

Chapter 1 - Introducing Islandora

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What is Islandora?

Islandora is an **open-source** software framework designed to help institutions, organizations and their audiences collaboratively manage, and discover digital assets using a best-practices framework. Islandora was originally developed by the University of Prince Edward Island's Robertson Library in 2006. Islandora is now implemented and contributed to by an ever-growing international community.

Built on a base of [Drupal](#), [Fedora](#), and [Solr](#), Islandora releases *solution packs* which empower users to work with data types (such as image, video, and pdf) and knowledge domains (such as Chemistry and the Digital Humanities). Solution packs also often provide integration with additional viewers, editors, and data processing applications.

Islandora leverages both the expertise of PHP/Java/Python developers, librarians and other information-professionals. Islandora is committed to utilizing open standards for data description and access, as well as high-standards for data stewardship and security over time. Islandora makes it possible to create, edit, discover, view, and manage digital assets. The system strives to strike a balance between extensibility and usability, by providing out-of-the-box support for collections, while maintaining an architecture that lends itself to customization to other software and workflows. The heart of Islandora's data stewardship model is Fedora - if you are a Fedora user, you are still capable of accessing and manipulating objects in Islandora's underlying Fedora as you would in any Fedora installation. Special consideration for Fedora users is taken in [Chapter 7 - Customizing Islandora](#).

More information about Islandora's core technologies is provided in this introductory chapter.

Who Uses Islandora?

A list of current installations of Islandora is available at <http://islandora.ca/islandora-installations>.

Islandora also represents a community-based approach to integrating robust **open source** software projects together. The Islandora community is comprised of [implementers](#), [developers](#), [service companies](#), and users working as transparently as possible toward better documentation and a better, always open-source, code base. [Membership](#) formalizes involvement in the community and community discussion is always active on the [developer](#) and [administrator/users](#) Google listservs!

Why Would I Use Islandora?

Islandora addresses the following needs:

Stewardship: Islandora emerges out of an awareness of the massive digitization of data, and the creation of born-digital materials that require long-term stewardship, and the current difficulties inherent in providing this stewardship. As software continues to grow and evolve, Islandora stores important data assets securely and in a manner that preserves the accessibility and understanding of digital assets.

Collaboration: Increasingly, knowledge is created and maintained online via active communities of contributors who collaboratively create, edit, review, and catalog information assets. Islandora emerges out of the need for tools that facilitate collaboration and community surrounding information in a digital age.

Access: While the production of information has and continues to increase exponentially, this information is often difficult to access because it is not cataloged and stored in a way that optimizes retrieval. For that reason, Islandora is committed to open standards for information sharing and transferring. Moreover, Islandora attempts to increase the agency of information specialists, researchers, and librarians, by creating tools that allow for better data management and knowledge creation. Finally, Islandora is engaged with configurable security for data assets, allowing for granular control of access to data.

Flexibility: Unlike closed or proprietary software solutions, Islandora code is transparent - the system's premise is that institutions will have different reasons for using Islandora, and that their data and workflows will be different. For that reason, Islandora is built to be modified and extended. To learn more about developing Islandora, see the chapter discussing the [Islandora Community \(Developing Islandora\)](#).

Islandora sites are not simple websites! By utilizing Fedora as its repository back-end, sites running Islandora provide the security and sustainability of a more flexible and complex system than what is governed in a series of HTML pages or a regular relational database.

Islandora Core Technologies

Islandora's core technologies are [FedoraCommons](#) repository software, [Drupal](#), and [Solr](#). FedoraCommons Repository Software lends itself to data stewardship via a unique content and relationship modeling framework that preserves the integrity of collections and can be modified to manage any digital asset. This means that Fedora collections are uniquely persistent, no matter what new software lurks around the corner. In the Islandora system, Drupal acts as an interaction layer atop Fedora, enabling users to discover, view, and manage Fedora objects. Drupal is a very popular, module-based system that understands Islandora as a suite of modules. Through Drupal, Islandora users can create content together, and use social-networking to enrich Fedora content.

Solr represents an emerging, and important third application used in Islandora – bringing lightning-fast searching of the Fedora database, including full-text searching of any attached documents. Solr also allows for results to be refined, using faceting techniques to engage users in a process of discovery and exploration.

What are Solution Packs?

Islandora's Solution Packs provide the framework for the ingestion, organization, and display of digital assets in a Fedora repository through a front end Drupal web interface. They are the meat of the Drupal-Islandora-Fedora sandwich. Solution Packs reflect best-practice workflows emerging as a result of the community's experience dealing with particular types of data, such as large-format images, maps, books, magazines, and individual research articles.

Solution packs combine pre-chosen **Content Models**, **Metadata Forms**, and Viewers based on the experience of the Islandora community. Solution packs may be customized to meet the needs of your collection and institution, or used out of the box to create collections. More information about installing and using Islandora Solution Packs is provided later on in this guide. Solution Packs often require additional applications to be installed and configured. An overview of common dependencies is provided in the Dependencies section of [Chapter 5 - Islandora Modules](#).

Solution Packs

- [Audio Solution Pack](#)
- [Basic Image Solution Pack](#)
- [Book Solution Pack](#)
- [Core Collection Solution Pack](#)
- [Compound Solution Pack](#)
- [Large Image Solution Pack](#)
- [Newspaper Solution Pack](#)
- [PDF Solution Pack](#)
- [Video Solution Pack](#)
- [Web Archive Solution Pack](#)

The Solution Packs for the latest Islandora release are always available from the [Release and Downloads](#) page in Islandora's online documentation. What you will find here are links to the GitHub origins for each module.