Challenges for the E-LIS team

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structure

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- Strengths
- Weaknesses in the environment
- Weaknesses in E-LIS itself

Introduction

commiserations

- Imma Subirats-Coll is ill.
- So I have been asked yesterday, at 19:30 to take her place.
- Blame Jose Manuel Barrueco Cruz for making the suggestion.
- I have a lot to say, but I don't have the time to prepare slides. These are the fruit of a night of a lot of wine but little sleep.

health warning

- What I say here is mainly opinion.
- I have not had the time to check facts, so some facts here may be wrong.
- But I am sure that the overall direction of what I have to say is right.

who me?

- Creator of RePEc
- Close friend of the creator of E-LIS, Antonella De Robbio.
- Creator of the rclis clone of RePEc, but on which I have not spent enough efforts.
- Maintainer lot of digital services.
- Currently I work on an interdisciplinary author registration service.

strengths

discipline based approach

- It is much more effective than the institutional repository approach at getting hardcore academic papers.
- Institutional repositories are as attractive as station toilets.
- Institutional mandates are useless. They are based on a vision of running an academic institution the way that Stalin wanted to run the Soviet economy.

brand recognition

- E-LIS brand has some recognition. It is a good brand since it is not perceived to be associated with a particular LIS academic department.
- That's one of the problems of DLIST.

weak competition

- DLIST has a weaker collection in terms of numbers.
- Last time I looked at it the site did not make a good impression.
- It does not look likely that another entrant will come to compete with E-LIS.

size

- My girlfriends console me that size does not matter.
- But it does for E-LIS.
- As long as we stay ahead of the size game we have an advantage over DLIST.

some quality

- The best research work in generally is conducted in the USA.
  - The leading journal is JASIST.
  - The leading conference is the ASIST conference.
- Thanks to Norm Mederios and Thomas Krichel, we have almost all papers from the last two years of the conference.
- ASIST did not cooperate and its CEO was not aware of our efforts.

weaknesses in the environment

free access hypocrisy

- Libraries claim to be about free access to information.
- But what many of them really mean is that funds should be given to libraries to purchase information which then is given away for free.
- I have complained about this in a veiled form on JESSE.
- Klaus Graf does a punchier job.

the myth of industry

- People tend to perceive digital libraries as products produced.
- The "I created it, I control access to it" idea is bad. It is best to disseminate widely.
- Open access digital libraries should be conceived like advertising services.
- Collaboration from people who need to advertise themselves can be levied.

digital information illiteracy

- Most current librarians are affected by this problem
  - no computer programming skills
  - no system administration skills
  - no idea about relevant protocols such
    - UTF-8
    - XHTML
    - OAI-PMH

a far reaching problem

- Digital information illiteracy means that librarians can report on what others are doing.
- But they have to find support from digitally literate people. These are rare and usually busy on many fronts.
- The lack of transparency of computing makes it hard for the illiterate to get anything done.

worship of idols

- Lack of knowledge leads people to believe in idols.
- An example is OAI-PMH.
  - We need information that is organized in a stable way.
  - We need information that is freely available.
  - We need quality information.
  - OAI-PMH is a nice plus, but not essential.

analytical reasoning inability

- Digital information illiteracy is usually accompanied by an inability to decompose a problem into bits and pieces, to be solved one-by-one.
- The digitally illiterate will say: "It does not work". But (s)he can not say what precisely does not work.

weaknesses in E-LIS itself

a bit of history

- Antonella De Robbio started E-LIS.
- She convinced CILEA, a Northern Italian research community to sponsor the system.
- It occupies a shared server. That server runs Eprints version 2. It is rumored to run mySQL version 3.

lack of digitally literate

- In the team that maintain E-LIS only
  - Josep Manuel Rodríguez i Gairín
  - Jose Manuel Barrueco Cruz
  - Thomas Krichel
  - Zeno Tajoli

  are fully digitally literate and only the Zeno has access to the server.
- Zeno and Thomas are active.
- This is not enough.

Zeno Tajoli

- Zeno maintains the E-LIS server. He is the only person known to have access to the server.
- CILEA have given Zeno 100 hours a year or so to work on E-LIS. Since he is digitally literate he has tons of stuff to do.
- Support is not sufficient.

Thomas Krichel

- Thomas runs the mailing lists
  - elis-editors
  - elis-administrators
  - elis-technicians
- Runs the elisdoc.rclis.org server
- Runs the DNS for rclis.

Extreme bottleneck

- Everybody agrees that we have to
  - upgrade to Eprints 3
  - get a separate machine
- CILEA promised a machine years ago, apparently it has been purchased but not installed.
- Even if we get a new machine, the indication from CILEA is that access will be very limited.

Thomas' proposal

- Thomas has proposed to fund the conversion to Eprints 3, done in Russia, through funds that he has.
- But he has no access to the data
  - no logs
  - no database tables
  - no full-texts
- CILEA refuse access.

the 'for sale' sign

- We need a new hosting institution, with a more liberal access regime.
- Thomas would be willing to sysadmin.
- This will allow for a volunteer team to maintain the system.
- Auxiliary services could be provided.
- Combining E-LIS with an author registration service would be a particularly attractive proposal.

some bad metadata

- The metadata get a 'satisfacit', but it is not good.
- A biting problem is the non-respect of the agreed separation for abstracts in different languages.
- Bad character data (confusion between bytes and chars) has also been reported, but Thomas did not see it.

constitution

- An E-LIS constitution was set up.
- Initially drafted by Jose Manuel Barrueco Cruz and Imma Subirats Coll, it was substantially modified by Thomas Krichel.
- He added a substantive branch, separate from the country branch, to cope for example separately with JASIS or other initiatives.
- Then he did no work on this branch.

editor quality

- It is rumored that country editors don't get the metadata right.
- The idea has been to put up continental editors to oversee the country editors.
- Thomas is skeptic, but has not been privy to the process.

professional communication

- Thomas found that the communication style on the editors list to be lacking in professionalism.
- When he complained, Imma suggested to leave the list. He did.
- Bad editors drive out the good ones.
- Bad editors should leave.

quality documents

- It is vital to get top quality documents. People want to be depositing in an archive where quality documents are and where quality authors deposit.
- Just waiting for authors is likely to attract bad authors, which will discourage good authors.

negative spiral

- The negative spiral between bad editors, bad documents, bad authors is not a big risk because of the multi-lingual & international nature of the project.
- But the multilingual nature may also be a deterrent to top English-writing authors.

conclusions

- Thomas, with many other pressures is thinking about retiring.
- He will have to make a decision soon.

http://openlib.org/home/krichel

Thank you for your attention!