Short Tour: VIVO in an information ecosystem

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This page is **part 4** of a short, self-paced tour introducing VIVO for use in an interactive workshop or online.

VIVO in an information ecosystem

In addition to identifying data sources for a VIVO and finding the common identifiers to link them together it's also important to think about VIVO as one piece of a larger ecosystem, both locally and when you are ready to start sharing VIVO data out to the world.

VIVO is not all things to all people ...

It's important with any project, especially in the realm of information technology, to be clear with yourself and your colleagues and managers what a new system will not provide in terms of features – to manage expectations, in other words.

VIVO works best as a complement to other systems that handle administrative functions such as personnel or grants management, annual effort and productivity reporting, or operational websites for facilities and services. Because it's been designed to optimize the sharing of data, not just as web pages but by computer request, VIVO is not a good solution for storing private data, and certainly not any information that is confidential or needs to be secure.

Typical pairings with VIVO

Most VIVO installations at larger institutions handle authentication via LDAP, Shibboleth, CAS, or locally-developed systems.

Many VIVO institutions have developed separate utilities for data ingest and updating, or have adapted tools such as the VIVO Harvester or Karma.

Bibliographic metadata on researcher publications remains a big challenge in part because journals and authors are not well identified or disambiguated in many current information systems or on CVs. While national-level systems such as PubMed are improving in that regard by assigning identifiers and including affiliation information on more authors, and large commercial vendors offer value-added disambiguation within the scope of their disciplinary coverage, it may be helpful to manage publication data in a purpose-built system designed to support disambiguation and author claiming (or disclaiming) of publications, such as Symplectic Elements.

As the ORCID movement continues to gain traction and more journal publishers request ORCIDs through their article submission interfaces and/or national-level funding agencies require or at least track researcher ORCIDs, this problem should diminish but will likely never go away, especially in the humanities where there are many smaller publishers and new types of publications.

VIVO beyond one institution

While some VIVO adopters have had a network model in mind from the start, such as the University of Colorado with its multiple geographically distributed campuses and many nearby federal labs, VIVO often starts out with a focus on the home institution.

The vivosearch.org site is intended to awaken more people to the potential of using VIVO data for discovery and networking across institutions, as originally envisioned by the 2009 National Institutes of Health request for applications. By harvesting data from several VIVOs and other software systems using the VIVO ontology into a common search index, users can discover expertise and activities across all the participating universities. This is just a first step toward developing services targeted by region, by discipline, by consortium, or for the full research networking community.

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next: VIVO as data