A Self-Evaluation Tool for Documenting Best Practices in Institutional Repositories

Version 1.0 – March, 2014

This document was developed by the Institutional Repositories Best Practices Workgroup of the Boston Library Consortium [BLC]. It is intended to be used as a self-evaluation tool by IR managers allowing them to document the extent to which their institutional repository meets a set of best practice guidelines, identify areas that are lacking, and plan for continuous improvement. It is designed to be administered on a regular basis, typically annually, so that improvement can be tracked and built upon.

In developing this document, the Workgroup used the TRAC Checklist [Trusted Repository Audit Certification - which has been adopted as ISO 16363 (for fee download), but is freely available in its final draft version] - as a template. While some sections have been altered to better meet the needs of the tool, we have included TRAC section numbers to facilitate referencing. Also, since TRAC is designed to accommodate any type of repository, we have added certain topics and issues that we believe are important to any evaluation of an institutional repository.

This document is intended to focus on best practice recommendations at a minimal and fundamental level dealing primarily with governance, infrastructure, staffing and sustainability. As a result, it does not make specific recommendations in a number of areas that continue to emerge as important for the institutional repositories of tomorrow. This includes issues relating to the standard registration of researchers and institutions via mechanisms such as ORCID, integration of altmetrics of various kinds into local IR’s and the relationship between such metrics and evolving methods of assessing research productivity, how best to integrate access to research data, etc. The Workgroup recognizes these are important issues and expects that as this Self-Evaluation Tool evolves requirements and recommendations for these and other important and emerging trends will be identified and added.

The Workgroup also recognizes that no evaluative tool can remain static. We hope, therefore, that as BLC libraries [and others, outside of the BLC] use the tool, they will suggest changes and enhancements that can be integrated into subsequent versions. To do so, please e-mail Susan Stearns, Executive Director of the BLC, at ssstearns@blc.org.

Finally, since resource sharing across the BLC is critical to its mission, this document includes an Appendix that is specifically oriented to the BLC member libraries. The recommendations included there focus on maximizing discoverability and delivery of IR content in both mediated [i.e. by ILL staff] and unmediated [i.e. directly by an end-user] forms. We hope these recommendations will be embraced by BLC libraries and will further serve the information needs of students, faculty and scholars who use BLC collections and libraries.
[Note on completing the Self-Evaluation: Each section below includes an opportunity for you to indicate those capabilities, processes, or functions that are currently IN PLACE; those that are currently LACKING and, based on any that are lacking, your planned NEXT STEPS. It is hoped that by taking such a snapshot of your current environment, you will be able to return to the self-evaluation in the future and be able to judge the progress you have made.]

Name and title of person completing the evaluation:
____________________________________________________________________________________

Institutional repository being evaluated – please provide the URL of the repository and a brief description of its contents as well as any limitations on access, use or re-use of the content:
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Repository platform(s) and version(s): [please indicate whether the repository is maintained on local servers or hosted by the vendor]:
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Date: _____________________

1. Governance and organizational viability: The IR should demonstrate an explicit, tangible, and long-term commitment to compliance with prevailing standards, policies, and practices [TRAC 3.1]

   Governance

   Mission statement/Purpose: reflects a commitment to the long-term retention of, management of, and access to digital information; goals and vision of the repository [TRAC 3.1.1]
BLC Recommendation: The BLC recommends that the IR be considered a core library service that adheres to the TRAC requirement above.

In place:

Lacking:

Next steps:

Organizational structure & staffing

Roles and responsibilities: designated staff with requisite skills and training. Staffing for the repository must be adequate; have the range of requisite skills; has staff development program in place for maintaining expertise [TRAC 3.2.1-3.2.3]

BLC Recommendation: An institutional repository should be managed by the library with staff whose requisite skills are appropriate to local needs and practices. It may be staffed with librarians/support staff and/or outsourced to a vendor under the supervisor of the library. There should be formal job description(s) for staff, written documentation/procedures, and ongoing staff development (including cross-training, succession, etc.).

In place:

Lacking:

Next steps:

2. Accountability & policy framework: Committed to formal, periodic review and assessment to ensure responsiveness to technological developments and evolving requirements [TRAC 3.3.4]

BLC Recommendation: The BLC recommends the library adheres to the TRAC requirement above.

In place:

Lacking:

Next steps:

Defined designated community(ies): documented policies to meet the requirements and service needs of the designated communities [TRAC 3.3.1]
BLC Recommendation: The institutional repository should serve its institution or organization as its designated community as well as any affiliated community(ies). This may include faculty members, researchers, students, employees or/and the general public, depending upon the institution. In order to maximize sharing of IR content across the BLC and beyond, it is recommended that institutions engage in active programs educating their constituencies on rights and licensing issues on an ongoing basis. They should also perform routine self-evaluations and solicit input from user community(ies) in a feedback loop.

In place:
Lacking:
Next steps:

Procedures and policies in place, and mechanisms for their review, update, and development: *include preservation plan, collection policies, succession/contingency plans etc.* [TRAC 3.3.2]

BLC Recommendation: The BLC recommends the library adhere to the TRAC requirement above.

In place:
Lacking:
Next steps:

Written policies that specify the nature of any legal permissions required to preserve digital content over time. A repository’s rights must at least limit the repository’s liability or legal exposure that threatens the repository itself. [TRAC 3.3.3]

BLC Recommendation: The policies and procedures of the institutional repository must comply with current interpretations of U.S. Copyright Law.

In place:
Lacking:
Next steps:

Collection policies/Scope: *policies and procedures of the repository must be complete, written or available in a tangible form, remain current, and must evolve to reflect changes in requirements and practice.* [TRAC 3.3.2]
BLC Recommendation: The libraries’ collection policies should reflect their mission statement and evolve to reflect changes in mission/priorities.

In place:

Lacking:

Next steps:

Committed to transparency and accountability: written documentation and access to content available to stakeholders and designated communities [TRAC 3.3.7]

BLC Recommendation: The BLC recommends that the library adhere to the TRAC requirement above.

In place:

Lacking:

Next steps:

3. Financial sustainability: appropriate, formal succession plan, contingency plans, and/or escrow arrangements in place in case the repository ceases to operate or the governing or funding institution substantially changes its scope [TRAC 3.1.2]

BLC Recommendation: An institutional repository should be funded via the library’s operating budget and not dependent on temporary funding.

In place:

Lacking:

Next steps:

4. Contracts, licenses, & liabilities: contracts or deposit agreements must specify and transfer all necessary preservation rights, and those rights transferred must be documented [TRAC 3.5.2]

   Intellectual property rights: track, act on, and verify rights and restrictions related to the use of the digital objects within the repository. [TRAC 3.5.4]
BLC Recommendation: The BLC recommends that whenever possible the content is made available through as open a license as possible to ensure resource sharing. While some content may need to be protected by original copyright, the library should prefer, when possible, a Creative Commons CC0 no rights reserved license, a GNU general public license or something comparable depending on content type and format.

In place:
Lacking:
Next steps:

5. Digital object management

Ingest: identify properties it will preserve for digital objects [TRAC 4.1.1]; information that needs to be associated with digital material at the time of its deposit [TRAC 4.1.2]; verify the correctness of the data transfer and ingest process [TRAC 4.1.14]; visible, persistent, unique identifiers for all archived objects [TRAC 4.2.5]; repository acquires Representation Information and preservation metadata [TRAC 4.2.8-4.2.9].

BLC Recommendation: The IR should support ingest of content from a variety of sources, e.g. author(s) or designated representative(s) and library staff on behalf of authors.

In place:
Lacking:
Next steps:

Preservation planning: current, sound, and documented preservation strategies in place and demonstrably implemented [TRAC 4.3.1]; preserves the Content Information of archival objects [TRAC 4.4.3]; actively monitors integrity of archival objects [TRAC 4.4.4]; ongoing evaluation of preservation planning, including assessment of effectiveness

BLC Recommendation: The content should be stored and preserved as is through data management and digital preservation, and items should be usable in the future by whatever combination of techniques (such as migration, emulation, etc.) is appropriate given the context of need.

In place:
Lacking:
Next steps:
Access management: documented access policies [TRAC 4.6.4]; communication with designated community(ies) about access policies; enable dissemination of authentic copies of archival digital objects [TRAC 4.6.10]

BLC Recommendation: IR content should be openly accessible to user community(ies) including external users to the maximum extent possible. Please refer to the recommendations in Appendix 1 for specific steps the library should take to ensure effective discovery, access and delivery of IR content.

In place:
Lacking:
Next steps:

6. Technical infrastructure and security: Repository functions on well-supported operating systems and other core infrastructural software [TRAC 5.1.1]

Backup [TRAC 5.1.2]: synchronization of multiple copies of digital objects [TRAC 5.1.4]; mechanism to detect corruptions/losses [TRAC 5.1.5]

BLC Recommendation: The BLC recommends the library utilize scalable backup and restore procedures designed to maintain 24/7 accessibility to the IR content.

In place:
Lacking:
Next steps:

Storage media and/or hardware change [TRAC 5.1.7]

BLC Recommendation: The BLC recommends the library make ongoing technology investments designed to keep abreast of emerging software and hardware advances.

In place:
Lacking:
Next steps:
Security: servers, firewalls, or routers; fire protection and flood detection systems; written disaster preparedness and recovery plan(s), off-site backup [TRAC 5.3]

BLC Recommendation: The BLC recommends the library adhere to the TRAC requirement above and make ongoing technology investments to stay abreast of emerging advances in security, disaster preparedness and recovery.

In place:

Lacking:

Next steps:
Appendix: Recommendations to BLC Libraries on Maximizing Discovery and Delivery of Institutional Repository Content

Sharing of resources of all types is core to the mission of the BLC. As member libraries continue to grow their institutional repositories (IR’s), it is increasingly important that they ensure discoverability of IR resources across a broad spectrum of services. Listed below are specific recommendations for BLC libraries to maximize discovery and delivery of IR content. It is hoped that all BLC member libraries will follow these recommendations.

1. OAI/PMI harvesting of IR metadata - As more and more discovery services integrate IR content through the Open Archives Initiative for Metadata Harvesting (OAI/PMI), it is critical that the library’s IR support such harvesting. Details of this can be found at http://www.openarchives.org/OAI/2.0/openarchivesprotocol.htm

2. Listing of the IR in repository directories – Similarly, the library should ensure that its IR is listed in the authoritative directories of repositories including OpenDOAR - http://www.opendoar.org/ - since this will better ensure that new services are aware of the IR and harvest its content if appropriate.

3. Include your content in Google Scholar – If you use the latest version of Eprints (eprints.org), Digital Commons (digitalcommons.bepress.com), or DSpace (dspace.org) software to host your content, it will be crawled automatically by Google Scholar. If you use an older version of these hosted services, a less common hosting product or a locally maintained server, please read the documentation for Google Scholar at http://scholar.google.com/intl/en-US/scholar/inclusion.html and make sure that your website meets the Google Scholar technical guidelines.

4. Encourage authors to contribute to multiple repositories – Depending on the author’s discipline, there may be subject-specific repositories to which content should also be contributed and/or IR’s from institutional affiliations of co-authors. Encourage your authors to contribute their content as widely and openly as possible.

5. Upload your metadata to WorldCat – As more and more libraries utilize WorldCat as their primary discovery service for resources outside the library, be sure to upload the IR metadata for your digital collections into WorldCat. See - http://www.oclc.org/en-US/digital-gateway.html for details.

6. Register your IR with other discovery services – Primo Central makes available a registration service for any IR [do not need to be a Primo customer]. See http://dc02vg0047nr.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com:8080/IRWizard/wizard.html for details. This ensures that any library using Primo will have access to your IR content. Other discovery services may offer this service in the future.
7. Ensure your local IR content is easily discoverable within your institution – While this may sound obvious, it is critical that your own library discovery service, whether a traditional ILS catalog or a next generation discovery service, make clear how IR content can be discovered. Integrating the content into a single index is typically preferred by most users, but if this is not feasible, at least ensure that access to a search of the local IR is obvious as part of the online catalog offering.

[Note: The BLC is also investigating ways in which all of the member libraries’ institutional repositories can be made available through Rapid ILL which is used increasing by members for more and more mediated and unmediated resource sharing. The Executive Director will provide details to the members as they become available.]

The BLC and its Board of Directors wishes to thank the following members of the IR Best Practices Work Group for their diligent work in creation of this document:

- Elaine Martin, University of Massachusetts Medical Library
- Ann Devenish, Marine Biology Laboratory/Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute
- David Lowe, University of Connecticut
- Emily Toner, Boston College
- Vika Zafrin, Boston University
- Ray Schmidt, Wellesley College
- Alix Quan, Massachusetts State Library.