

Kultur Project

User Analysis: Interviews Report

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Victoria Sheppard, University of Southampton
Andrew Gray, University of the Arts London
Dominic Persad, University for the Creative Arts

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Introduction

This report describes the results of a series of interviews with academic staff at the three Universities involved in the Kultur project – the University of the Arts, London (UAL), the University for the Creative Arts (UCA), and Winchester School of Art (WSA) at the University of Southampton. The report is part of the Kultur project user analysis work package, the aim of which is to identify the cultural barriers and incentives for encouraging arts researchers to use an institutional repository. The first part of this work package, a user survey, (see *Kultur Project User Survey Report*, Aug 08), provided quantitative information about prospective depositors, such as the types and media of their research outputs, modes of dissemination, IT habits and use of web services. The qualitative interviews enabled the project team to draw out more detailed case studies of individual researchers, to map the processes involved in creating and publicising research outputs, and to gain an overview of the research culture. They also provided an opportunity to elicit more detailed thoughts on the perceived uses of a creative arts institutional repository (IR), and to gather some valuable feedback on the Kultur prototype repository.

The interviews were conducted between May and August 2008, with a total of 15 members of staff across the three institutions. The interviewees were chosen from those who, when filling in the Kultur survey, ticked to say they would be willing to take part in a follow-up interview. Although the interviewees were largely 'self-selected' in this respect, the project team were careful to choose candidates who represented as broad a spectrum as possible from amongst those who volunteered. In addition to those from WSA, interviewees included academics from almost all of the constituent colleges at UAL and UCA. They represented a range of different subject areas within the creative and applied arts, including video, photography, crafts, printmaking, performance, textiles, digital arts, and theory. Positions included readers, research fellows, part time lecturers, teaching and learning co-ordinators, and curators.

Interviews lasted an hour and followed a semi-structured format. Interviewees were asked to talk about a specific piece of work or a project and to trace the working processes involved from its conception to its dissemination, including any online dissemination that had taken place. They were encouraged to think about where a repository may fit in with their current practice, and what features it would need in order to be of most benefit to them. Interviewees were also encouraged to talk openly about their reservations towards using a repository for their work.

Interviewees' confidentiality has been respected throughout this report, and comments are not quoted verbatim or attributed to individuals.

The report comprises three sections:

Section 1: Thematic concerns – synthesising recurring key issues surrounding working practices, research and professional cultures.

Section 2: Feedback on Kultur project and demo – specific comments on the perceived value and problems of an arts IR, and direct feedback on the demo user interface

Section 3: Scenarios – sets out different use cases and provides recommendations for repository development

1. Thematic concerns

1.1 Working practices

Most of the interviewees worked in a variety of forms – for example producing both video art and textiles, photography and installations, paintings and digital art. There was a strong tendency towards interdisciplinarity – most commonly the practices discussed mediated between different discipline areas within the arts and humanities, but some of those interviewed had also collaborated with the sciences. When it came to representation within the realm of the professional art world, however, some commented on the difficulty of moving between different kinds of practice. One artist described the stubborn resistance of the art world to accept digital art in the 1980s and early 90s, a situation which has since changed. In another case, an artist had faced difficulties breaking into the fine art world with a background in textiles and crafts.

Nearly everyone had engaged in some sort of collaborative work. Collaborations may take the form of large scale research projects with several participants, or refer to a discrete stage in the process of producing or exhibiting a work. There was a general feeling among the interviewees that more opportunities for collaboration would be welcomed. Some made the important distinction between simply working with others (or enlisting assistance at a particular stage of a project), and fuller collaborations involving a more thorough, sustained, even exchange of knowledge. Such collaborations were ultimately more desirable, but perhaps less common.

The majority of those we spoke to had to balance their own research and practice with teaching and/or management responsibilities. In a small number of cases, researchers mentioned that they were engaged in different kinds of artistic practices outside of work.

1.2 Funding

The main source of external funding amongst those interviewed was the Arts and Humanities Research Council (ARHC). Others included the Arts Council, the Film Council, Wellcome Trust, and the Design History Society.

1.3 Documentation

Documentation is a requirement in both research and professional contexts. The conditions of research council funding obliges practice-based researchers to document their work. Those whose work is submitted by their university as part of external research evaluations are also required to supply appropriate documentation for entered works. Outside of the academic context there is further need for practitioners/researchers to document their work in order to secure future exhibitions or screenings at galleries and festivals, commissions, and to apply for artist's residencies.

Most of the interviewees stressed that documentation was important, but several also highlighted issues with the act and art of recording practice-led research, a process which is more complicated than with traditional text based forms of research. The four main issues that emerged related to the size and scale of documentation, sharing records of collaborative works, the technical skills needed to record work, and the difficulty of adequately reproducing works.

Many collaborative projects create vast amounts of material, a proportion of which may be ephemeral. This needs to be ordered, stored and shared effectively. Large file sizes means that this work is sometimes spread across numerous PCs. It can be difficult sharing files with collaborators based at other sites or other institutions (for example), individual file sizes can be greater than the limits imposed by file sharing/sending sites. Some researchers described how they had had to learn new skills and technologies or else had to enlist the help of friends or colleagues to document their work. This was particularly the case when works or performances needed to be videoed.

A recurring problem with documentation related to what one interviewee called the “unsatisfactoriness of reproduction”. Some felt that it was hard to replicate the ‘live’ nature of performance with a recording, or to convey the tactile element of textiles in digital form. Others stressed that video works/installations do not always translate well from a large screen gallery setting to photographs or recordings. Still images of time-based work can be misleading insofar as they only represent one moment of a work. Where installations involved multiple projectors and screens, there is an additional difficulty in conveying the set-up of the work.

Reproducing the work for purposes of documentation ultimately changed the nature of audience engagement. More than one interviewee felt that it was difficult to capture the experience of durational works through a recording which will be shown on a small screen – a platform which tends to be more suited to dramatic rather than slower or more subtle works. Some also designed their work not only for big screens, but specifically for a gallery setting, with the intention that viewers could join the work at any point rather than viewing in a linear fashion.

1.4 Dissemination

The means used to disseminate creative and applied arts research are characteristically diverse. Taken as a whole, those interviewed had produced articles, essays, conference papers, books, exhibition catalogues, performances, workshops, videos, DVDs; they had had works exhibited in galleries, had curated shows, and also disseminated their research through teaching. Meanwhile non-research teaching and learning staff had produced podcasts and DVD resources, and had promoted these through teaching and learning away days, presentations, launch events and through more personal, direct means – speaking to staff on a one-to-one basis.

The vast majority of staff we spoke to had some of their work available online in one form or another, as discussed in the following section.

1.5 Creative arts research and the internet

Where researchers had work online it tended to be on project, personal, or university websites, or else on art or video databases. A minority of those spoken to made use of blogs and of filesharing sites (such as Flickr). On the whole, project and personal websites had been created by third parties. Occasionally these third parties continued to maintain them, but in most cases, artists/researchers preferred to be able to update them themselves. Personal websites were often currently in need of updating, but various reasons – time pressures, lost passwords – had prevented this.

The reasons for desiring a web presence were interesting, particularly amongst the individuals who had invested time and money in setting up their own site. Websites were felt to be an important means of representing and promoting artists, especially

by those who weren't represented by an agent or gallery. More than one interviewee mentioned that living outside of London put them at a disadvantage when it came to networking and attending private views, and felt that online arts resources were creating an alternative forum for the art world to operate. Websites were also seen as useful when applying for residencies.

Those who didn't have a website either for themselves or for their project or research centre generally cited a lack of time and resources as a reason. In this respect, there was much enthusiasm about the potential of a repository to act as an alternative to a personal website. In a small number of cases, artists were already happy with their existing representation on different databases including Luxonline, and felt that this eliminated the need for a personal website. In one case, an artist had sold some video work to a collector as a limited edition, which prevented any version of this now being made available online.

There was a split between researchers who were very much in favour of open access and were happy for all their work to be accessible online, and those who had reservations about it. The majority of these reservations concerned intellectual property, but there were also concerns about privacy and the ways in which work was presented and interpreted online. The main reservation was that having high quality work available online could potentially lead to a loss of revenue for the artist. This was voiced in particular by those involved with photography, video art, and digital printmaking, as well as those who had created teaching and learning resources which had commercial potential. One interviewee recounted a case where one of their images had been used without permission for some merchandise. It should be mentioned here that during the interviews a discussion of the ways in which an arts repository could protect intellectual property of artists went far in alleviating these concerns. In particular, options for the automatic creation of lower resolution options, putting up samples or stills from a work rather than the whole thing, the option to allow previews but no downloads, and a tool to 'request a copy' of a restricted work were all welcomed.

There was a small degree of concern about the possibilities that printed works may be plagiarised if freely available online. And one researcher pointed out that the process of clearing the rights to put creative and applied arts work online would be complicated, especially if commercial interests were involved.

Aside from copyright, another reservation concerned material that drew on the artist's personal and family life, and whether or not this would be appropriate for dissemination on the web. Finally, the presentation and context of the online work were revealed as deciding factors for some. In part, this comes back to reservations about scaling down a large screen video work or installation for online delivery and the impact this has on the viewer's engagement with the work. In relation to this issue of viewer experience, a small number of those interviewed were concerned about works being interpreted out of context, and felt that it was very important for the artist to provide a textual context for the work. Conversely, those working in more abstract styles wanted their work to be seen with as little contextual detail as possible.

Context was also thought to be important in relation to *who* was represented on a website/arts database – this could influence whether or not an artist wanted to be featured on a site.

1.6 University culture

The relationship between universities and the creative and applied arts is a relatively recent one. As an AHRC review of practice-led research summarises, 'the period following 1992 has brought some dramatic changes and in many ways Art and Design can still be seen as emergent academic disciplines despite their long history.'¹ Our interviewees reflected on the implications of these changes. Many welcomed the value now placed upon research, and appreciated the support they received to conduct their research, free from many of the financial pressures of having to produce work to sell. But some felt that it remained difficult for artists to see themselves as researchers, and to think of their work in terms of research outputs, which universities were increasingly emphasising. The interviews took place a few months after submissions had been made for the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). It was pointed out that this can be a demoralising process for staff. There is a lot of institutional activity centred on collecting data about outputs, but it was suggested that more could be done institutionally to help to in the actual promotion of these outputs. It was also stressed that there was a lot of research going on outside of the RAE, and outside of formal research centres.

Nearly all of those interviewed had teaching responsibilities. One interviewee observed that although many courses had shifted from HND to undergraduate status, they remained essentially skills based and vocational, and students were not always aware of the academic structures at work in the institution. There are some issues with translating traditional university criteria and evaluation into a practice-based environment. This gap was illustrated anecdotally by the example of students (and some staff) being unaware what a 'reader' is. Another view expressed about teaching (though not necessarily representative) was that the current model seemed more impersonal in comparison to a collegiate model of art college teaching in past decades. An increasing student-to-staff ratio was a big factor here. There was an implication that the creation of an institutional repository itself documented the changes in HE – not only reflecting an increasing emphasis on managing research outputs but also the public marketing of education.

Teaching and learning staff offered a different perspective, and a discussion about some of the audio visual resources that they had created suggested that technology was increasingly being used to enhance the educational experience and support students in learning at their own pace. E-learning resources were being developed to assist with teaching rather than as a substitute for teaching. Part of the work of teaching and learning staff was to try and alter the culture of privacy that surrounds teaching in universities, and the reticence of lecturers to share the materials they had created for teaching was commented on.

Many researchers felt that there was a lack of effective communication across their university, and mentioned it can be difficult to find out what other researchers were doing. Not only are the universities dispersed across several sites, but sometimes the colleges themselves are spread out across different locations, meaning that email becomes the main mode of communication.

¹ Chris Rust, Judith Mottram, Jeremy Till, *AHRC Research Review: Practice-Led Research in Art, Design and Architecture* (version2: November 2007), p. 14. Available from http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/About/Policy/Documents/Practice-Led_Review_Nov07.pdf [01 Oct 08]

2. Feedback on the Kultur Project and the demonstrator repository

In addition to finding out about working practices, the interviews provided an opportunity for the project team to show researchers the prototype repository and obtain feedback on the user interface. Many made specific suggestions about the kind of additional features they would like to see incorporated into a creative arts repository. The interviewees were also forthcoming in talking about the ways in which they felt a repository would be useful to them in their academic and professional practice, and the perceived limitations or problems of making their work open access via a repository. These are summarised below.

2.1 Potential uses of a repository – interviewees thoughts

- **Networking, community and collaboration** – it was felt that the repository would be a very good way of finding out what colleagues and peers were doing, forging links with other researchers, and helping to initiate collaborations. It was suggested that this could help counteract perceived weaknesses in communication across the university
- **External promotion** – promoting work outside of a university context, increasing potential work and exhibition opportunities
- **Storage** - a repository would be welcomed as a place to store large quantities of work. When research involved performances, a repository would be a useful way of referring people to works without having to send out DVDs. Good place to store and share ongoing work with collaborators. One interviewee suggested that the repository could be marketed as a 'loft for artists'
- **Feeling valued** – if the institution is collecting and looking after the work of its employees, it can reassure researchers that their work is valued
- **Alternative to having own website**
- **Funding** – a repository will help to satisfy some of the AHRC funding requirements, as they place a lot of emphasis on how work is documented online. It will also help in funding application, because it can give existing research legitimacy, and also allows applicants to point funders to a clear record of existing work.

2.2 Potential limitations and problems with a repository

- **Presentation** – the compressed nature of a website may affect how viewers interpret works. When works are available online there is a temptation to flick through them quickly, resulting in a certain loss of reverence. The repository format may not suit time-based work that is non-linear, because it encourages viewers to watch from the beginning. There is a recurring sense that digital representation can never fully convey the work
- **Size issues** – the bandwidth and size of files for certain types of work could be a problem. High definition works also problematic to store.

- **Copyright** – may involve lengthy negotiation to clear rights to make work available online. Anxieties about protecting artist's IP (see discussion above)

2.3 Demo: feedback on user interface and further suggestions

- **Text/image balance** – need to make sure that the text doesn't overwhelm the work. Text is very important for this context – one option is to have the text accessible through an additional button
- **Clean look** – some commented that they liked the current uncluttered look of the current demo, that it has better aesthetics than Blackboard. Others mentioned that the clean element of Flickr's interface would be a good model. Interface should be attractive and simple and easy to navigate
- Needs to be **visually arresting**
- **Homepage** could show examples from each discipline.
- **Selected highlights** – it can be useful when sites help viewers to select what to view – eg favourite for the day
- **Search engine** (advanced search) needs to be tailored more towards the arts
- Would be good to be able to **browse by research centres and clusters**
- **Typeface currently seems very small**
- **Browse by projects** – would be nice to have more of a sense of what the projects are (subject area)
- **Tagging** very important
- More information about the artist – space for an **artist's statement**
- **Depositing** – if FTP isn't a possibility, then it needs to be easy to use
- **User managed** – so don't have to keep contacting people to change things
- Depositors should be given **clear guidelines** on what they need to supply, specifying certain kinds of files and sizes.
- Depositors should have the option to make a full copy or a **low resolution** copy of their work available
- Depositing should **avoid labour intensive and repetitive data entry**
- Should be able to set different **access levels** to work, eg. so can use it to store works in progress without necessarily making open access
- There needs to be **training and ongoing technical support** to help with depositing
- **Other functions:** links to Blackboard, possibly space for user comments and critiques but only if done seriously – restricted/registered users

2.4 Previous experience of eprints

Some of those interviewed had had prior experience of depositing their work in an e-prints institutional repository (e-Prints Soton), and made the following observations:

- Process of depositing was pedantic
- Repository needed to be more visual
- Interface not designed for creative arts. Confusing process of depositing – especially having to choose between artefact and exhibition. There needs to be a narrowing funnel and self-excluding choices, so that depositors don't need to make too many decisions.
- Very varied texture - stills combined with exhibition records, and artefact record – never really know what going to get when click on a record. Would like it to be more consistent.

3. Scenarios and recommendations

This section outlines five different scenarios which bring together information gained from the interviews regarding the range of working habits and needs of researchers. The potential depositor in each of these situations makes different demands of a repository, and these requirements need to be addressed if a creative arts IR is to be of maximum use to its user community.

Scenario 1: A collaborative project with a range of complex multimedia outputs.

A collaborative project can be comprised of a range of digital materials that may include image, audio, video and related text documentation. The project may be interdisciplinary and combine different areas of activity or practice within its scope. Numerous creators and contributors may be involved in a range of capacities.

Documentation of a project can be highly detailed and may take place at different stages over the course of the project. This can result in multiple files in multiple formats. The range and complexity of collaborative project works makes for large digital objects that require more storage space than single file items. The interrelation between elements needs qualifying within the object record and a more thorough level of item level description is needed than for single item objects, to provide individual detail and accreditation.

There may also be a difference between what creators/contributors/collaborators require in terms of storage and description and what an 'end user'/viewer requires of the object. Creators may want to access and work on documents subsequent to their deposit so that 'the documentation becomes part of the research itself'. They may require the ability to go into the object and edit material as required, perhaps using their own more personalised/bespoke classification system than that of use to an end-user/viewer.

Creators may also wish to make lower resolution files publicly available for view and download, while storing large hi-resolution files in the repository, as 'raw' working material, for their own use, future re-use, or for sharing with collaborators. In this scenario, the repository serves well as a central place of storage and retrieval for a range of large and complex digital materials that are normally held on a number of different devices or in different places. It provides a means of uniformly ordering, cataloguing and describing complex work so that it is more 'readable' to collaborators and viewers alike. It also provides clear copyright and accreditation of persons involved.

However, objects of this nature are time and space consuming and complex from a depositor/editor/administrator point of view. Uploading and describing numerous individual files takes time. Also, the size of files affects upload and download times from both a depositor and end-user perspective. Providing an overall catalogue record to make sense of the various files and provide context for the project is dependent on the information available and/or the knowledge of the depositor. Ideally documentation needs to be ordered, classified and presented in a way that makes real sense to both depositor and viewer.

Scenario 2: Using the repository for teaching and learning resources

Teaching and learning resources may be in a variety of formats - text, audio, video and even websites.

The teaching and learning resource is primarily aimed at students but is also of use to others teaching within that particular subject area. Issues of access are important. The creator of the resource may only want those within the University to be able to use the resource so registration is important. Being online, copyright will also be of great importance especially as many teaching and learning resources contain 3rd party material, so limiting it to those within the University will definitely help. If material is open to all, creative commons licenses would need to be an option. Creators are often happy to distribute the work as long as no commercial gain is produced. This can be a big issue when they are addressing a 'gap' or 'need' within the teaching of a subject and have produced a text or video.

At the moment teaching and learning material and resources are stored in a variety of places and not always online, so gathering this material together would be the first potential hurdle in using the repository for teaching. A specific area for teaching and learning material would need to be created in the repository.

When using the repository as a teaching and learning area there is a more pressing need for interactivity. Options to re-use and re-upload need to be explored as do the facilities to comment and leave feedback on the record of the resource. Using eprints software to try and archive any teaching and learning websites which have an interactive element is currently problematic.

As students are the primary users of such resources, the site has to be dynamic and encouraging for them to come back to. The present way such resources are distributed is through Blackboard, a VLE which has always seemed problematic both for students and staff. At the moment, course materials and related resources are only accessible through Blackboard to those enrolled on that course. The repository will allow people who are not on a course to also view that material. This should also help teaching staff by the sharing of resources and the prevention of duplicating material and also assist in improving/building on teaching and learning material.

Scenario 3: Researcher producing HD (high definition) videos/images of their work.

As technology advances and computer memory increases and comes down in price more and more work will be produced in HD. Work such as video art is also produced to be viewed in a specific way in a specific environment. This can involve multiple screens and the artist will have exact requirements as to how their work is presented. The byte size of such works may mean that the repository is unable to store the work. The repository development also needs to take into account that users may not have the capacity to view very large files in a meaningful way. Therefore being able to describe the work accurately through metadata or having a lower resolution version becomes necessary in order to document the work at all. A dialogue with the researcher is needed in order to ascertain what other documentation can be used such as still images. Each institution needs to specify the upper limit size of files that can be stored within the repository. There also needs to be clear guidance for depositors on preferred/accepted formats, which should be clearly related to the repository's aims. Some formats are bigger than others e.g. wav is a bigger file than mp3, yet wav files are seen as the archival format and so depending on the preservation policy of the repository, it may be necessary to store the format that takes up more space.

Scenario 4: Researcher dealing with material that may be sensitive

Certain research work may contain material that will be deemed sensitive, either owing to its 'personal' nature as in informal interviews, or because of partnerships with commercial sectors. The researcher may want to store the material in the repository but not allow all to have immediate access. The repository can offer the option of allowing the researcher to store material with access only being granted to individuals who submit an email request from the repository record page. This however does mean that users will be able to see that there is other material that is restricted access. Making this clear on the record page is essential. If the researcher wants to store work purely for their own purposes, and does not want any users to know that the material is there, then it would have to be stored in the depositor's 'user work area', rather than deposited. However, such a use may be seen to conflict with the open access ethos of sharing research.

Scenario 5: Artist/designer/maker wanting to use repository as alternative to personal website.

Practitioners recognise the benefit of having a web presence and representing oneself online. They may have no gallery representation, live outside London or not be able or wish to engage with traditional networks. However, practitioners also have reservations about the cost of personal websites both financially, technically and time-wise. They recognise that it can take an amount of each to get site looking and operating how you want. There is also the question of maintaining the currency and content of the site and its long-term sustainability. In these situations, the repository offers an institutionally managed alternative to a personal website.

Researchers see having a profile and work within the repository as providing 'legitimacy' for research or placing it within an academic context that is beneficial. The IR is a strong sign that the University is committed to its researchers and values their work. This is something that has been perceived in some cases as lacking. The IR is therefore of great value in assisting with the dissemination of researchers' work and raising their profile within the context of academic research.

Researchers generally want to be able to find out what other people are doing in related areas and to see their own work presented within the wider context of art, design and craft research. The repository is seen as possibly aiding collaboration, communication and enhancing research communities within the institution.

However, accompanying such a use of the repository are high expectations regarding the presentation of works and the aesthetics of the site. Many researchers want to retain a high level of control over how their work is viewed and the context in which it is presented. They have concerns about what appears on the rest of the site and how. They are concerned about the quality of works submitted and what checks and balances will be in place to safeguard overall quality. These concerns raise the notion of there being a 'review panel' for the IR so that overall research quality and institutional integrity is maintained.

4. Conclusion

The results of the interviews have been informing the direction of the repository development over the last six months of the project. This report concludes by summarising the ways in which the project has engaged with the needs outlined in the five user scenarios. It outlines the kind of features that have been created in response to these needs along with features that are currently under development. It also suggests which areas may be the subject of future research beyond the life of the project.

To deal with complex objects, a function to "explode" an uploaded zip file into many documents has been incorporated into the repository. This means that depositors do not have to separately upload every individual document when creating a record with multiple documents. This should save time and be of particular use to depositors creating records for projects with complex multimedia outputs. In order for depositors to share ongoing work with collaborators but restrict access to others while the work is still in progress, the ability to make documents visible to "named collaborators" at the document upload stage would be a useful addition.

The Kultur repository already supports some examples of teaching and learning material successfully. These include tutorials, DVDs, and power point presentations. Many of the repository features that have been developed to accommodate arts research outputs are also of direct use when it comes to presenting teaching and learning objects, especially when these are multimedia. The repository's item-level metadata assists in the description of complex learning objects, and the more visual nature of the repository – its previews and video players – means that it is easier to get an at-a-glance impression of the content of a learning item. Any further development of the repository to accommodate teaching and learning material lies beyond the scope of the Kultur project, but the partner institutions could make use of the findings from other repositories projects with more focused teaching and learning remits. For example, the more interactive requirement of teaching and learning repositories is explored in the JISC projects such as EDSpace and Faroes.² Copyright issues surrounding learning objects in repositories have been examined as part of the recent TrustDR project,³ and there are several projects and studies which are looking to develop links between IRs and VLEs, as summarised on the CETIS wiki.⁴

² EDSpace: <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/exemplars/edspace.aspx>, Faroes: <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/reppres/sue/faroes.aspx>

³ http://trustdr.ulster.ac.uk/about_trustdr.php

⁴ See http://wiki.cetis.ac.uk/Linking_VLEs_and_Repositories

In order to deal with large files, the project is currently developing a function to create lower resolution versions of uploaded documents. This feature will help depositors with very large files make a version of their work easily accessible to others through the repository, and will also assist those who want to limit the ways in which their work is reused. Policy on the upper limit of file sizes for each repository has yet to be finalised. The project team also need to produce some clear guidance on recommended/preferred formats for depositors.

It is possible for depositors to offer access to their work selectively, in response to individual requests from viewers, which are fielded through the repository. If creators restrict their documents as visible to “repository staff only”, the option for viewers to “request a copy by email” will appear on the abstract page. The process gives the viewer space to state their reasons for wishing to access the work. This leaves it to the discretion of the creator to decide whether work that may not appropriate for the public domain, for commercial or other reasons, can still be accessed by individuals for educational or research purposes.

Finally, the project’s progress with enhancing the visual, aesthetic dimension of the repository means that it now offers arts-based researchers a viable alternative to a personal website. It presents the work of individuals within a larger context of the latest art, design and craft research. The repository offers more opportunity for exploring related works (and uncovering potential for collaborations) than traditional text based repositories: more hyperlinked metadata offers greater scope for lateral browsing, and there is also the chance to browse by category. In addition, a “related items” feature for the abstract page, and space for biographical details and/or an artist’s statement on the “browse by creator” results page are in development. With regard to quality control, decisions still need to be finalised about the precise inclusion criteria for the repository at each institution.