

DRIVER: Supporting Institutional Repositories in Europe

Jones, S., Robinson, M., and Hubbard, B.

SHERPA, Information Services, University of Nottingham

E theses in Europe

A press release by the British Library describes academic theses as ‘the richest resource of primary research’ (www.bl.uk/news/2005/pressrelease20050407.html). The provision, preservation and accession of theses help researchers in higher education, science and industry to tap into this resource. Academic theses are often very difficult to access. Even though they tend to be well documented, there is an inadequacy of tools available to search for them. Also, there is usually only a limited number of print copies available only at the home institution’s library.

Open Access enables research to meet its full potential by maximising its dissemination and, therefore, usage. In the UK, of the twenty top research-led universities, eighteen have institutional repositories. Institutional repositories hold research materials including articles, book chapters and academic theses. Therefore UK e theses become exposed to the rest of the world, promoting the institution’s research profile and increasing the publicity for supervisors and students.

In Europe, research organizations are building and connecting institutional and nationwide public archives. Projects such as DART Europe and organisations such as SPARC Europe advocate the benefits of Open Access to researchers, funding bodies and managers in order to change in the scholarly communications market to better serve the international research community.

A recent study of scientific publication markets in Europe funded by the European Commission strongly recommends the development of a European policy mandating open access to EC-funded research. In addition, it recommends an exploration of interoperability issues and how open access repositories can be implemented Europe-wide. We can foresee therefore that soon, every major European research institution will be in a position to disseminate its own theses through their institutional repositories.

The SHERPA project is internationally recognised as a leader and advocate for the development of open access institutional repositories and associated services. SHERPA is collaborating in the major project, DRIVER (Digital Repository Infrastructure Vision for European Research). This is a high profile, major European project with 10 international partners, funded by the European Commission and it reflects the international enthusiasm surrounding the Open Access movement.

DRIVER sets out to build a testbed for a future knowledge infrastructure of the European Research Area. The testbed is based on existing nationally organized digital repository infrastructures. Other work includes the support of new European repositories. Thus far DRIVER has developed the infrastructure middleware and has conducted focused research studies to facilitate the iterative development of the project. It is now actively advocating repository development in EU countries with focused activities, information and contextualized support.

This poster will explain the vision behind DRIVER. It will describe how the various aspects of the project tie together to form the knowledge infrastructure of the European Research Area and the role that it plays for electronic academic theses. DRIVER is an ambitious and important project that will yield valuable results for individual researchers, the publishing community and the European Research Community as a whole.