

Title of Proposal

Inter-unit collaboration in developing repository services – the case of E-thesis at the University of Helsinki

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Session Type

- 24x7

Abstract

University of Helsinki runs a relatively complex DSpace-based E-thesis service. The service utilizes workflows and enables submission of Master's and Bachelor Theses for review, the review process of the theses as well as storing and publishing of the theses.

During the past five years, the E-thesis service has been developed in ever closer cooperation between the University Library and the Student Administration. During that period about 10000 Theses have been submitted, evaluated and stored using the system.

We argue that this collaboration has been very beneficial, even necessary for the successful development of the service to meet the demands of the faculties, the administration and the library. The close involvement of the student services means that the development has been able to tap into the user feedback and networks available in the administration.

From a broader perspective, our experience shows the benefits of inter-unit or inter-organizational collaboration in developing and maintaining repository services. There are many types of resources and expertise, which can be combined in a fruitful way in the collaborative approach.

Conference Themes

- Understanding user needs and user experience
- Supporting open scholarship and cultural heritage

Keywords

Digital theses, inter-unit collaboration, service development, feedback

Audience

The presentation could be of interest for participants involved in digital theses as well as participants, who are interested in how different types of expertise and methods can be utilized and combined in developing services based on repositories. The audience could include repository managers, librarians, university administration etc.

Background

Digital theses and dissertations are one of the traditional areas of repository services. Our submission discusses cooperative approach in developing a relatively complex Dspace-based service and shows how user needs can be met when the service is developed in cooperation by organizational units with different types of expertise.

Presentation content

We will briefly tell the audience about what the E-thesis service does and how. The DSpace-based service utilizes workflows and enables submission of Master's and Bachelor Theses for review, the review process of the Theses as well as storing and publishing of the Theses. In addition, the repository communicates with a plagiarism detection system and a linked open data system. Also, different user roles will be covered. The technical features of the system won't be covered in detail.

The organizational background will be briefly covered. As the University is a multidisciplinary university with 12 faculties, there are varying expectations and demands for a system that performs tasks, which are central to the graduation of students. Initially the development of the current system progressed one faculty at the time, as the implementation has involved customization of the system as well as training of the staff in the student administration.

We will briefly tell how the collaboration in developing the system has evolved in the past five years. As the Library has limited resources and as there has been strong demand from the faculties and administration to expand and develop the service further, during the past five years the E-thesis service has been developed in an ever closer cooperation between the University Library and the Student Administration. During the period about 10 000 Theses have been submitted, evaluated and stored using the system.

We will describe the working methods of the collaboration. The collaboration involves weekly meetings of the developing team, development sprints by the technical personnel, handling the user questions and cases, training of the users, instructing the users, communication with the student administration of each faculty etc. We hope this part could be especially interesting as we combine many types of working methods in our collaboration.

We argue that this cooperation has been a fruitful method in developing the system. The library brings its expertise in the software, in metadata and in publishing and storing. The student administration has insight knowledge of the processes related to the submitting, reviewing and approving of the Master's Theses. The close involvement of the Student Services means that the development has been able to tap into the feedback and networks available in the administration. The cooperation has been very beneficial, even necessary for the service and for the successful development of the service to manage processes, which are central to completing studies in the University.

Furthermore, there is evidence that different types of users, the students, the teachers and the administrative staff, see the benefits of the digital service in submitting and evaluating the theses. In short, the digital submitting and reviewing process is easy for the reviewers and the students.

From a broader perspective, our case is an example of how other types of organizations than libraries or IT departments can be involved in developing repository services. Our case shows the benefits of inter-unit collaboration in developing and maintaining repository services. Besides the pooling of scarce technical resources, there are other types of resources, which can be combined in a fruitful way.

Repository System

- Not Applicable (even though we work with DSpace)

Conclusion

It can be highly effective and beneficial to develop repository services among partners, who can bring in different types of expertise in to the cooperation. It is especially valuable if the cooperation bring the service closer to the actual users.

References

Joonas Kesäniemi: It's a workflow engine. It's working with linked data. It's repository! – Supporting electronic thesis related processes in University of Helsinki library. Presentation at Open Repositories 2014, Helsinki, Finland, June 9-13, 2014. DSpace Interest Group Presentations. <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe2014070432167>