RAD-UNAM: Genesis and evolution of a repository administrators group

Gunnar Wolf (IIEc-UNAM)
Pablo Miranda (FFyL-UNAM)

Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas UNAM
Red de Acervos Digitales UNAM (RAD-UNAM)

Open Repositories 2013
Repositories in Latin America

- Region very underrepresented in this community
- Not meaning it is a region lacking activity
  - Not relatively to its tech development status, at least
- But, oh, it’s so lonely here in Canada...
  - This delegate is, to the best of his knowledge, the only Latin American in OR2013
Repositories in Latin America

**Figura:** Proportion of repositories by continent (OpenDOAR, 2013-07-09)

*Note:* Not accurately represented. Mexico is part of North America; Central America is *both* part of Other *and* of the Caribbean (?).
Repositories in Latin America

- We can suppose $\approx 10\%$ OpenDOAR repositories exist in Latin America
- Some important regional projects do exist — Just off the top of my head...
  - SciELO: Scientific Electronic Library Online
  - Redalyc: Red de Revistas Científicas de América Latina y el Caribe, España y Portugal
  - LA Referencia (RedClara): Red Federada de Repositorios Institucionales de Publicaciones Científicas
  - ...
- But has very low connectivity/insertion in the English-speaking repositories community
  - Why? It’s not because of inactivity (i.e. BIREDIAL)
  - Ongoing work might bring us closer (i.e. PKP Scholarly Publishing Conference 2013 in UNAM, August 2013)
Goal of this talk

- We believe there are common cultural traits in our region of the world
- I will present the experience (so far) in Mexico’s largest university on building a federation of institutional repositories
What is UNAM?

- Largest university in Mexico, among the largest in the world
  - 300,000 students, 35,000 academics
- Publicly funded/owned
  - Academics are State employees
- *Both* a strong vertical hierarchy and organic, bottom-up organization
  - *To some extent*, a federation of faculties, research institutes and academic-administrative units
  - Natural due to its size (or not? → IPN)
Specialization and lack of specialization

- Many of our institutes and faculties are #1 in the country in its area of knowledge
  - But... Are repositories part of said area?
- Lack of specialized people in technical, operative areas
  - Lack of funding → Young academics with some computer intuition
  - Often even interns hired on short terms to keep things just working
Cultural ossification

- It’s often hard *anywhere* to get people to accept Open Access licensing for their work
  - We believe several factors make it harsher in the UNAM context
- Average professor age is 46 years old (several >90 year old active),
  - Not normally balanced (“lumping” up)
  - Partly due to very liberal hiring in the 1970s-1980s
  - And difficulty of opening new hiring processes since the 1990s
Cultural ossification

- Anachronic evaluation mechanisms $\rightsquigarrow$ opposition to OA repositories
  - Until recently, formal recognition denied to non-print publishing
  - Academics oppose(d?) OA because they believe their ratings will be lowered by higher exposure
- This is all changing... But some concepts have got ossified and are hard to challenge
  - UNAM finally has a (weak) institutional mandate for Open Access!
Regarding repositories...

- Faculty members in different areas do request repositories to be set up
  - Often only publication dumps are requested (but sometimes proper repositories)
- Many ad-hoc, home-brewn systems
  - Sometimes require logging in (even if for free)
  - Very seldom exposing metadata in a standard format
  - Often leads to hiding the information rather than making it available
What is RAD-UNAM

- *Red de Acervos Digitales* — Network of Digital Collections
- Born back in 2005
  - Research project with *some* institutional backing
  - Inescapable *Organizational change*
  - Became a project pushed by four independent researchers in different areas
- Many of the current members joined ≈ 2010
What is RAD-UNAM — Formal group objectives

1. Increasing visibility of UNAM’s digital collections, aiming to promote its discovery through external search engines
2. Offering a digital infrastructure to the University’s areas, helping storage, administration and dissemination of their digital resources
3. Helping digital collections’ creators to improve the utility, functionality and applicability of their collections through the creation of tools (such as data mining, visualization and others)
4. Proposing metrics to assist the evaluation authorities on the relevance for UNAM of acknowledging the academic work invested in creating high quality digital collections

http://eprints.rclis.org/15474/ (Galina, Giménez, Chávez 2011)
What is RAD-UNAM — Boiling down to...

- 9 active repositories
  - 8 DSpace, 1 EPrints instances
- Encompassing research institutes, schools/faculties, administrative areas
- Providing *group-wide* support for repositories
  - For the *various disciplines* involved
  - For the *different phases* of a repository
- Technologically, RAD is a harvester that collects metadata from the nine repositories
  - SOLR-based
Repository specialization

- Compared to what I have seen during OR2013, we have very simple repositories
- All have the “standard” academic publications
  - Books, reports, articles, theses, etc.
- But some have more specialized content
- Each has very different policies, target population, main deposit mechanism...

Some examples follow
2. Archivo fotográfico "Mexico Indígena"

Community home page


Las imágenes muestran estilos de vida y perfiles físicos y étnicos de individuos de diferentes antecedentes e identidades, que carecían de un registro documental. Son, por consiguiente, piezas de identidad, testimonio y memoria histórica. Estos testimonios son, sin duda, un legado de las últimas décadas del siglo XX e inicios del XXI.
Instituto de Biología — Irekani
Instituto de Biología — Minero

556,395 ejemplares encontrados.

1. *Echinocampus zubedakhaname Nasir y Diaz, 1968* [UNAM CDHE HE1238]
   - Localidad: Animales, gusanos planos
   - Ubicación: Animales, Platyhelminthes, Trematitis, Echinostomátidos, Echinocampúes, México, Yucatán, Celestún, Celestún
   - Autor: Joaquín Yunes Vargas • 1968 • 0

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   - Ubicación: Animales, Platyhelminthes, Trematitis, Echinostomátidos, Echinocampúes, México, Yucatán, Celestún, Celestún
   - Autor: Guillermo Salgado Mahiash • 1987 • 12
RAD as a working group

- Self-governing, shared knowledge administration group
  - Two semi-formal roles — Technical and academic coordinators
- Each repository’s team (often one or two person strong) lacks formation in many key areas
  - System administrators and programmers vs. archivists and librarians
  - Interested researchers not into technical stuff
  - How to “sell” our efforts as worthy to the specialized search engines?
Current main tasks for RAD

- Welcome and steer new repositories, avoiding past mistakes
  - Importance on the proper use of metadata
  - Stable, updatable technological base
  - Aiding in installation, schema creation, base customization
  - Insist on the *requirement* to have a formal responsible person/team!

- Give visibility to our work (mainly inside our own institution!)
  - Participation promoting Open Access in varied academic forums
  - Much of the last year’s work: Talk to high-level directives to try and get formal incorporation
Formal incorporation — Yay!

- Currently incorporating as a node of newly formed CCUD — Coordinación de Colecciones Universitarias Digitales
- Will help ensure repository survival beyond individuals’ interest
  - . . . Or political changes
- Presents a more easily identifiable contact point for outside queries
CCUD breadth beyond RAD-UNAM

Figura: Expected breadth of the CCUD platform
Already ongoing cooperation

- Individuals in RAD-UNAM have been very active and outgoing for almost a decade
- Naturally, we *have already* become an advisory contact point
- Besides intra-UNAM, we have worked together with other entities, including:
  - UCR
  - UDUAL
  - INAH
  - ...?
Wrapping up...

1. Why are our regions of the world so separated? How can they be brought closer together?
2. Not a unique work — Illustrating the needs of a specific academic community
   - Of unusual scale and –somewhat– complexity
   - Example of knowledge distribution and repository federation
3. Minimal showcase of work being done in our region
Thanks!

- Gunnar Wolf <gwolf@gwolf.org>, Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas, UNAM
- Pablo Miranda <pablomirandaquevedo@gmail.com>, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, UNAM
- http://rad.unam.mx/