

MIDESS – Institutional Buy-in Case Studies

LSE:

The LSE's institutional repository currently makes use of E-Prints and is known as LSE RO (or LSE Research Online)ⁱ. LSE RO was developed as part of the JISC-funded SHERPA Project.

As part of the MIDESS Project, LSE have also been working with Fedora, and have used this to set up a pilot repository for images and multimedia materials. The decision to use Fedora for the purposes of the MIDESS Project was taken following the user and technical evaluation undertaken by the MIDESS Project. LSE favoured Fedora because of its high international profile, ability to support multiple file formats, support for rich metadata and METS, compatibility with Shibboleth and preservation functions. The full functional and technical requirements specification document is available on the MIDESS websiteⁱⁱ.

In 2006, Sally Rumsey, then E-Services Librarian at the LSE and with particular responsibility for LSE RO, made a recommendation to the LSE Library Senior Management Group (SMG) regarding the preferred repository software for future use at the LSE. The recommendation was to use Fedora as a single repository for all requirements. The MIDESS working group at LSE, including Jane Secker and Marie Lagerwall, liaised very closely with Sally leading up to this recommendation, providing her with details on both DSpace and Fedora. Before the MIDESS project is complete at the LSE, the team will communicate findings on Fedora, Fez (and Elated) to the relevant members of staff to make sure the LSE gains maximum benefit from the experiences of the MIDESS Project.

The Project has already successfully established a mechanism for feeding experiences through to core service developments, as the bi-monthly LSE MIDESS working group comprises several members from the Library's SMG.

The Library have chosen to continue using the E-Prints software for the institutional repository for the moment, however the Library IT team are involved in the MIDESS Project and have been very interested in the evaluation of Fedora being undertaken. The findings will feed into any future decision on the choice of software for the institutional repository as this is scheduled to be reviewed within the next 18 months.

The LSE's Centre for Learning Technology (CLT) team is also kept aware and to an extent involved in the MIDESS project. CLT has become aware of the advantages managing digital content within an LSE institutional repository would have over storing them within the VLE (WebCT and Moodle). A decision has been made to move much of the multimedia content out of the VLE and into some form of database or repository so that it can be shared more effectively between courses and to encourage re-use of the materials.

University of Leeds:

The MIDESS Team at the University of Leeds have actively used the MIDESS Project to drive institutional awareness and buy-in to repository developments. The MIDESS repository has been promoted from the outset as an 'institutional' service – rather than a tool that the Library could use for managing its own digitised collections - and the Project Team have actively targeted academic staff and others as potential candidates for making their content available through the repository.

With this in mind, the MIDESS Working Group at Leeds included representatives from ISS (Information Systems Services), from the e-learning services within the University, and from a number of academic Schools. This group have helped to drive the positioning of the repository as a central, institutional service.

The MIDESS Team have used the various project work-packages to maintain a high institutional profile for the Project, and to encourage buy-in and support from academic stakeholders in particular. The User Needs Analysis work-package (WP3) raised the initial profile for the Project by widely advertising an online questionnaire across campus. The

Project Manager followed up responses with face-to-face discussions with staff where possible, and used this to gain a comprehensive picture of local and individual digitisation efforts around the campus. This activity created a list of key contacts for the Project, and key potential candidates for use of the repository. Contact with these potential users was actively maintained, and fed through into the Functional and Technical Requirements work-package (WP2). The Team actively involved a wide range of academic and other stakeholders in this phase of the Project through attendance at supplier presentations and provision of feedback on the range of packages demonstrated.

The MIDESS Team also used the enterprise architecture work-package (WP 6) to drive decision-making about the technical implementation of the repository as a core 'enterprise' system. This resulted in a decision being taken to use the centralised storage architecture (SAN), which contributes hugely to the repository being viewed as a core enterprise system.

The involvement of key stakeholders resulted in the use of a number of Schools and central services being willing to provide their content to the repository as part of the pilot service. These included the School of Medicine, Media Services, Staff Development Unit, the Library, School of English and the Centre for Heritage Research.

A critical aspect for the Project Team in gaining institutional buy-in to the repository was the interest which emerged from the ALPS CETL. The CETL is keen to use the repository to share assessment materials with their partners, and has been closely involved in working with us to assess requirements for VLE integration and other support for learning and teaching activities.

The University is also currently out to tender for a new VLE. The repository has been included in the ITT as a key system which must be integrated with the new VLE. We are also currently assessing how the repository could be integrated with our Student Portal.

The repository has also been included as a key system in two recent internal Academic Development Fund bids for enhancing teaching and learning.

The most difficult aspect of achieving institutional buy-in for a new system is in obtaining the financial commitment necessary for the development and maintenance of a long-term service. The University has already provided a substantial measure of commitment through providing funding for the repository licence, and for hardware in 2006. With the longer-term future in mind, the University Library has recently put forward a business case for long-term funding of the repository. It is hoped that, if successful, the funds will provide a secure long-term future for the repository as a fully-supported institutional service, not just as an experimental pilot.

University of Birmingham

The University of Birmingham (UofB) implemented an Institutional Repository in 2004 based on E-prints. Take up of the new service by academic staff has been slow, despite the best efforts of academic liaison staff from Information Services (IS).

Funding became available to digitise a large number of items within IS Special Collections – approx 28,000. At the time of digitising the idea was to use RLG Cultural Materials to expose the items however this still required an in-house repository/database to store the images and metadata prior to exporting and a system had not been identified. The MIDESS project therefore provided an ideal opportunity for UofB to test the waters with a digital repository, to explore the emerging metadata standards and draw up a full requirements specification of any future repository/system. UofB used DSpace as an open source tool to investigate – largely due to having no internal funding to purchase anything else!

The aims of the MIDESS project at UofB are to:

- Evaluate DSpace as an open source image repository

- Evaluate metadata standards, e.g. Dublin Core, METS etc and to determine which is most likely to meet our future needs not only for images, but for the full range of potential digital materials that may need to be housed in a repository.
- Experiment with image scaling to decide the optimum file size and graphics format for the 28,000 digitised images
- To securely store and preserve the 28,000 images
- To estimate the financial and staff resources needed to sustain a well-managed repository
- To explore options at UofB for integrating repositories with other systems, following the investigations of WP6
- To produce a document for Senior Management recommending the way forward not only for image repositories, but for repositories in general at UofB

The MIDESS project team comprises staff from across Information Services, including Kelly Smith from the TE3 - Technology Enhanced Enterprise Education project. This project is part of the Learning Development Unit and her input has been invaluable in relation to Learning Objects.

Sample images have been deposited into DSpace ensuring all variations of media type are covered. Several academic departments, known to have local image databases, have been contacted with a view to uploading sample images and evaluating likely buy-in. The Urban Morphology Research Group in the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences have provided some urban townscape images. The Music department is also very interested in using a repository to deposit material such as pdf output of scholarly editions, for an e-publishing project, but haven't supplied any images as yet. We have been working closely with The Barber Institute which has a national coin collection of over 28,000 coins which they would like to expose more widely.

Any repository will need to be able to provide adequate security, to control access by users and by potential depositors, and as a minimum we would want to authenticate against our Active Directory server. In the longer term software which supports Shibboleth would be more desirable to enable a finer level of access permissions. As with the metadata standards, it is early days yet for the adoption of Shibboleth so we maintain a watching brief.

An article describing the MIDESS project at UofB was written for Insider – the monthly Information Services staff Newsletter and two presentations on new metadata standards were given to cataloguing (and other interested) staff.

The project team are very interested in developments being undertaken at LSE with Fedora and Leeds with Curator as this will all feed into the decision making for UofB's recommendation.

As a result of the experience gained from implementing E-prints and now DSpace the Digital Library team have been approached by the e-Learning team to discuss possible plans for the Digital Library team managing a Learning Objects repository using commercial software.

ⁱ <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/library/midess/MIDESS%20workpackage%20%20-%20Functional%20and%20Technical%20Requirements%20Specification.pdf>