many items in the repository hadn't been touched since they were initially uploaded (in some cases, now a full decade ago, when the repository was first set up); the migration provided the team with the opportunity to perform an audit on the repository's content, such as correcting misspellings or broken links, updating subject

texts, and more generally assessing the quality of the content. Prior to the migration, Avi noted, there were no strict rules and guidelines on the type of research that could be included in the repository, so the migration offered an opportunity to create and define some.

BRINGING THE REPOSITORY BACK INTO THE SPOTLIGHT

From what Avi has seen, the migration project did a great job of bringing renewed attention and interest to the repository, and resurfacing it in the law school's consciousness. Since the migration was announced, more people have contacted the team about the repository, and it has jump-started a number of new collections, including permanently housing a student-run journal and a project digitising old files from the BC Law experiential learning centre and legal assistance bureau.

Both Avi and Leo would recommend that any repository teams planning a similar project should take advantage of the increased interest, and factor promotion of the project to the community into the wider migration plan. This is something they wish they had done differently, as the LIRA team began promoting the new repository only once it had gone live.

STARTING OPEN ACCESS CONVERSATIONS

Migrating the repository to a fully open provider had its obvious benefits in aligning the repository with the values of the institution as a whole, and in reinforcing the very mission for which it was started, to increase accessibility to scholarly law materials. Consequently, Avi also believes that the project prompted a lot more interest in and discourse around open access within the library, and within the faculty at large.

It has also opened up new channels of communication between Avi and repository managers at other institutions, through which he has had many productive and stimulating conversations around open scholarship. Avi, Leo and the LIRA team strongly believe that there is a real need for more education surrounding open access solutions in the academic world; the conversations that have come about as a result of the migration, both within the faculty and externally, have been hugely beneficial in this respect.



"It has been a pleasure working with the]u[Ubiquity team during the migration and operation of the new BC Law repository, LIRA. The team is extremely responsive and helpful, and moving to the]u[Ubiquity repository platform has been a great step forward for our institution."

Avi Bauer

The]u[Ubiquity team is excited to see LIRA, and the repository platform in general, continue to develop and improve.

About]u[Ubiquity:

]u[Ubiquity is the leading provider of open publishing services, covering the entire research lifecycle. It provides open access journal and book publishing for academic societies, full publishing infrastructure and services to university presses, and open source repositories for institutions. Its team of professional and passionate experts are all dedicated to making open access and open science accessible to all. [Find out more.](#)

About LIRA@BC Law:

The Legal Institutional Repository and Archives (LIRA) is an open access repository of intellectual and creative works managed by the Boston College Law Library to foster a community of scholars through the sharing of ideas. It was set up approximately ten years ago to collect, preserve, and promote the school's scholarly output, and to support the faculty's law publication, the *Boston College Law Review* (BCLR). LIRA@BC Law is hosted on]u[Ubiquity's open source repository platform. [Find out more.](#)

[Contact \]u\[Ubiquity.](#)