University-based Institutional Repositories: The Future of Academic Libraries in Thailand

Wachiraporn Klungthanaboon
Humanities Advanced Technology and Information Institute (HATII), University of Glasgow, 11 University Gardens, Glasgow G12 8QQ. Email: w.klungthanaboon.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Abstract
The paper outlines ongoing PhD research whilst aiming to discuss the impact of Open Access and institutional repositories within Thai universities: by 1) providing information on OA support from research councils; 2) explaining current IR developments in National Research Universities; 3) considering challenges being faced by academic libraries maintaining institution repositories, and 4) research findings to date suggesting solutions. Thai academic libraries have the responsibility for implementation and management of institutional repositories (IRs). The purpose being to collect, disseminate and preserve academic works generated by university members. The management of IR projects is problematic due to a lack of understanding of copyright and the lack of senior administration mandate policies, resulting in low content contribution. Libraries are under pressure to serve changing information behaviour in OA movement and to effectively implement IRs. This PhD study proposes changes to enhance effectiveness of IRs based upon data produced from interviews with stakeholder groups in Thailand.

Keywords: Institutional repositories; Thailand; Academic libraries.

Introduction
The paper outlines ongoing PhD research discussing the impact of Open Access (OA) and institutional repositories (IRs) within Thai universities: by 1) providing information on OA support from research councils; 2) explaining current IR developments in National Research Universities (NRUs); 3) considering challenges faced by academic libraries maintaining IRs, and 4) research findings to date suggesting solutions. Challenging changes to scholarly communities are introduced. The public realizes the significance of available and accessible research publications to build new knowledge upon research outputs. Several countries research councils advocate OA by announcing OA policies (SHERPA/JULIET 2013). Journal publishers employ a business model, "author-pay model", to sustain business. Researchers must follow OA policy, institutional policies, and journal publishers’ policies in terms of research output publishing and sharing. These changes draw the attention of university administrators to the management of research output generated by the university members.

As an OA strategy IRs are being implemented in a number of academic institutions to reduce problems related to library budgets, serials subscription costs, current publishing paradigm, institutional intellectual assets, and restricted accessibility of research publications (Cullen and Chawner 2010; Anderson 2004; Crow 2002). In Thailand, the NRUs have implemented IRs, mostly initiated through academic libraries. However, it seems that academic libraries encounter difficulties in the participation and awareness of university members and the support from key stakeholders. Consequently, the holistic views towards IRs in Thailand should be explored as a ground to propose potential change solutions.

Methodology
This qualitative research aims to expand the holistic views of stakeholders towards the roles of university-based IRs in research output management in Thailand, based upon Grounded Theory. Face-to-face interviews were used to gather perspectives of different groups of stakeholders including faculty members and academic publishers amongst others. For this paper initial findings will be presented and discussed in the context of academic libraries in Thailand.

The Open Access Support from Research Councils
Research Councils in Thailand, especially National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT) and National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA) via Science and Technology Knowledge Services (STKS), recognise the OA benefits and advocate OA. Understanding on the ownership of funded research outputs is more refined. The Secretary of NRCT (2012) states, government-funded research reports in Thailand should be freely and publicly accessible unless content indicates otherwise (e.g. instances of security sensitivity).

NRCT initiated the “Thailand National Research Repository (TNRR)” project as a national research portal through collaboration with research councils and universities. The work deposition of TNRR is decentralized. Instead of sending printed research reports with CD-ROM to the funders, funded researchers inform the funders which IRs their final research reports are deposited. TNRR use OAI-PMH to collect metadata of digital full text deposited in university-based IRs, thus, accelerating IR implementation and populating the IR content as the mandate policy is in place.

Additionally STKS (2013) organized academic conference on “Information for Research in OA Era” to promote an OA understanding. This increases OA and IRs awareness in Thai scholarly community.

The Current State of Institutional Repositories in National Research Universities

Since 2005, Thai universities have implemented IRs. Yoowang (2012) noted 11 IRs were established in state and private universities. IRs services aim to collect and promote dissemination of institutional scholarly publications. DSpace software was used to develop these university-based IRs. The IRs content includes theses, technical articles, research articles, and research reports. However, my research focuses on IRs in three NRUs which are at different stages and have different scope of collection in detail. All of them employ mandate policy to acquire theses from postgraduates, whereas, they encourage faculty members and researchers to deposit research publications. Like other countries, academic libraries face low content contribution from faculty members due to concerns based around copyright, ownership and workload.

All IRs at these NRUs have collaborated closely with Graduate Schools and Research Units on content deposition. However, some redundant workflows need to be reorganized and guidelines should be in place for academic work owners. Based on the interviews with Library Directors in three NRUs, data collected showed no IR policy. This initial finding is in accordance with Yoowang (2012).

The IR participation of university presses and Thai academic journal editors is affected by copyright interpretation. One of NRUs established IRs in collaboration with its own university press now there is a clear policy to preserve digital copies of books printed by the university press in IR. However, copyright management is still debated. University presses in other two NRUs do not deposit digital copies to IRs because of copyright management concerns. Based on the interviews with journal editors, they would like to disseminate their articles publicly but remain concerned about copyright. The interpretation of copyright laws and transfer agreements remain unclear to both journal editors and authors in this study hence delay in IRs participation.

Challenges of the IR management in Thai universities

IRs challenges in Thailand relate to content recruitment, low awareness, sustainable support, copyright clarification, lack of mandate policies, sustainable support from senior administrators, and contributors’ reluctance to participate due to lack of clarification of what IRs implementation means. The changes in international scholarly community at this stage should be mainly concerned with: the direction of OA policies from other countries and journal publishers’ OA policies, which have also influence on scholarly communication in Thailand.

Initial research recommendations for academic libraries in Thailand

Based upon fieldwork and interviews to date it is recommended that academic libraries:

- Work collaboratively with stakeholders.
- Provide standardised IR policies for university members and public information.
- Promote IRs awareness regularly to stakeholders.
- Academic librarians’ core competencies in OA environments require updating.

Conclusion

The OA movement and the role of academic libraries are becoming recognised within the scholarly circles in Thailand. Major challenges do exist and potential contributors continue to be hesitant to be involved.
However, this study suggests if the steps outlined within this paper are continually raised and routes to resolve them are offered stakeholders will see the medium to long term benefits emerging and come involved.

References


Author biography
Ms. Wachiraporn Klungthanaboon from Thailand obtained her B.A. in Information Studies and M.A. in Library and Information Science from Department of Library Science, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University in Thailand. In 2010, she earned International MA in Digital Library Learning (DILL) with an Erasmus Mundus Scholarship. This joint MA programme is delivered by Oslo University College (Norway), Tallinn University (Estonia), and Parma University (Italy). She is currently a PhD student in Information Studies at the University of Glasgow. Her research is centered on university-based institutional repositories and the management of research output.