

Community efforts help repository development

The open-source software DSpace is used in institutional repositories around the world. **Gaëlle Bozec** reports on a recent event that brought together the users of this platform

The Norwegian word 'dugnad' roughly translates as 'a group of people who work for the common good or for a common cause.' According to Kjar-tan Sørland, of Bergen University College, Norway, 'a dugnad is a joint effort and a social event – often with a practical purpose. Its efficiency may vary, but it always makes you feel good.'

This description gives a good picture of the situation when users of the DSpace repository system meet together. It was therefore fitting that the 4th DSpace User Group Meeting, which took place in Bergen, Norway from 19 to 21 April 2006, was subtitled 'Dugnad among the fjords'. The meeting was originally intended to be a regional event for those who were not able to travel to Australia (the previous DSUG Meeting was in January 2006) or the USA. However, the meeting, hosted by the University of Bergen Library, turned out to be a world-wide event.

DSpace is a repository system distributed under an open-source software licence. In addition to being free to download and use, individuals are able to contribute to the software development – producing add-ons and new features – that benefit all of the DSpace community. This DSUG meeting allowed 107 representatives from 16 countries to gather together to talk about DSpace, to share experiences, and to dream of a better DSpace through collaboration. However, one of the best things about the DSUG meeting was meeting other 'DSUG-ars'. Now, finally, I can put a face to names that have answered emails I have submitted to the various DSpace-mailing lists.

This meeting of DSUG-ars prompted much lively dialogue, especially during the round-table discussions. They allowed people to share their experiences and express their frustrations, mostly towards publishers. A common complaint was

about the PDFs of journal articles that publishers often provide to authors. For the authors, 'this [PDF] is the final product and what counts and what is worth showing off'. However, publishers do not usually allow this version to be placed online. IR managers agreed that they would like to use the publishers' PDFs but no-one dared to because they fear litigation. During the meeting some people day-dreamed along the lines of 'let's do it and leave the university managements to deal with the legal consequences!' But, of course IR managers are too nice to challenge publishers and their copyright policies.

Furthering research

But the purpose of the DSpace event was not simply a focus for venting frustration about publishers. The software has been used in a number of exciting projects that were described at the main meeting. These include helping the research assessment process (IRRA-project in the UK) and archiving Open Data in Chemistry (SPECTRA-project in Cambridge, UK). In Sweden, DSpace is helping to do electronic publishing and printing, while in Italy the platform is acting as a showcase for museums. Another exciting application is in helping to publish and preserve research findings by African scientists (OdinPubAfrica) where open access helps alleviate financial barriers.

To achieve these goals, considerable time and effort goes in to technical developments to the platform. Richard Rogers, one of the seven DSpace-committers, described some of the new features planned for the next version of DSpace (1.4, to be released soon). Features being considered include: support for multiple metadata schemas; control vocabulary in the submission process (at the item level); and RSS feeds.



The meeting was subtitled: Dugnad among the fjords.

Another purpose of the event was to update users of the system on the latest DSpace news. As part of this, Peter Morgan (Dspace@Cambridge, UK) presented the main recent change: the DSpace community has now a governance advisory board. This board, which is led by Chris Rusbridge of the Digital Curation Centre in the UK, will facilitate and allow 'a formal decision-making process and make more coherent the technical/functional directions'. In addition, anyone wanting to interact and talk to the DSpace community will have someone with a mandate that they can talk to.

The meeting also allowed the creation of a new DSpace subdivision: the first UK and Ireland DSpace Users Group (chaired by Stuart Lewis, University of Wales Aberystwyth, UK) met at the meeting with the aim of forging closer ties within the community.

With so much going on, the 'DSUG-ars' seem to have left Bergen with many new ideas, and with the reassuring feeling that their single/local efforts help to make the DSpace community grow more rapidly and stronger.

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