Digital Repositories in the Hospital Environment

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(presented at the Health Libraries Inc. conference 2013)

Ballarat Health Services (BHS) is the major hospital for western Victoria. Located an hour west of Melbourne it is the principal referral centre for the Grampians region, which extends from Bacchus Marsh to the South Australian border, covering a catchment of 48,000 square kilometres, and providing services to almost 250,000 people.

Why a digital repository?

There were two reasons why we decided to head down the repository path:

1. The BHS Library kept hardcopy folders of research publications. There was no access or knowledge of what hospital staff had produced except the occasional mention in an Annual Report. Using an EndNote library was not an option as the organisation doesn't license it.

2. Piles and piles of 'historical stuff' was dumped in the library. People didn't want to throw out anything of value so they kindly gave it to us. We had no idea what we had and were often asked if we had old photos etc. that were of past staff or old buildings.

I liked the idea of a repository as I could chase the copyright for researchers and make the items freely and publicly available. A repository was clearly in line with my organisation's values as it would allow staff to be recognised as researchers and enhance the research reputation of the organisation.

Where I started…

It didn't take me long to realise that I needed to go down the repository path. I had explored the functionality of our existing catalogue but it wouldn't suffice. I spoke with several vendors to hear about their products and had a bit of a play with these online. For me (and my miniscule budget) the costs were extremely prohibitive. I also spoke to repository staff at universities to garner their ideas and opinions (thanks to staff at the University of Ballarat and Swinburne University of Technology whom I pestered on several occasions).

I put a call out to the aliaHEALTH e-list to see what other hospitals were doing. There were few responses, however one did mention that they were heading in the same direction and were looking at using DSpace, which could be hosted externally by Prosentient Systems based in Sydney. Hospital IT departments can be restrictive and Prosentient could provide the support and training I would require. I also read lots and lots about different repositories and played around with them to see if they would suit our needs.

DSpace

We decided to use DSpace for a variety of reasons. It was a lot cheaper than other systems and Peninsula Health were also looking to head down this path so we figured we could work in tandem. DSpace (through Prosentient Systems) would come configured and hosted and they would look after the technical side. These are skills that no one in our library (equivalent 3.2 full-time staff) possessed at a high-end level. The technical support included helping us set up an IT sub-domain; configuring the site; handling registration; Google analytics set up; indexing on Trove (National Library of Australia); training; and helping to test, re-test and tweak the system. It also included ongoing support and

maintenance, which we pay for annually. We had worked with Prosentient before (they look after GratisNet interlibrary loan system for health libraries), so we were confident in their ability to help us. DSpace was also very popular with universities, so for me it had credibility and lots of support out there, which I could tap into when required.

What's included?

Our repository is split into two sections:

1. Research – this contains published journal articles, books, book chapters, conference papers and theses. We chase copyright from publishers for all completed works. We are yet to chase authors for pre-publication versions as we are still getting a feel for how this all works. This is something we hope to do more of in 2014. We currently sit at about 20% of full text research but expect this to rise.

2. Historical content – so far this includes Annual Reports from BHS. These have been scanned and indexed in Trove. In the future we aim to add in newspaper articles, photographs, internal reports and recordings.

Promotion

Before beginning the repository it was put to both the BHS and St John of God Human Research and Ethics Committee (HREC) and the BHS Research Advisory Committee to garner support. All were keen to see the repository implemented as it highlighted what research was undertaken within BHS and the region. The repository was also added to organisation-wide policies. This included the 'Rules for Publication/ Presentation' policy as well as embedding it in HREC documentation. Each year BHS hold a Research Symposium and I am asked to speak about where we are up to and encourage people to deposit works into the repository. I also promote the repository in the internal staff newsletter. There is also the possibility for external promotion in the local newspaper in relation to the historical documents. The

historical components also open up opportunities to work with local historical groups, the research room at the local public library and other local archives.

Response

The BHS Digital Repository has just ticked over its first birthday. In that time we have managed to add just over 400 items. Three-quarters of these relate to research and we have many more to add. The researchers we worked closely with in the initial stages of the project are very keen to alert us to new publications and we are finding that when we approach staff about publications they are happy to give us a list of all their work for inclusion.

Library value

In its vision to provide excellence in health care, BHS is strongly committed to the values of research, continuing education and collaboration with other service providers and is committed to sharing its knowledge and experiences to build a better health system. The BHS Library supports these values through a number of library initiatives (literature searching; database training; electronic journals and books etc.)

Over the last three years, the majority of health libraries have remained static or experienced a decrease in their budget, staff hours and space. As a manager I know that I need the library to add value to the organisation for it to recognise that we are a resource worth keeping. I feel that implementing a repository has done this. Not only has it shown us that we have transferable skills, but it has opened up professional visibility for both the organisation and the library. We communicate more widely across the organisation and in doing so are promoting the library and showing staff that we are more than just books. When we talk to researchers, it puts the library in their headspace and they approach us more frequently for help. It's a win-win situation.