

Stephanie L. Gross

# YAIR (Yeshiva Academic Institutional Repository)

## How rethinking an open-source institutional repository is changing the visibility of faculty, students, and administration

The director of libraries conceived of Yeshiva University's institutional repository (IR) in 2018 in part as a cost-effective alternative to Digital Measures, a scholarly productivity tracking program used to determine faculty eligibility for tenure. It was mandated in Yeshiva University's first Strategic Plan 2016-2010, under Strategic Imperative 2: Advance Faculty Development and Excellence in Teaching and Research.<sup>1</sup> The IR would be a secure, prestigious, university-sanctioned platform for showcasing, documenting, and sharing intellectual output across the globe. It was important that most of the work would be open access, with accompanying Creative Commons Non-Commercial No-Derivatives licenses. In addition to faculty, undergraduate and graduate students would be given a platform to self-archive their intellectual output. Both faculty and students would have the option to opt-out from making their work public, or at least limiting the visibility to the university public only.

### Choosing a platform: Proprietary or open-source?

The university formed an IR task group that explored three popular platforms: Elsevier/bepress Digital Commons, Islandora, and Lyris/DuraSpace's DSpace. While Digital Commons might have been a first choice, budgetary constraints determined DSpace to be the most affordable. The appointed IR task force, which included myself and an IT supervisor, established a workflow based on my best practices' literature review and networking with colleagues. Responsibilities were divided between myself and my supervisor, the web and digital systems expert. Since 90 percent of work submitted to the IR is not

self-deposited, as scholarly communication librarian, I deposit for both faculty and students. In order to establish and maintain a competitive edge to our repository, I endeavor to find alternative techniques to replicate most of the favorite Digital Commons features. For example, although Yeshiva Academic Institutional Repository (YAIR) lacks an expert gallery, faculty are given handles for their faculty pages<sup>2</sup> as well as a trial audiovisual collection for the graduate school in Judaic studies. Student publications can be embedded or linked to department web pages (e.g., Women in Science). The library has collaborated with Yeshiva University Marketing and Communication on outreach and developing policies and best practices. They have published promotional articles for YAIR, positioning the library (physically and virtually) at the center of the institution's intellectual life, and now both faculty and students routinely inquire how to share their work. Student editors have contacted me with requests to publish new undergraduate journals on YAIR.

### Faculty input

From the beginning, fewer than 50 faculty showed interest in sharing their work to YAIR, and only one dean committed his faculty to contribute. According to feedback, many faculty writers prefer the convenience of self-archiving work to international sites, though less reliable, such as Academia and Research-

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Gate. A few individuals have told me that identifying which article version to submit is too time-consuming for a task that is not mandated by the university.<sup>3</sup> Truthfully, institutional affiliations are not permanent, and often lead to lack of ownership of material. Many of our STEM researchers prefer Cornell University's arXiv for that reason. As scholarly communications librarian, I encourage authors to learn about author rights and copyrights retention, pointing them to resources such as SPARC, which I have incorporated into the YAIR User's Guide.<sup>4</sup>

## Student input

Undergraduate honors students are required to submit their theses to the repository using a custom form, including access designation (open access, institution only or embargo) prior to their work being archived. Faculty advisors oversee this task. Past theses have been uploaded in batch sequence, but lacking permission, are only visible to the university public. Dissertations from all doctoral candidates will soon be uploaded directly to the IR. Most are available via ProQuest Dissertations, but streaming the process will facilitate ease of access and highlight the university's intellectual achievements.<sup>5</sup> A new and somewhat expected upturn for the IR has been a weekly increase for undergraduate and graduate Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs), which are often only accessible via ILL requests. Authors of works from past decades must be contacted for consent, and surviving relatives provide signatures for creators who are deceased. A partial remedy for this has been suggested: adding a Retrospective release form for alumni in order to make their work visible.<sup>6</sup>

## Institutional input

The Michael Scharf Publication Trust of Yeshiva University is the institution's official publisher. The editor determined that the market value of certain work from earlier years is negligible and is now available to the public. More recent work is being embargoed to enable authors and organizations to realize a profit. Dispensations for the latter have been made for classroom use and adult outreach.

## Scope of the repository

In summer 2019, I decided to broaden the collection's scope. Rather than declare defeat at the slow faculty response, I set my sights on incorporating

student work and campus publications. I attended bepress webinars such as Macalaster's "Faculty Observe: Students Who Publish Understand Scholarship More Deeply." Students presented anecdotal evidence of how their IR was used to showcase student work, including ETDs, student journals, and projects.<sup>7</sup> I decided to retrospectively digitize past student work (hoping to generate future submissions). The library catalog uncovered an incredible range of creative work, some housed in the university archives. Since the work was university-produced by student organizations and clubs, permission to share it on YAIR was usually granted by university administrators. Work that has been out-of-sight for decades is now accessible to the Yeshiva University community and beyond.

The repository is not a one-dimensional platform but includes diverse artwork and multimedia. Zoom sessions are converted to YouTube and then embedded into the IR. Videos of book talks, panel discussions, and podcasts by faculty authors and the library are accompanied by attractive color posters. To further our reach, we advertise new repository acquisitions on digital signs on our campuses. Reactions to the new breath of the collection has been quite positive. The dean of Stern College for Women expressed pleasure at bringing into public view the immense talent and productivity of our students. She promised to become more involved with the Office of Student Life, student organizations, and the Office of Admissions to streamline the process of preserving and sharing student publications. I was recently interviewed by one of the staff writers for our student-run newspaper, *The Commentator*. The author is also head of the student government, and we have established a collection to house and share student government trials and election results.

## Campus outreach

Since YAIR's inception I have spent many hours contacting professors by email and in-person. Since COVID-19, I've continued outreach efforts via email, telephone, and Zoom. I also participate in compiling and editing the annual Catalog of University Authors. At the end of the academic year, the catalog is printed as well as posted to the web. A campus celebration, open to all Yeshiva University faculty and staff, features light refreshments and presentations. Since I am in direct contact with all

those who submit their work, I use the occasion to recruit scholarly work to YAIR. Professors emeriti are also encouraged to have their work chronicled in the volume as well as online. In these relaxed situations, it is easy to approach faculty, hear their concerns, and troubleshoot user-experience problems. At a 2019 staff recognition event, I sought out the editor of a Holocaust education journal, *Prism*, which had just been added to YAIR. I commended her for her publication, which included impressive digital artwork. Because she sat at the same table, representatives of the Marketing and Communications department became involved in the discussion. One initiated a meeting with the library director, my supervisor, myself, and the library outreach coordinator. The outcome of this meeting will be an article covering the repository, which will be published in the future. Recruiting content in-person is not a current option because of COVID-19.

### **Funding**

Library administration along with community stakeholders, such as department heads, are seeking sources of funding. The director of libraries makes periodic reports based on statistics generated from D-Space and Google Search Console. One feature I would like to see in the upcoming version is a readership map. This would enable me to feature not only where a work is being read or cited, but also what the top articles of the day or the week are.

### **Release forms and take down policies**

The IR team made it a priority to post clear and understandable release forms as well as take-down policies for both student and faculty work. Without these, potential submitters of material would hesitate to submit their work, and the institution may be held accountable for intellectual property violations or breaches of privacy. Our IR team met with legal counsel before posting ETDs and journal articles.

### **Publisher agreements**

The newly revised and updated Sherpa Romeo directory<sup>8</sup> is routinely consulted to determine readiness for posting journal articles to the repository. Factors include embargo time, file versions (published, accepted, submitted), and nature of repository. Since not all titles are included in the directory or are obviously out-of-date, editor permission must be sought.

As time allows, I seek requisite permission on behalf of our professors. Almost without exception, I have received positive responses (from across the globe, no less). Permission is not only granted, but support offered and encouraged. One journal, SBL, has recently changed its policy limiting sharing to that of the version of record. Upon occasion, faculty perform their own requests for dispensation, especially if they have served on the editorial board. Since we are not a STEM institution, funding has not been available for pricey APC GOLD OA publishing fees. Many faculty members, especially in Judaic studies, have begun to favor OA journals and publishing houses. However, many of those, especially if they're prestigious, require embargoes of one-to-two years before self-archived work may be posted to an institutional repository. More seriously, not all OA journals are maintained, and many sadly disappear within a few years. The Internet Archive has been instrumental in helping to ensure that much of that material remains publicly available.

### **Self-deposit of work to YAIR**

Workload and workflow-wise, neither faculty nor students have been enthusiastic about self-deposit, and many send PDFs via email. Since the institution has not mandated contribution of works to the repository, outside of ETDs, it is a matter of practicality to simply post on behalf of the creators.<sup>9</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Originally conceived as an OA showcase primarily for faculty scholarship, necessary accommodations were made to make the IR the robust and attractive digital venue it has become. Wisdom from webinars and OA conferences continues to help configure a path that promises to serve not only the institutional faculty and students, but the global public of scholars. On demand fulfillment of interlibrary loan requests for retrospective theses and dissertations is a booming aspect of weekly workflow. The hurdles encountered in the first two years since the rollout have been overcome, and I am cautiously optimistic that the road ahead will bring continued support from content creators from all academic departments, as well as student organizations and university institutes.

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tional, 2020), <https://www.achievingthedream.org/resource/17993/oer-at-scale-the-academic-and-economic-outcomes-of-achieving-the-dream-s-oer-degree-initiative>.

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("YAIR," continued from page 131)

For small private institutions, especially those with a low STEM profile, I recommend that you focus on student work, including student journals and ETDs. I also suggest including informal material, such as book talks, podcasts, and conference proceedings. Institutional repositories need not focus strictly on peer-reviewed scholarly work. They should showcase and promote intellectual output that reflects the talent and culture of its institution. Both prospective faculty and students can then use the material to evaluate and understand the institution, its values, and its spirit.

## Notes

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2. See <https://repository.yu.edu/RichardSteiner>.

3. Aaron Tay, "Rethinking Institutional Repositories," *Online Searcher* 2.41 (2017): 10-15,

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