LessonsLearned

DSpace Lessons Learned

A number of universities are currently developing DSpace services. We've polled them for tips to share with other DSpace teams.
Communications

- DSpace Policies need clear explanations and examples.
- Many sites stress the importance of educating faculty about why DSpace is important. Faculty customs and culture need to change.

Planning Phase

- It's important to do business and operational planning in parallel with your technical installation effort.
- Be flexible in defining your service model - it may take several iterations, and you'll revisit some decisions during the implementation phase.
- The rhythm of the academic calendar influences the project's progress enormously.
- Some institutions quickly exceeded their initial storage. More content was submitted, larger files, etc. Keep this in mind when planning for capacity.

Recruiting Early Adopter/Beta Communities

- There's a long process to launch a new community in DSpace.
- There's no such thing as too much publicity.
- A Community's policies are set at the highest level of the community. For example, the chair of an academic department would most likely drive decisions about content acceptance in the department's DSpace community.
- The concept of open access can be a tough sell. Exposure for their content and digital preservation are easier to sell to faculty.
- The DSpace team can take a personal approach to finding pilot projects. Go out to talk with faculty groups, individual faculty members.
- Criteria for selecting early adopter communities change as you go along. As you build communities, the size of collection and diversity of formats become more important than at the start.
- Library heads of collections are most helpful in recruiting early adopter participants.
- Each year, survey your content communities to see who's still there, who's in charge of submitting content, and so on. This keeps your records clean and provides a way to get back in touch with all communities annually. Community staff change often.

Top Selling Points for Signing up Early Adopters

- Persistent identifiers for content
- Uniform presence for the university's research
- Community and author control
- The self-archiving clause from key publishers. Emphasize this to faculty who are concerned about the first publication clause in publishing contracts.

Library and Staffing Issues

- Communicate the DSpace project's development and progress to Library staff along the way to generate awareness and acceptance.
- Cross-functional teams among library staff are very important for business planning and proved invaluable for analyzing staffing impact.
- Integrate DSpace into all corners of the library's daily operations.
- Stress the importance of managing through uncertainty.
- Professional development for library staff is critical.
- Many sites found that the Library's research focus helped to establish the library as an active participant in faculty members' research processes.

Getting Content Submitted

- Faculty generally don't submit their own content - dept staff, web editors, or administrative staff do.
- Consider launching new communities in bi-annual releases in fall and spring. This provides motivation to finish new communities and publicity. It also sets expectations about when new content and new communities will appear.
- Submitters need more training in entering metadata properly.
- Once faculty and staff are trained to submit content, their metadata is surprisingly rich. But there are some problems with the submissions, including lack of authority control.
- Authority control is desperately needed for metadata - for example, using dropdown menus with author names, dept. names, degrees offered, etc.
- If you find that faculty are having trouble submitting content, you might try training grad students in submitting content, dealing with metadata, finding content to upload, etc.

Marketing a DSpace Service

- A DSpace project manager suggest that in talking with faculty members ... "Try to steer clear of the "open access" debate ... and instead try to refer to our repository as a 'digital archive.' I talk more about preservation of digital materials, with access being a nice side benefit, because I think that's a bigger draw, and more and more people are experiencing the problem of not being able to open their digital files."
- Ongoing communication on campus is vital. Go back to communities often, use newsletters, personal follow up, and phone calls to answer questions, remind community liaison to get new content added to DSpace.
- Timing is critical. Summer is a great time to market your service, if faculty are around. Also, summer is a good time for staff to learn something new. During the beginning and end of the semester, your message can be lost.
- Keep in close contact with existing communities. DSpace staff at one institution take turns contacting communities to post content and move the project forward. Having several team members contact the community avoids the feeling of nagging your community liaisons.
- Use success stories, quotations from faculty, and time lines for how long it takes to start a community to encourage other communities to get going.
- Work with the university's Grants Office to reach faculty who need to demonstrate in grant proposals how their work will be distributed and preserved.
- Invest your time and money in getting a community going - jump-start a successful service as a community test case.
- Different disciplines think differently, and have different content needs. Address them specifically.
- Educate faculty about issues of digital scholarship, preservation, etc. This makes it much easier to sell them on DSpace.
- Easy sells - that is, showing faculty how easy it is to submit and find content.
- The persistent identifier for content is the single best selling point for DSpace when talking with faculty.
- Word-of-mouth among faculty and end-users is invaluable. When content contributors and users start using DSpace, word can spread quickly around your institution.

Success doesn't always follow immediately after you publish an article, make a presentation, persuade a faculty member to preserve his/her work. Your marketing efforts pay off eventually, even if it doesn't feel that way immediately.

Please share your experiences as well – log in to the wiki site and click the Edit link at the bottom of this page to add your lessons learned.