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April 3, 2002
Oakland, CA

CALIFORNIA DIGITAL LIBRARY OPENS ONLINE REPOSITORY FOR WORKING PAPERS

The California Digital Library today announced the launch of a web site and associated digital services to store and distribute academic research results and working papers. The eScholarship Repository (<http://repositories.cdlib.org/>) includes a set of author and reader services for the rapid dissemination of scholarship authored or sponsored by faculty from the University of California. Its initial focus will be on working papers from the humanities and social sciences.

Built under a co-development partnership with the Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress), the tools behind the eScholarship Repository improve the speed and efficiency of sharing the results of scholarly efforts. For participating scholars, departments, and research institutes, publishing working papers is greatly streamlined. The submission, processing, and dissemination of papers is managed through a simple web interface, the bepress EdiKit system.

Likewise, readers can, at no charge, discover and view relevant research by topic, author, or sponsoring research department with the site's straightforward organization and search tools. The system also allows users to sign up for a service alerting them to new content in their specific areas of interest.

Following focus groups and planning meetings in late 2001 with UC social science scholars and research staff, the repository opens with early-adopter social science research units at UC Berkeley and UCLA. The Berkeley Olin Program in Law and Economics, Institute of Industrial Relations, Institute of Business and Economic Research, Institute of Transportation Studies, and others are moving existing working paper series to the repository as well as using it to publish new scholarship. The eScholarship Repository will also be the first stop for papers in the University of California International and Area Studies (UCIAS) peer-reviewed ePublications Program, an eScholarship initiative launched last year (<http://escholarship.cdlib.org/ias.html>).

“What's not to like?” asked Martin Wachs, Director of the Institute of Transportation Studies and Professor of Civil Engineering and City and Regional Planning at UC Berkeley. “I welcome any technology that improves people's access to our research. By placing ITS researchers' papers in this new digital repository, we will be able to reach a larger audience.”

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The repository represents an important component of the CDL's eScholarship program, whose mission is to facilitate and support scholar-led innovations in scholarly communication. A clear advantage of CDL's sponsorship of the repository is its commitment to making the working papers available over time.

"Of course, libraries have long been in the business of preserving materials and providing ongoing access to them, so it makes sense that UC's digital library would respond to these goals for digital scholarship as well," said Catherine Candee, Director of Scholarly Communication Initiatives for the CDL. "Scholars responded enthusiastically to our support of innovations in the early dissemination of their work, but the safekeeping and ongoing availability of that work, through inevitable software and hardware changes, is of paramount concern to them and us as well," she added.

Associated with the authors' concern for permanence of the digital versions of their papers is a reader's need for reliable tracking of the evolution of a work. The eScholarship Repository accommodates that need by maintaining links and citations for previous or later versions of any material posted.

CDL expects the collection to grow quickly in size and diversity, with the addition of content from other social science and humanities institutes and scholars. The eScholarship program is working with UC libraries and a 10-campus scholarly communication advisory body to schedule this phased expansion.

Although the content of the repository is expected to grow to tens of thousands of articles, eScholarship builds from a vision of researchers who are able to search across many openly available repositories, leading to single-point access to a global network of research results. By adopting a technology for sharing repository contents, known as the Open Archive Initiative (OAI) metadata harvesting protocol, the eScholarship repository joins a set of like-minded initiatives to bring the vision a step closer.

According to Candee, the eScholarship Repository could not come at a better time for social sciences. There are few well-organized alternatives with non-profit backing and goals of low or no-cost access to social science scholarship. In contrast to commercial ventures, that may charge both for authors to deposit materials into a collection and for readers to search and use a collection, the eScholarship model extends university support of scholarship to include its dissemination to the broader community at no cost.

"I am thrilled that an institution as large and influential as the University of California is providing a viable option for social scientists and humanities scholars to share their work," said Marc Mayerson, Assistant Dean of Social Sciences at UCLA. "What better role could the CDL play than to help us help ourselves in creating faster, broader, permanent means of building upon each other's work, or to manage the output from the University's investment in scholars and scholarship?"

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Editors: Additional information about the California Digital Library may be found at the CDL web site, <http://www.cdlib.org>. Additional information about the eScholarship program may be found at <http://www.escholarship.cdlib.org/>. For