

First DRIVER Summit demonstrates the advancement of the European repository network and lays out further actions



On 16 and 17 January 2008, DRIVER II successfully carried out its first Summit in Goettingen, Germany. Approximately 100 invited representatives from the European Community, including representatives of the European Commission, over 20 spokespersons of European repository initiatives as well as experts in different repository related fields from Europe, the U.S., Canada and South Africa came together to discuss their experiences and concrete actions with respect to the further building of cross-country repository infrastructures.

In his opening address, Dr Norbert Lossau, the scientific coordinator of the DRIVER II project, introduced the objectives of the Summit. These were first, to present the results of the DRIVER I project - which ended in November 2007- and second, to begin the building of a "Confederation for Digital Repositories". This Confederation, a key objective of the project, aims to be active beyond the actual project consortium partners and is therefore open to all interested stakeholders in the repository community. DRIVER is already being developed based on an established network across Europe. Interested stakeholders will therefore include both national correspondents from all European countries but also international disciplinary communities and experts from technological, metadata, IPR and scientific information service areas.

With reference to the significant interest beyond Europe to join the DRIVER initiative, Dr Lossau cited a letter sent by the Director of the National Science Library, Academy of Sciences in Beijing, China, Professor Xiaolin Zhang: "As China is beginning to initiate institutional repositories in its universities and research institutes, the knowledge accumulated and the infrastructure developed by DRIVER and its members would be instrumental to Chinese institutes and future Chinese IR networks. [...] Therefore, on behalf of the National Science Library of Chinese Academy of Sciences, I would like to express the interest to collaborate with DRIVER in ways fit, and to become a member in a future confederation of digital repositories". In advance of the Summit, representatives from India and South Africa had also expressed their strong interest in becoming a part of the upcoming global repository network.

In his keynote, Mario Campolargo, Head of the European Commission's "Geant & eInfrastructure" Unit and acting Director of the Directorate F "Emerging Technologies and Infrastructures" set the tone by pointing out the central role of DRIVER as the precursor of the pan-European Digital Repository e-Infrastructure. He particularly welcomed the support DRIVER offered to the European Commission with regards to the "Council Conclusions on Scientific Information" (22 and 23 November 2007, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/intm/97236.pdf) underlining the fact that DRIVER endeavours to help the Commission respond with an excellent integrated approach, ensuring unrestricted access to EC-funded research output. Furthermore, the abovementioned international interest in DRIVER was welcomed and aligned with European strategic interests in the area.

Michele Kimpton, Director of the D-Space Foundation at MIT, U.S. and former Director of the Internet Archive and Open Content Alliance, presented different

international organisational models that the planned DRIVER Confederation will consider.

After presentations by DRIVER partners (Yannis Ioannidis, University of Athens, Bill Hubbard, University of Nottingham and Kasja Weenink/Maurits van Eijndhoven, SURF) a Panel comprising of Deirdre Furlong (EC-Research), Neil Jacobs (JISC), Stevan Harnad (Southampton/Montreal (statement sent in his absence)), Norbert Lossau (DRIVER), Salvatore Mele (CERN) and Carlos Morais-Pires (EC- Geant & eInfrastructures), discussed "Open Access and Repositories: Responding to the 'Council Conclusions on Scientific Information'". While Stevan Harnad underlined the unambiguous role of institutional repositories as "feeders" (= primary research providers) to central repositories (discipline-based, funder-based, national etc.), Salvatore Mele reported from the physics community and their long tradition with the ArXiv as a place for depositing the research publications. Deirdre Furlong expressed the interest of the EC to prepare an Open Access Mandate for all EC-funded research publications and to learn how existing repository infrastructures, like DRIVER, can support this mandate.

The second day of the Summit began with presentations by Stevan Harnad (movie sent in his absence) on "Institutional vs. Central Deposit: Optimising DRIVER Policy for the OA Mandate and Metric Era", followed by the DRIVER partners Paolo Manghi and Donatella Castelli from CNR-ISTI in Italy. Manghi and Castelli gave a short live demo of the DRIVER testbed functionalities and outlined the challenges for DRIVER II.

Representatives from disciplinary repository projects, funded by the EC and other funding bodies underlined both the impressive number of disciplinary based repository activities already underway and the special requirements for research data that need to be addressed (EuroVO-AIDA, Astronomy; GENESI-DR, Earth Science; D4Science, Environmental Monitoring; eCrystals, Crystallography; OLAC, Open Language Archive; CLARIN, Language Resource Management and Discovery and Nereus/Neeo, Economy). Throughout the day's proceedings, the opportunity to collaborate with DRIVER as a multidisciplinary, pan-European repository infrastructure was repeatedly pointed out.

The afternoon of the second day focused on the need for urgent action to include repository initiatives from further European and international countries into the DRIVER infrastructure. Starting with eIFL, the international library organisation that supports countries, including in the developing world, in repository building, representatives from six European country initiatives (Finland, Sweden, Norway, Lithuania, Ireland and Spain) expressed their clear interest in joining the DRIVER infrastructure as full partners.

In his wrap-up speech, Norbert Lossau summarised the presentations and discussions in a five-point conclusion:

1. The conditions to populate repositories with content and to implement a coherent European and global digital repository based eInfrastructure are more favourable than ever before. The Council's Conclusions on Scientific Information, the European Research Council Open Access mandate and the current preparation of an Open Access mandate for all EC funded research publications can draw from the existing infrastructure efforts which must be accelerated in the coming months.

2. DRIVER II, with its recent focus on research publications, is now moving towards research data by addressing so-called enhanced publications (publications linked to datasets and vice versa). It is instrumental that DRIVER II works together with disciplinary communities, like disciplinary research institutes (such as CERN), disciplinary projects (such as those funded by the EC's "Geant & eInfrastructure" Unit and in the ESFRI context) and, where existing, learned societies on a European or international level.
3. Although funded by the EC, DRIVER II must be open to international efforts and collaborate on a global scale. This point was also clearly underlined by the EC representatives as part of the Commission's eInfrastructure strategy.
4. Technology is the means to manage content repositories as a virtual content resource. Combining publications with research data and other digital objects requires additional research and development.
5. The change of culture has been a frequently stressed requirement for the new eInfrastructure. Depositing open access publications, sharing datasets with a wider community and deploying existing technology instead of "re-inventing" them are some of the issues which need to be addressed in the near future.

The first DRIVER Summit was a successful milestone on the way to building a professional, active repository community. Over the course of 2008, DRIVER II will invite various stakeholders to support DRIVER in an advisory capacity and to prepare the building of a Confederation, by exploring models of and potential liaisons with, existing organisations and initiatives (like SPARC, LIBER, the European Digital Library, Alliance for Permanent Access, etc.).

About DRIVER II:

The EC-funded DRIVER II project is leading the way as the largest initiative of its kind in helping to enhance repository development worldwide. Its main objective is to build a virtual, European scale network of existing institutional repositories using technology that will manage the physically distributed repositories as one large scale virtual content source.

For further information please go to the central entry point of the DRIVER initiative:

www.driver-community.eu

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On behalf of the DRIVER II Consortium

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