

Kultur Advocacy Workshop: a summary

20th November 2007
University of Southampton

Attendees

Mark Brown	Library, University of Southampton
Les Carr	School of Electronic and Computer Science (ECS), Soton
Jacqueline Cooke	Library, Goldsmiths College
Mick Eadie	Visual Arts Data Service (VADS)
Andrew Gray	Kultur project, University of the Arts London (UAL)
Clare Hemmings	Library, Winchester School of Art (WSA)
Jessie Hey	ECS, Soton
Rosemary Lynch	Library, University College for the Creative Arts (UCCA)
Dominic Persad	Kultur, UCCA
Victoria Sheppard	Kultur, Soton
Wendy White	Library, Soton

Introduction

The main aim of the workshop was to answer the question, how can we achieve successful advocacy?

While a significant motivation was to formulate practical advocacy strategies for the Kultur project, the aim was to come up with a combination of broad principles and concrete examples that would also help others engaged in repository projects with similar user groups. The combination of round-table discussion, group activities and presentations brought together past experience of promoting digital projects with the insight of those who are used to working with arts-based researchers.

This summary is split into four main sections:

- 1. Cultural web activities**
- 2. Advocacy in practice: presentations and discussion**
- 3. 'Quick Wins'**
- 4. Barriers to success and solutions**

Part one: the Cultural Web

The cultural web diagram is a tool devised by Gerry Johnson and Kevan Scholes and is often used in business to assess the culture of an organisation in order to think about how it can be changed – how a paradigm shift can be achieved. In the case of this workshop, however, each attendee was asked to think of their own institution, so that we could draw some broader conclusions about the often unspoken cultural paradigms which help to shape the Higher Education arts research sector.

The six elements of a working environment, through which we can identify the paradigm, are:

- **Stories** (*events, people, myths talked about inside and out of the institution*)
- **Routines and rituals** (*daily behaviour, key rituals and the beliefs they reflect*)
- **Symbols** (*visual representations such as dress codes, logos, workspace, status symbols*)
- **Organisational structure** (*eg. flat or hierarchical? Competitive or collaborative?*)
- **Power** (*how is power distributed? Do some groups have more influence than others?*)
- **Control systems** (*such as financial and quality systems, rewards*)

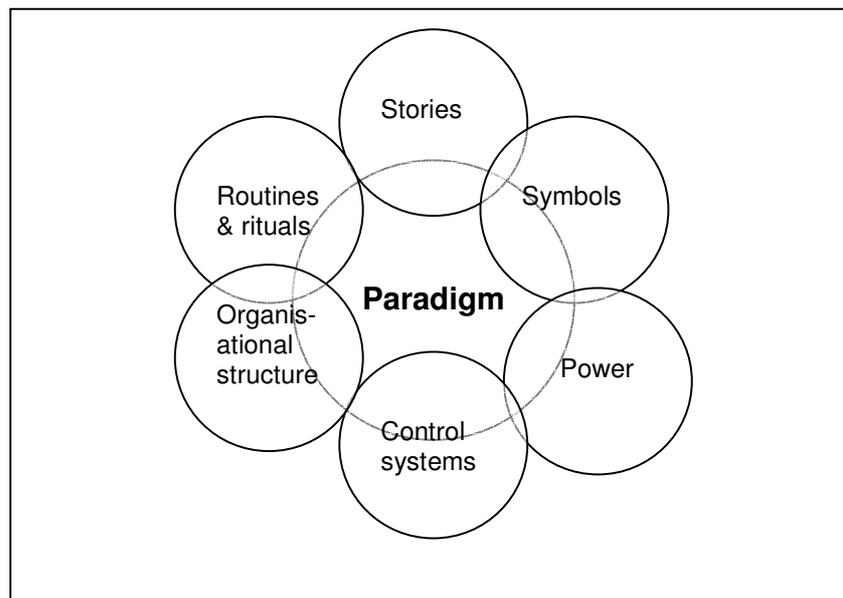


Fig 1: The Cultural Web diagram

The first part of the exercise (at the beginning of the day) pooled ideas on what this cultural web looks like for our working environments. The second part of the exercise (at the end of the day) asked what we could change through the Kultur project, and reflected on how we could engage with each element of the web in promoting the benefits of an institutional repository.

Cultural Web 1: where we are now

Stories – recurring themes included recent mergers and its effect on staff, the existence of antagonistic strands – ‘the centre vs us’, ‘research vs teaching and learning’, and fragmentation. There were also more optimistic stories centring on successful alumni and aspirations for the future of the institution.

Symbols – logo and logo redesign was predominant here, but there were also other symbols associated more specifically with arts institutions – including studio space, individuality, and students smoking....

Routines and rituals – these were all quite practical and activity-based – including workshops, end of year student shows, seminars, exhibitions, submission of theses, degree ceremonies

There were overlaps between **powers** and **controls**. Powers included HEFCE, governing body, and students. In controls these recurred, alongside a strong emphasis on finance, the RAE, time, space, and league tables.

Organisational structures brought out multiplicity – ‘lots of schools and centres’. There was a tension between democratically oriented collaborations/committees and a more narrowly hierarchical structure – ‘committees temper autocracies’, ‘collaboration between individuals but competition encouraged between schools, departments etc.’

Paradigm – two pictures emerged here. One was closely related to artistic practice – innovation, craftsmanship, individualism, innovation and creativity. The second was more to do with institutional structure, power and privilege – images of ‘knights of the round table’ and an ‘inner circle’.

Cultural Web 2: where to get to

The second part of the activity considered how we could work with the themes identified in part one to promote the benefits of an institutional repository. The **stories** section offered a particularly positive vision. In some cases these responded to stories from part 1. Previous fragmentation was replaced with an emphasis on collectiveness, bringing together different priorities (teaching, research) as well as departments and colleges. There was also a new narrative about the increased profile and international presence of the institutions involved, with the suggestion that the project could even change the face of publishing in the creative arts.

Part 1 picked up on the importance of **symbols** and logos as expressions of institutional identity and part 2 applied this to the marketing of the repository. Suggestions underlined the need to clarify the position of the repository within an institution’s branding profile. Submitting work to the IR becomes a new **ritual** and part of the **organisational structure** – acknowledging the importance of embedding the repository within the working routines both of individual staff and the institution more broadly.

The repository in this vision becomes a way of negotiating **controls** – a tool which, through increased visibility, can assist with the RAE and with securing other forms of funding.

Finally, without compromising the previous emphasis on individuality, the new core values, or **paradigm**, foreground collaboration and a new institutional unity. A new core value of access has also been added.

Part Two: Advocacy in Practice

Two presentations on tried and tested advocacy approaches were followed up with questions and discussions, which drew out how these approaches might be adapted for Kultur’s arts-based repository.

Jessie Hey gave a presentation on the various techniques used to promote the TARDis project at Southampton (Targeting Academic Research for Dissemination and Disclosure).¹ This presentation will be made available in the repository. Wendy White's presentation was based on the post-TARDis stage of Southampton's research repository. This covered three main issues – the use of committee meetings for advocacy, ways of embedding the repository in the university long term, and experience of working with the arts community at Southampton (WSA).

Taken together, the presentations and the discussions they initiated focused on the following areas

2.1. The importance of an environmental scan as a preliminary to advocacy activity

For the TARDis project, the environmental scan proved essential in helping to target presentations to different departments and research groups. Introducing the idea of an institutional repository to a department that already had an established culture of sharing work online, and introducing it to departments that did not (and to whom terms such as 'open access' may not have meant much), clearly required quite different approaches. In this respect, the environmental analysis should be thought of as a tool which helps to determine the content of initial presentations – which benefits to promote – as well as the language and terminology to use.

It was agreed that an important part of the Kultur environmental assessment should be finding out what academics want from a repository, and how they envisage its capabilities. Discussions stressed the importance of appreciating how things are done in the art world and how a repository can fit in with this, rather than thinking in repository terms and trying to impose this on an arts community. In Goldsmiths College repository, for example, a more 'person-centred' CV format has been favoured as a way of presenting work from the school of art.

2.2 Advocacy as a gradual process rather than a big launch

Working gradually with user communities using a 'drip feed' approach to promote the repository is likely to give greater results in the long term than one-off launches. It is also important to return to departments for refresher sessions, so as to update staff on any new developments, to feedback on how the repository is being used (e.g. download statistics), and to introduce it to new researchers. Both presentations stressed the benefits of getting someone within each department on board to help sell the project from an early stage (whether this is an administrator, researcher, or head of department), as staff are more likely to listen to someone they know and trust.

Visual media offers one way of publicising a repository once it is fairly established – Jessie Hey and Les Carr both pointed to examples of slide-shows and videos which rotate work from the repository. These can either be downloaded, or can be played on large screens positioned near the entrance of department buildings, offering visitors and prospective students an idea of the type of research that goes on in the university. This

¹ The project ran from 2002-2005. See http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/programme_fair/project_tardis.aspx for more details

type of public display would be particularly effective with the high visual content of an arts repository.²

2.3 Identifying opportunities for advocacy

Firstly, this includes attendance at various committees throughout the University organisational structure. These range from senior management and research committees, through to more functional and discipline-based committees, and then administrative meetings, and, again, each of these audiences might require a different approach (see point 2.4).

New academic staff can be given written information about the repository in their introductory HR packs, as has recently been introduced at Southampton. This starts to associate depositing work with the core administrative processes of the university.

Then there are more informal opportunities for promotion by word of mouth, such as through conversations at artist's exhibitions and shows and conferences.

Certain annual events within an institution's calendar may also offer scope for advocacy – for example UCCA hold a research conference every year (the next one is scheduled for September 2008).

2.4 Understanding the situation and concerns of different user groups

Experience of promoting the repository at Southampton suggests that winning over senior staff can be easier than getting disciplinary groups on board. While the former were generally convinced by the institutional benefits (particularly transparency), there was a bit more opposition from within disciplinary groups. Wendy White's presentation stressed the importance of understanding the reasons for any hostility and opposition – most commonly stemming from the number of different roles people are playing (such as editor as well as author), the laboriousness of metadata input, and IPR and copyright fears. A proven way of overcoming this opposition is to take a personal approach to working through the problems people raise, demonstrating that you fully appreciate their perspective, and using a non-confrontational manner (see 'Quick Wins' section for specific tactics)

Overall, the emphasis should be on a tailored rather than blanket approach – both in selecting what may be of interest to each audience, and in alleviating people's concerns.

2.5 Arts Community in particular

Within the Winchester School of Art at Southampton University (WSA), there have been different levels of engagement with the research repository. Certain groups, including Fine Art, have given a positive response, and have been very engaged with the idea of increasing the audience for their work through open access, but have had various practical problems with actually creating records (all WSA academics have been responsible for depositing their own work for the RAE).

² For more details on repository visualisation, see Les Carr, 'Exciting Times: The Repository Desktop Experience', 29 Oct 2007, <http://repositoryman.blogspot.com/>

This is something that the Kultur project needs to engage with and find solutions for. As well as refining the current eprints metadata for cultural objects, experience of the Soton repository also reinforces the need for practical training as part of advocacy strategies, and the importance of developing a highly user-friendly interface, which can be adapted to suit different user communities/departments.

Discussions also highlighted other practical problems – for example the high level of collaborative projects amongst practitioners pose specific rights problems

2.6 Embedding

Both presentations highlighted the need to find a place for the repository within the existing structures of the university. Some relatively simple ‘quick wins’ for embedding a repository include making e-theses compulsory, and offering a feed-through to staff webpages on departmental websites.

The issue of mandates was discussed, and it was suggested that this was more valuable as a demonstration of institutional commitment rather than a direct means of enforcing staff to deposit their work. With the Kultur project, it was thought that while a mandate may be something to consider at a later point, it would be more helpful to work to a dialogue model at this stage.

Part Three: Suggestions for ‘Quick Wins’

Providing evidence of increased visibility:

- Showing examples of object in repository featuring high on a Google or Google Scholar search (ideally on the first page of search results).
- Offering citations evidence
- Data tools have been built into eprints3, and once the soton repository has upgraded, more detailed analytical data will be available. Existing download stats for the Southampton repository already have potential for promoting the Kultur project, as an artefact from the School of Art has been the most downloaded item (see <http://users.ecs.soton.ac.uk/lac/irs/stats.html>)

Getting the language right

- Be succinct – useful to be able to sum up the project in 1 or 2 sentences (eg, for the TARDIS project this was “one record for many purposes”). Information handouts best kept to one side of paper
- Deciding on right name for repository – branding
- Make sure that the ‘about’ page on the repository (first place many new users will go) is where the user-friendly project blurb goes instead of the default technical/software details – have a separate link to this instead.

Dealing with concerns about IPR

- Have some concrete examples to hand of where clearing copyright is straightforward, and where it is more problematic
- Drawing up Frequently Asked Questions – as handout and for repository website

- Be clear on options for delivering time-based media to protect IPR– eg. whether files can be streamed if requested, presenting clips rather than showing whole work, changing the quality of the material

Part Four: Barriers to success and solutions

Here we focused on factors that we thought would present the biggest obstacles (or ‘showstoppers’) in trying to achieve academic buy-in.

4.1 Aesthetics

Barrier: the visual appearance of the repository fails to engage, to the point where artists/researchers are unwilling for their work to appear in this context.

The role of the demonstrator will be key here – it is important to get the demo right from a visual perspective, but this can only be achieved with feedback from potential users themselves. So it will be an ongoing process of testing out the design and improving it based on the suggestions of practitioners. This process will start with the environmental scan: in addition to the questions asked to determine working practices, we will also ask staff pre-determined questions about the interface design.

Again, the value of having different interfaces was reinforced: as the cultural web exercises demonstrated, individual departmental and college identities are quite strong, and the aesthetics of the repository should be able to reflect this. It will also be important to ensure that the different colleges feel equally represented by ensuring that each has some examples of work in the demo from an early stage.

4.2 Clarity

Barrier: the directions for using the repository, and the point of doing so, are unclear to users.

Directions for depositing work and searching for work in the repository need to be simple and understandable. More broadly, the project team also need to be clear on the vision and aims of the project, and this may involve some quantifying (eg. targets for the range of item types, number of staff and departments represented, and number of records per staff member)

The naming of repository should ideally reflect the vision of the project, and should capture the kind of benefits that are being sold to researchers.

4.3 Time

Barrier: researchers find the process of depositing their work too time consuming

If working practices and processes are researched and mapped out effectively, then we should be able to find the right location for the repository, so that it doesn’t take much time.

Testing out and agreeing on a minimum of essential metadata fields will also help in making the depositing process as time efficient as possible – what are the most useful fields needed to ensure that an object can be successfully searched for and retrieved? And which fields would constitute a ‘recommended core’ to follow on from these?

Embedding: For repository managers as well as users, it can be time saving in the long term to have a repository linked into staff database IT system (eg. LDAP). Useful for added-value services that can be added on at a later stage - for example, for streaming services to other websites.

4.4 IPR

Barrier: creators are unsure whether they have the rights to make material available online, and are also anxious about how their work may be appropriated by others.

Research into IPR and licensing issues will form a major part of the Kultur project. It will be important to be able to answer individual queries about rights as fully as possible, and to demonstrate awareness of IPR problems and solutions specific to each item type and to the conditions in which works were created. Special attention will need to be paid to collaborative works, especially those in performing arts, for which the rights of all involved in a production will have to be cleared.

Conclusion

Many of the threads running through the discussions of this workshop reinforced the importance of taking a tailored approach to advocacy. In order to achieve this, undertaking preparatory research on audience groups before embarking on formal presentations, having a clear vision of the project, and ensuring that this vision can be communicated succinctly, are all important. The ability to translate values into different registers and languages is also key: it is useful to be able to explain how the repository relates to the mission statement of the institution when promoting the project to senior management. Similarly, when engaging different user groups (researchers as creators and as end users, students, library staff, administrators...) selecting the two or three most relevant benefits specific to each may have more of an impact than rehearsing the entire project blurb each time. Responses to opposition should be equally tailored, by dealing with any problems raised on a one-to-one level, and showing an understanding of people's perspectives and concerns. Making user groups aware that their responses are integral to the project, and refining the repository structure and design in light of feedback, should reassure these groups of their stake in the final resource. In the longer term, investigating how people are actually engaging with the repository will also influence the shape of ongoing advocacy activity.