

2014

# Building a Framework for IR Success: A Case Study on the Development of Digital Commons @Brockport at the College of Brockport

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## Repository Citation

bepress, "Building a Framework for IR Success: A Case Study on the Development of Digital Commons @Brockport at the College of Brockport" (2014). *Digital Commons Reports and Promotions*. 16.

[http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/dc\\_reports/16](http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/dc_reports/16)

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# Building a Framework for IR Success

## A Case Study on the Development of Digital Commons @Brockport at the College of Brockport

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## About The College at Brockport

The College at Brockport is a master's-granting institution and liberal arts college with over eight thousand undergraduate and graduate students, and nearly five hundred academic staff. Located near Rochester in upstate New York, Brockport is part of the State University of New York (SUNY) system, and was ranked by US News as one of the top tier master's-granting institutions in the Northeast in 2013.

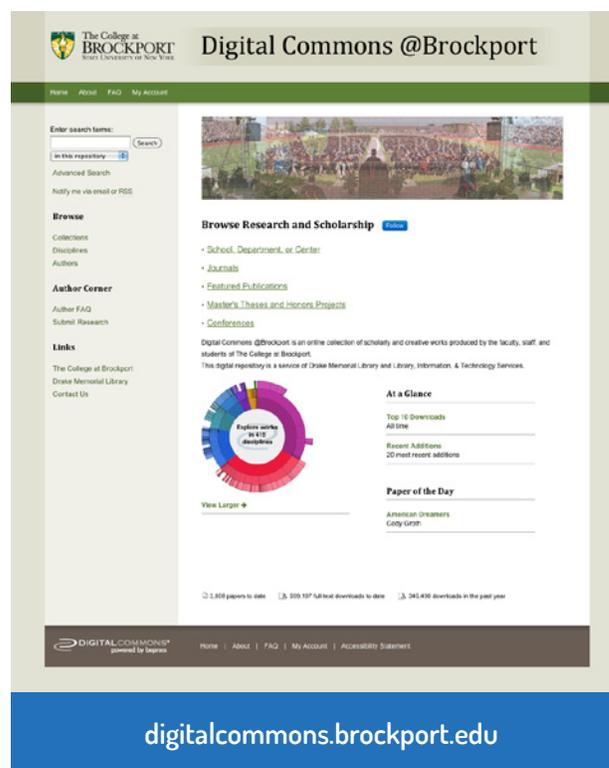
With forty-nine undergraduate majors and forty-seven master's programs being offered at the College, the twenty-four staff and faculty at Brockport's Drake Memorial Library serve an extremely diverse population. In early 2012, library staff worked with bepress Digital Commons to launch the College's institutional repository (IR) and publishing platform, Digital Commons @Brockport. In the three years since the repository's launch, the library has exceeded its projected quantitative benchmarks and has begun to see exciting qualitative results, making Digital Commons @Brockport a great success in support of the college and library's overall strategic goals.

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

## Identifying Needs and Setting Goals

### Initial investigation shows that an IR would support library and university goals

In early 2011, the library was approached by a faculty learning community with an interest in Scholar's Day, an annual event showcasing the best student research of the year. The group wanted to know if the library could help them produce an annual journal publication



The screenshot shows the Digital Commons @Brockport website. At the top, there is a logo for The College at Brockport, SUNY University of New York, and the title 'Digital Commons @Brockport'. Below the logo is a navigation bar with links for Home, About, FAQ, and My Account. The main content area includes a search bar with the text 'Enter search terms:' and a 'Search' button. There is also a 'Browse' section with links for Collections, Disciplines, and Authors. An 'Author Corner' section provides links for Author FAQ and Submit Research. A 'Links' section lists 'The College at Brockport', 'Drake Memorial Library', and 'Contact Us'. The 'Browse Research and Scholarship' section features a 'Browse' button and a list of categories: School, Department, or Center; Journals; Featured Publications; Master's Theses and Honors Projects; and Conferences. Below this is a circular chart titled 'Evolve works in IR disciplines' and a 'Paper of the Day' section. At the bottom, there are statistics: '1,859 papers to date', '3,359 PDF full-text downloads to date', and '345,436 downloads in the past year'. The footer contains the Digital Commons logo and the URL 'digitalcommons.brockport.edu'.

of its top student papers. Bob Cushman, Head of Library Technology, took the lead and began researching possible library publishing solutions.

While viewing an introductory bepress Digital Commons webinar, Cushman realized that the system could not only provide a publishing solution for the Scholar's Day journal request, it could also support several of the library's nascent strategic goals. The library—which is housed within Academic Affairs—and the campus as a whole were currently undergoing a strategic planning process, so this made Cushman's discovery especially timely. In particular, Cushman believed a Digital Commons repository would help support Brockport's mission to be a "nationally recognized comprehensive master's institution focused on student success," and the library's goal to become a vibrant center for scholarly communication and research.

While supporting these goals was important, Cushman knew that the right repository and publishing system would have to do more than that if it was going to be

DigitalCommons @Brockport leads to better user experience for special collections: Spotlight on archivist Charlie Cowling

Archivist Charlie Cowling has used several platforms over the years and ultimately finds Digital Commons the most “user-friendly.” He recently moved all digital archives work to the DigitalCommons @Brockport. How does he decide what is suitable for digitization and posting? It comes down to what the user community wants the most. He says: “My decisions about what content to put in DC are driven by experience with patron interests. For example, the college yearbooks are a staple resource that is sought out. Another collection – the aerial photographs – came about because these images are always a big draw when on display. [And] my participation in a local history museum helps me to recognize what materials will be of interest in that realm. It is wonderful to be able to make accessible to one and all in a manner that does not risk damage to the originals rare and unique archival and local history materials, whether plate maps, aerial photographs, yearbooks, etc.”

Cushman believed a Digital Commons repository would help support Brockport’s mission to be a “nationally recognized comprehensive master’s institution focused on student success..”

successful. So, along with Academic Affairs and others on the library staff, he dug deeper into evaluating different solutions and educating other key stakeholders on campus about institutional repositories. After narrowing in on a hosted solution, Cushman arranged for a bepress Digital Commons representative to come to the campus and present in July of 2011.

## ■ Seeking Out Collections & Building Support

### Early outreach reveals additional campus needs

To show top-level support for the project, the provost’s office took care of sending out the invitations to the Digital Commons presentation. Deans, department chairs, faculty, and other potential stakeholders were all encouraged to attend. Turnout for the event was high, and soon afterward several parties on campus approached the library with existing needs and new ideas, including the following:

- The chair of Counselor Education told Cushman his department had been collecting digital copies of its Master’s theses for several years and wanted them online once they found a good solution. Digital Commons seemed to be it.
- The college webmaster had long been trying to teach people that the website isn’t the place for everything. He committed to move hundreds of lesson plans – the output of an NSF grant from a several summers-long program – from the website to the IR, the more suitable location for long-term access and archival material.
- The Director of Women and Gender Studies saw an opportunity for her students to publish an annual journal from their senior research papers, with a rigorous review process by a faculty editorial board.

The feedback from the event helped the library settle on Digital Commons as their IR solution, and in the following two months things moved quickly. While bepress conducted a Digital Commons Kickstart, an optional service designed to pre-populate the IR with faculty collections and provide targeted recommendations for growing the IR, Cushman laid down the groundwork for

Student journal brings librarian into the classroom:  
Spotlight on Pat Maxwell and *Dissenting Voices*

*Dissenting Voices* was a journal that “came out of the woodwork” during Bob Cushman’s initial conversations and presentations about IRs. Dr. Barbara Le Savoy, Director of Women and Gender Studies, suggested her Senior Seminar students produce an annual journal in which they published their capstone projects.

The articles are reviewed and arranged by the Faculty Editorial Board, and librarian Pat Maxwell is Managing Editor. The best part for the library? It’s a great way to embed a librarian in a class or department. As Managing Editor, Maxwell joins the class several times during the year as students brainstorm ideas, present their research, and put the finishing touches on their journal articles. This means Maxwell has more face-time with students. She says that in her first year, several approached her to talk out their projects. This type of relationship allows her to advertise all the library’s services and encourage more students to seek out research support from their library.

“The result of being there,” Maxwell says, “is that the students see me actively involved in their work and research.”



building new collections and garnering support from the rest of the campus.

Not only did Cushman meet with each department that the library had elected to include in the initial Kickstart collection building, he also made sure to meet one-on-one with department chairs who had already expressed a distinct interest in improving circulation and visibility of their faculty and student work in order to continue expanding the IR once the Kickstart was done.

Within three months DigitalCommons @Brockport was launched, complete with ninety-three faculty publications and full branding and design approved by the college’s Marketing and Communications department.

## ■ Staffing the IR and Involving the Rest of the Library

### For Brockport, commitment to success means re-allocating resources

Ultimately, creating a successful IR “came down to commitment,” Cushman said. “If we were going to do this, we wanted to make a commitment to a successful, thriving repository...and commit resources.” This meant allocating enough staff time to get widespread uptake in the first year and provide long-term support. Cushman wanted to dedicate a full-time position to managing the repository, but as a state university, Brockport didn’t have the capacity to commit any brand new hires to the project. So, instead of bringing in someone new, Cushman decided to shift around positions and responsibilities within the existing library staff, allowing them to pursue new interests and continue work that aligned with their strengths.

For the position of Digital Repository Specialist, Cushman knew he needed someone who could “curate the growth of the repository, and be an evangelist too.” Kim Myers spent eight years working in Interlibrary Library Loan (ILL), the last three of which as the Head of ILL. Her work in ILL gave her a great foundation for both the outreach and operational work that would be needed to manage the IR, including interacting with faculty and digitizing documents. Myers was looking for new growth opportunities, and Cushman believed her skill set was a good match, so after spending a few months getting up to speed on IR management, Myers took over work as the Digital Repository Specialist in January of 2012.

## Digital repository position offers opportunity for professional growth: Spotlight on Kim Myers

Q: How did you get the idea to manage like this?

Kim Myers: I am an MBA student and one of the classes I was taking was project mgmt. [It] has informed my management of DC. Anybody can find a project management class online, even if they're not enrolled in another program.

Q: What's changed for you from ILL?

KM: I loved ILL while I did it, but I felt like I had done everything I could do there. I was looking for a new thing. I'm now interacting on a personal basis with many more faculty and presenting more – the growth professionally is phenomenal. With this job, we're forging new ground. There are always opportunities to learn and try new things and make decisions on my own.

Q: What do you like about this position?

KM: Variety. It has been an opportunity to become better known across campus and work with individual faculty, but I don't have to be out there every day. It's also been very rewarding to work with faculty and alumni. For instance, with the thesis collection, I'm contacting alumni, asking for permission [to post their theses] and following up with them. I sent one alumnus a note thanking him for sharing his research and he wrote back to say it was his pleasure and a great way to stay connected to the College. It's been a way to help the school with alumni relations, and the Alumni Relations folks were all for it.

While Myers manages the repository, she is not alone in building collections. Remarkably, over two thirds of the library staff participate in projects that contribute to growing DigitalCommons @Brockport. Myers attributes a large part of this widespread effort to the library culture at Brockport. "There is a strong interest among the group in promoting Brockport scholarship. They see Digital Commons as a great vehicle for this effort."

As manager of the IR, Myers believes matching her colleagues with projects that fit their interests is the most important thing she can do to involve the whole library team in building Digital Commons. While Myers still manages all ongoing projects like faculty publication series and theses collections, she always keeps her ears to the ground for new more short-term opportunities that might be relevant to other library staff's professional interests. While working on repository projects can contribute to a librarian's Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure (APT) requirements, which certainly provides some incentive, ultimately Myers believes "my colleagues work on [the repository] because it is interesting, challenging, and new."

## ■ Developing an Outreach and Marketing Strategy

### A strong first year supports ongoing/continued marketing and outreach

DigitalCommons @Brockport's campus engagement and success has been supported by the library's strong marketing and outreach strategy. Cushman did extensive work early on to prepare deans and department chairs for the new service and identify new collections. Myers successfully led the development of those collections and has worked to leverage early successes for ongoing mar-

"If we were going to do this, we wanted to make a commitment to a successful, thriving repository...and commit resources."

keting and outreach by keeping excitement and interest high both within the library and throughout campus.

To do this, Myers makes sure to engage with stakeholders digitally and face-to-face. In between her regular meetings with individuals and presentations to groups on campus, she engages with departments and groups online through press releases, newsletter announcements, Facebook, and Twitter. When a thesis from a certain department comes as Paper of the Day in the repository, she mentions this in a post on the department's Facebook page. She also regularly uses Twitter to share new or featured work. Though Twitter accounts for only a small percentage of traffic to the repository, that traffic is high quality. "Those referrals stick around much longer than the average—sometimes upwards of half an hour touring the repository collections," Myers noted.

The library also holds in-person events to promote the IR. When the one thousandth article was uploaded into DigitalCommons @Brockport, the library marked the milestone with a daytime celebration honoring early adopters. This provided an opportunity for the library to recognize and celebrate those on campus who had showed their support early on, and offer a space for networking. As Myers quickly learned, happy repository users tell others about their positive experience. Doctor Joseph Makarewicz, Distinguished Professor of Environmental Science, found a permanent home for his lifetime's worth of research in DigitalCommons @Brockport. He now shows off the [Water Resources collection\\*](#) to his college and to colleagues outside of campus, creating goodwill and free publicity for the IR.

Finally, in order to be an effective steward of the repository, Myers

needed to be extremely well-informed. She's made a strong effort to educate herself about IRs, scholarly communications, and Digital Commons services from the get-go. She got involved in the Digital Commons user community and the IR community at large, stayed up-to-date on available Digital Commons features and best practices, and kept herself abreast of larger issues in the scholarly communications community. She attends all Digital Commons webinars, reads the technical documentation thoroughly, and regularly chats with bepress Consulting Services Representatives. And last year, Myers participated in bepress's first Scholarly Publishing Certification Course. Knowing what to promote, when to say yes, and how to follow-through are all key factors in developing stellar services.

## ■ Reporting Your Successes

### Open Access: now more than a "buzzword" at Brockport

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The majority of campus users want to participate more in an initiative that is already proven, which is a big part of the reason building support and establishing early adopters at the beginning of the process is so important to a repository's long-term sustainability.

important to a repository's long-term sustainability. When Myers presents to departments and groups on campus, she makes sure to share the successes of those who already use DigitalCommons @Brockport. She uses these existing examples as analogues for what her target group could achieve through the repository, and demonstrates where and how the department's or unit's works would be showcased when they are ready to participate.

Keeping benchmarks and statistics readily available is also an important

\* [http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/water\\_research/](http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/water_research/)

part of establishing the IR's success, so Myers is always ready to tick off some numbers when the opportunity presents itself. In the early days of DigitalCommons @ Brockport, the Associate Provost and CIO would often swing by Myers' office to discuss the IR's statistics. Not only would she have up-to-date numbers ready to go as soon as he asked, she would also regularly provide him with charts and other materials to share at committee and senior leadership meetings. Additionally, Myers also kept detailed internal benchmarks, maintaining a weekly list of twenty or so peer-repositories and repositories she aspired to in order to track Brockport's progress against a landscape of other institutional repositories.

Perhaps the most important step Myers took to report the IR's successes was to create an official annual report explaining the mission and vision for DigitalCommons @Brockport, and the most significant accomplishments and statistics for the first year. The annual report was published by Brockport's campus newspaper, *The Daily Eagle*, emailed to stakeholders, and is frequently referenced by other libraries that are working on launching their own IR initiatives.

The annual report has proven to be an excellent tool for demonstrating the library's strategic goal of becoming a vibrant center of scholarly communications. As the Library Director commented in the report, "The online digital repository has made 'open access' more than a buzzword at Brockport. It allows us to collect and share examples of faculty and student scholarship more widely and efficiently. After only one year, the data on the number of items in the Digital Commons and their downloads concretely demonstrates its success."

**"The online digital repository has made 'open access' more than a buzzword at Brockport. It allows us to collect and share examples of faculty and student scholarship more widely and efficiently."**

## Making thirty years of water quality research openly available: Spotlight on Distinguished Professor Joseph Makarewicz

Located on the shores of Lake Ontario in the New York Finger Lakes Region, The College at Brockport has been building a strong environmental engineering program since 2001, with water quality research as a major focus. Dr. Joseph Makarewicz, Limnologist and Distinguished Professor at Brockport, has developed a significant corpus of work in his 39 years at Brockport. This corpus includes hundreds of technical reports—unpublished works commissioned by state, county, or city governments to help public officials grapple with environmental policy; until recently, these reports were either sitting in a few file cabinets or sitting on Dr. Makarewicz's hard drive. He personally would field requests from researchers for copies, either photocopying or emailing the works to them himself.

Kim Myers had known Dr. Makarewicz through her work with ILL, so she found it easy to initiate a conversation with him. Early in the development of the repository, she approached Dr. Makarewicz with the question: "How can we support you with DigitalCommons @Brockport?" Myers and Dr. Makarewicz started discussing his immense corpus of technical reports and government documents. Not only would digitizing and making the works public help him, it would also help the research community. And, additionally, it would also help the library to further support one of the university president's Six Major Initiatives: to support Lake Ontario Research. The library digitized those works that were only in print, then posted the full set in Digital Commons @Brockport. The resulting collection, Studies on Water Resources of New York State and the Great Lakes, is a win for everyone.

(continued on pg. 9)

## ■ Planning for the Future

### Expanded scope and more departments

In the first year of DigitalCommons @Brockport the library developed early collections with their guiding strategic goal in mind: to support to the university mission to be a “nationally recognized, comprehensive Master’s institution focused on student success”; to support major university initiatives; and to develop the library as a vibrant center for scholarly communications and research.

As the library moves into the fourth year of its repository development, they continue to further develop many of those initial collections. For example, the library has already digitized and made openly accessible nearly one thousand [Master’s theses\\*](#) from twelve different departments, and it now has the staff and workflows in place to be able to offer digitization, access, standardized processes, and support for all of the college’s master’s-granting programs department by department.

Additionally, after solidifying processes to support the publication of several undergraduate research journals through DigitalCommons @Brockport, the library will now take on supporting two faculty-edited journals as well. One of the journals had a print run in the 1970s and was recently resurrected, and the other is an annual publication derived from a speaker series on campus. Both come from the College of Arts and Humanities, and both came to the library after the VP of Academic Affairs presented to the Dean’s Council about the repository.

Other plans for growing DigitalCommons @Brockport in the near future include: adding collections from every department to the IR, with a focus on creative works;

For Dr. Makarewicz, it was particularly important that this collection of work would be free and immediately accessible to anyone online. In the field of freshwater research, he explains, “Long term environmental datasets are quite valuable with time but only if they can be discovered by others.” Some in this specific collection are up to thirty years old, which can lend a powerful long-term data-driven view to current water and watershed research and policy. These works represent over \$4M worth of local government funding. Dr. Makarewicz says it’s particularly important to him that the work is now easily “available not only to the county it originated from, but also to researchers and policy makers in the state of New York to develop management plans.”

The results of making this corpus of research freely available have been significant for both Dr. Makarewicz, his department, and The College at Brockport. In particular, Dr. Makarewicz says, this has “focused attention on the college as a center for environmental research and resources... and has led to more students coming here.”

In addition to attracting grad students, the public availability of this work has “led to a number of counties coming forth to suggest they may be willing to fund research and scholarship.”

increasing participation in digital submissions of theses; and developing the Center for Philosophic Exchange to include the digitization of its journal, publication of new issues, and digitization of related audio recordings and other materials.

\* <http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/theses/>