Bringing IRUS to the USA: International Collaborations

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Introduction

The value of open access (OA) in supporting effective research through enhanced visibility, discoverability, and access is widely recognized. Institutional repositories perform a critical role in this respect, facilitating knowledge sharing and enabling academic institutions to share their research outputs with a global audience. Within this context, measuring the reach of research is key. Tracking, monitoring, and benchmarking usage of scholarly resources supports the understanding of an institution's research, identifies emerging trends within local, national and international contexts, and informs both policy and process for a wide range of stakeholders. The increasing use of data to support decision-making in these areas requires effective tools to access comparable data, to calculate return on investment, and to demonstrate value and impact.

Although most institutional repository (IR) products provide statistics indicating usage of that institution's research, making comparisons that situate an institution's research within a broader context are often difficult or impossible as different repository products process raw usage data in different ways. The IRUS-UK (Institutional Repository Usage Statistics) service,[1] developed by Jisc[2] in the UK, addresses this problem by enabling repositories to share and compare usage data conforming to the COUNTER[3] standard for counting usage of electronic resources. IRUS-UK is used by virtually all IRs in the UK and supports national comparison and benchmarking to offer a UK-wide view of IR usage.

The lack of an existing standards-conformant solution for measuring and benchmarking repository usage statistics among US higher education institutions led to the formation and development of IRUS-USA,[4] a pilot project to measure usage in a consistent and comparable way and to evaluate the resulting impact for participants.

This paper provides an overview of the IRUS-USA pilot project and reviews the results of a project assessment. Specifically, this paper will explore the following two research questions:

I. What are the primary repository usage assessment needs, barriers, and opportunities for IRUS-USA pilot participants?

II. What is the perceived value of international measurement and benchmarking among IRUS-USA pilot participants?

Literature Review

Analytics assessment for online resources, including digital repositories, has a rich and growing literature—too vast for a comprehensive review in this paper.[5] Since the IRUS-USA pilot project surfaces themes around collecting to ensure standardized metrics, to analyze usage statistics among partner organizations, and to offer cross-institutional comparisons, the authors will focus this literature review on two broad areas: identifying the barriers to assessing usage statistics and the attempts to standardize usage assessment practices. This focus situates the IRUS-USA pilot project in a larger landscape of cultural heritage usage statistic assessment.

Researchers have been paying a growing amount of attention to identifying and confronting barriers to assessing usage statistics—both broadly in the information profession and specifically within conversations of IRs. Within the information profession, the literature indicates that a lack of data standardization and insufficient skills at interpreting usage data are significant hurdles. Voorbij analyzed survey results, interviews, and annual reports from 100 institutions in the Netherlands.[6] The author found that most institutions gather some form of web statistics for "practical purposes," including modifying websites and determining digitization selection priorities.[7] Although many are collecting this data, most institutions are not including contextual information that would help others understand, interpret, and benchmark new data collected with existing caches of data.[8] Arendt and Wagner conducted a case study to collect data on redesigning their library's website.[9] The authors wrote, "The usage statistics enabled the Virtual Library Group to make better decisions by providing factual information about the site."[10] However, they also identified three barriers to incorporating usage statistics as part of their overall redesign: wading through large amounts of irrelevant assessment data, addressing difficulties in interpreting results, and "balancing competing interests within the library."[11]

Within the repository landscape, barriers to usage assessment are numerous and diverse. Early scholarship sought to understand the scope and components of digital repository evaluation criteria. In 2004, Saracevic reviewed existing literature on evaluating digital libraries.[12] While Saracevic found that existing studies focused on a variety of aspects, including tools, services, and user behavior, he noted that there was an overall lack of evaluation occurring among digital library practitioners.[13] Hong Xie conducted a survey asking respondents to compile and apply evaluation criteria for digital libraries.[14] The author found that "usability," "collection quality," "service quality," and "system performance" were among the most important evaluation criteria.[15] These criteria surface a host of barriers for evaluation, including confusing or poorly designed user interfaces, a lack of contextual information on a collection, non-existent community service, and limited accuracy in search results.[16]

Later scholarship focuses more directly on the assessment of digital repository usage data. In 2008, Khoo et al. reviewed the web metrics among four digital libraries and identified several "practical web metrics issues."[17] Their analysis suggests that more expertise, skills, and community-shared norms are needed across the spectrum of usage assessment, from collecting, compiling, and analyzing data to the definitions and lack of agreed-upon standards.[18] Khoo et al. also discussed the limitations of usage data itself, emphasizing that "no firm inferences regarding users' intentions can be made solely from web metrics."[19] Noting the absence of "public data on usage of digitized library collections," Schlosser and Stamper conducted a case study to understand what impact posting IR content in Flickr would have on repository usage statistics.[20] While the authors ultimately found that their approach to promoting collections in Flickr did not necessarily increase usage, they believe their study exposed the complexities of usage assessment and the need for more organizations to "share their [usage data] methods and their results with others to help foster an environment where such data are collected and used."[21] Perrin et al. focused on five specific repository usage

problems, including "difficulty of distinguishing different kinds of internet traffic," a "lack of direct correlation of a digital item to its multiple URLs," "the analytics tools' inherent bias in statistics that are counted only in the positive way," "the different interaction between digital collections with search engine indexing," and "evaluator's bias toward simple growing statistics over time for surmising a positive use assessment."[22] To overcome these issues, Perrin et al. advocate for institutions to evaluate usage data through the lens of the "sessions or user perspective."[23]

As noted by multiple studies, standardizing practices is a current gap in digital repository usage assessment. However, some groups are beginning to address this problem. For example, members of the National Science Digital Library Metrics Working Group articulate metrics, including web analytics, which they find "useful for assessing digital library activities."[24] They also advocate for more sophisticated ways to compile and analyze web analytics data, through incorporating code into their Google Analytics account to allow for "roll-up reporting."[25] Other projects are attempting to build tools and services around usage data standardization. The Repository Analytics and Metrics Portal (RAMP) project at Montana State University (in collaboration with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and partners) is developing a framework "that classifies IR page views and download activity into three categories that communicate metrics about user activity related to the research process."[26] When completed, this framework and associated platform will help IR practitioners confront the problem of the current "deficiencies of log file analytics reporting methods."[27] Finally, the UK-based Publisher and Institutional Repository Usage Statistics (PIRUS) Project aimed to establish platforms and infrastructure that allows institutions to generate IR usage reports based on COUNTER-compliant standards, communicate the results out through appropriate venues, and aggregate usage data for global comparisons across organizations.[28]

This paper contributes to this evolving body of literature by providing a concrete example of a collaborative effort to bring a standardized usage assessment approach to US institutions. While this project is not the first attempt to do so in the US, it does offer a rare additional case study. It also allows for future comparisons between the IRUS-USA approach and other programs and models, such as RAMP. Finally, with the expansion of the IRUS program into the US, the results of this paper establish comparable international benchmarks with other IRUS-related programs.

Background

Jisc, an organization that provides digital solutions for education and research, delivers various library analytics services that aim to save time, increase efficiencies, improve data quality, and support comparison and benchmarking. Part of Jisc's OA[29] offer, IRUS-UK enables IRs to share and compare usage data based on the COUNTER standard. The service provides access to authoritative, standards-based statistics enabling universities to gain a better understanding of the breakdown and usage of their institution's research.

IRUS-UK built on the work of the PIRUS2 project,[30] which demonstrated that COUNTER-conformant article-level usage statistics could be collected and consolidated from publishers and institutional repositories. Through its prototype, PIRUS2 demonstrated that such a service was technically possible. In practice, however, the majority of publishers were not ready or able to participate in such a service, primarily for economic reasons. Nevertheless, PIRUS2 indicated the value of a standardized approach to measuring repository usage. IRUS-UK was formed when Jisc decided to support development of a service for items hosted by institutional and subject repositories.

The IRUS program of services collect and then process raw usage data from repositories and consolidate those data into COUNTER-conformant statistics by following the rules of the COUNTER Code of Practice. This enables participating repositories to provide consistent, comparable, and trustworthy usage data as well as benchmarking usage of their repository against other institutions. COUNTER provides an infrastructure to support publishers, libraries, and third parties who wish to create or access statistics or build services to support access. One of the first standards organizations to focus on usage statistics, COUNTER has been instrumental in bringing together publishers, vendors, and librarians to develop and maintain a standard for

counting usage of networked e-resources. Collaboration is key to the development and maintenance of an effective standard intended for global adoption and use.

IRUS services work by adding a small piece of code to repository software which employ the "Tracker Protocol." This was developed in conjunction with and endorsed by COUNTER. Tracker functionality is currently available and in operation for a variety of platforms including DSpace, EPrints, Pure Portal, Worktribe, Haplo, Figshare, and Samvera applications. In keeping with the ethos of openness, IRUS requests that participants commit to data sharing, enabling institutions to access data from other repositories in order to support comparison and benchmarking. Data from IRUS services can be shared with key stakeholders as well as used for management reporting, usage monitoring, and external reporting such as annual statistics. Data can be viewed within the online portal, downloaded for further analysis, or harvested for reuse in alternative applications.

Overview of statistical modules and reports

IRUS-UK presents statistics through a portal via a series of charts and data visualizations that enable users to easily understand, interpret, and communicate data. A survey of UK institutions indicates that IRUS-UK primarily offers value by improving statistical reporting, enabling new forms of reporting, saving time collecting statistics, and increasing knowledge to support better decision-making.

The IRUS-USA pilot replicated the UK approach but provided a limited subset of reports and, therefore, functionality. These reports provided a general indication of features available in the production service and enabled the pilot group to assess value. The following table outlines reports made available to pilot participants.

Table 1: Reports in IRUS-USA

Report	Description
Summary of all data in IRUS-USA	Provides summaries of data in IRUS-USA including: number of participating repositories, number of items downloaded from these repositories since they joined, numbers of downloads (in total, to the end of the previous month, and during the current month)
Book Report 1	Indicates the number of successful book downloads by month for a selected repository
Book Report 2	Indicates the number of successful book section downloads by month for a selected repository
ETD (electronic thesis or dissertation) Report 1	Indicates the number of successful thesis or dissertation download requests by month and repository identifier for a selected repository
Item Report 1	Indicates the number of successful item download requests by month and repository identifier for a selected repository. It indicates the item URL, title, author(s), item type, and total downloads by both month and for the period selected.

Report	Description
Item Report 1 Daily	Indicates the number of successful item download requests by day and repository identifier for a selected repository
Item Report 2	Indicates the number of successful item download requests by month and item type for a selected repository. For each item type it indicates the total downloads by month and for the period selected.
Repository Report 1	Indicates the number of successful item downloads by month for all participating repositories
Repository 1 Daily	Indicates the number of successful item downloads by day for all participating repositories
DOI Duplicates Report	Provides a view of the items with duplicate DOIs in a selected repository

Branching out beyond the UK

The standards-based approach that IRUS-UK pioneered is easily replicable and has been broadly adopted. As such, IRUS-UK is now part of a family of services that include instances for CORE,[31] OpenAIRE,[32] the University of Amsterdam,[33] and OAPEN,[34] in addition to pilot instances with limited functionality (for the purposes of the pilot) in Australia, New Zealand,[35] and the US.

Formation of the IRUS-USA pilot project

The benefits of IRUS-UK, particularly the ability to access standards-compliant usage data so that participating institutions can run complex reports, perform cross-institutional comparisons, and better visualize and benchmark their own usage statistics, was an attractive feature for members of the Digital Library Federation (DLF).[36] In March 2017, Jisc, DLF, and the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR),[37] DLF's parent organization, announced an intent to collaborate around a number of issues of mutual interest. Stakeholders in the Jisc and CLIR/DLF community selected IRUS as the first collaborative effort between the two organizations. President of CLIR Chuck Henry indicated that, "building on a series of conversations over the last few months between our staff members, Jisc's IRUS-UK program seems especially appealing. The IRUS aggregation service is fundamentally important. In addition, the attendant benefits are equally pertinent, including giving participating institutions the ability to plan and make strategic decisions based on their, and other institutions', data; building a user community of shared standards; the inherent, collateral goal of national and international coherence at scale in support of higher and continuing education; and the promotion of OA. IRUS has thus compelling behavioral, intellectual, technical, and strategic value."

To facilitate this collaboration, the two groups developed a pilot project to bring IRUS-UK to the United States (branded as IRUS-USA). The group was composed of individuals from both organizations, including representatives from DLF's Assessment Interest Group (AIG).[38] Together, the pilot project organizers devised a three-phased approach to the project, including pilot recruitment and platform configuration, information sharing on IRUS-USA, and pilot assessment.

The group brainstormed potential pilot participants based on a variety of factors, including the type of institution (public and private academic, government), the type of IR software (e.g., DSpace, Eprints, Samvera), and the type of repository administration (hosted locally vs. consortially). Through DLF's executive director, the team recruited nine institutions during the summer of 2017 to participate in the IRUS-USA pilot project. After recruitment, Jisc established an instance of the IRUS-USA portal and made it available to 11 pilot IR participants, with access provided throughout 2018.

Pilot organizers held a webinar on IRUS-USA in March 2018 for pilot participants. The webinar introduced pilot participants to the portal and outlined key features and functionality. The intention of the pilot was to provide IRUS-USA access and assess the portal's use and value to participants.

Organizers devised and administered an evaluation in August and September 2018, with a view to establishing a longer-term vision and sustainability plan subject to evaluation outcomes. The program of communications and dissemination activities underway throughout 2018 will culminate in a presentation and paper at the Library Assessment Conference in the US in December 2018.

Methodology

Two methodologies were used to assess the IRUS-USA pilot: a survey and a focus group. The survey questions appear in Appendix A. These questions were edited from a previous IRUS-UK assessment survey[39] with some revisions for the current pilot. The survey was sent to the 11 institutions that were participants (Caltech, Indiana University, Montana State University, Smithsonian Institution, Swarthmore, University of Arizona, University of Houston, University of Maryland, University of Michigan, University of Pittsburgh, and University of Virginia) with a response rate of 72% (ten starting the survey and eight finishing). In the survey, participants were asked if they would be willing to participate in a focus group. This pool of self-selected individuals were used for the focus group. Four of the survey participants agreed to be a part of the focus group and three participated in the focus group. The prompts for the focus group are included in Appendix B.

Findings

Survey

Report Usefulness

The reports were scored on how many responses they got to the usefulness scale. One score point was awarded for "Somewhat useful," two for "Useful," and three for "Very useful."

Table 2: Usefulness of IRUS-USA Reports

Report	Score	Usefulness
Summary of all data in IRUS-USA	4	Do not use (n5); Not useful (n0); Somewhat useful (n2); Useful (n1); Very useful (n0)
Book Report 1	5	Do not use (n5); Not useful (n1); Somewhat useful (n0); Useful (n1); Very useful (n1)
Book Report 2	5	Do not use (n5); Not useful (n0); Somewhat useful (n0); Useful (n1); Very useful (n1)

Report	Score	Usefulness
ETD (electronic thesis or dissertation) Report 1	8	Do not use (n4); Not useful (n0); Somewhat useful (n0); Useful (n1); Very useful (n2)
Item Report 1	9	Do not use (n4); Not useful (n0); Somewhat useful (n1); Useful (n1); Very useful (n2)
Item Report 1 Daily	4	Do not use (n4); Not useful (n0); Somewhat useful (n2); Useful (n1); Very useful (n0)
Item Report 2	10	Do not use (n4); Not useful (n0); Somewhat useful (n0); Useful (n2); Very useful (n2)
Repository Report 1	6	Do not use (n4); Not useful (n1); Somewhat useful (n1); Useful (n1); Very useful (n1)
Repository 1 Daily	4	Do not use (n5); Not useful (n1); Somewhat useful (n1); Useful (n0); Very useful (n1)
DOI Duplicates Report	3	Do not use (n6); Not useful (n0); Somewhat useful (n1); Useful (n1); Very useful (n0)

The reports that scored the highest on usefulness are the "Item Report 2," "ETD (electronic thesis or dissertation) Report 1," and "Item Report 1." Many of the reports received "Do not use" from four to six institutions. These results were further investigated in the focus group.

Use of repository statistics

Table 3: Use of Repository Statistics

Use	Number
Identifying trends and patterns in usage	7
Regular reporting to management	6
Benchmarking	3

Use	Number
To provide evidence related to the impact of institutional outputs	6
Identifying trends and patterns in deposit	2
Raising awareness and advertising services with users	5
Checking and maintaining records	2
Contributing to statistics	6
Sharing results via social media	4
Advocacy with researchers	6
Other	None

The responses indicated that most participants use IRUS-USA to identify trends and patterns in usage to contribute to statistics, with five responses each. With four responses each are "regular reporting to management," "to provide evidence related to the impact of institutional outputs," and "advocacy with researchers."

Barriers or challenges

When asked if there were barriers to using IRUS-USA, three said "no," two said "maybe/unsure," and three said "yes." This shows an even split between those who felt there were no barriers and those who experienced some barriers to use. When the participants were asked to list barriers, they listed unclear report names, unclear report formatting, unclear definitions of terms in the reports, lack of full integration with existing systems due to IRUS-USA's status as a pilot instance, and lack of alignment between IRUS-USA item types and local item types. One organization said their major barrier was that they were never able to set up the IRUS instance due to lack of local technical support. Another said that the ETD report did not function for them.

How can IRUS-USA provide value?

One point was awarded for "Somewhat valuable," two points for "Valuable," and three points for "Very valuable."

Table 4: Value of IRUS-USA

Value	Score	Responses for value
Improving statistical reporting	20	Not valuable (n0), Somewhat valuable(n0), Valuable (n4), Very Valuable (n4)
Saving time collecting statistics	21	Not valuable (n0), Somewhat valuable(n1), Valuable (n1), Very Valuable (n6)
Enabling reporting previously unable to do	21	Not valuable (n0), Somewhat valuable(n1), Valuable (n1), Very Valuable (n6)
Increasing knowledge to support better decision-making	15	Not valuable (n2), Somewhat valuable(n0), Valuable (n3), Very Valuable (n3)
Saving money	5	Not valuable (n3), Somewhat valuable(n5), Valuable (n0), Very Valuable (n0)
Enhancing productivity	8	Not valuable (n1), Somewhat valuable(n6), Valuable (n1), Very Valuable (n0)

This shows that participants found that IRUS-USA is best at saving them time in collecting statistics and enabling reporting previously unavailable. To a lesser extent, they found that it improved statistical reporting and increased knowledge to support better decision-making.

Support better decision-making

The majority (n7) of participants noted that IRUS-USA was useful for supporting better decision-making, with one negative response. Participants added that, in order to provide more value to repository management, it could compare statistics to other institutions to provide context (n1), identify areas of sustained growth (n1), include an API with real-time display of statistics (n1), break down the downloads by domain (n1), merge reports with IR stats and sorting (n1), produce more visualizations of data (n2), enlist more institutions to make more standardized statistics and reporting (n1), and provide more detailed statistics (n1).

Current Functionality Clear to Understand

When asked if the current functionality of the system was easy to understand, four said “Yes,” three said “Maybe/unsure,” and one said “No.” This suggests that the functionality of the system could be made clearer. The participants offered suggestions for enhancements such as making the tool faster, showing top downloads/views, sorting reports by academic departments, viewing statistics in the browser, including date as a filter, providing author-level download reports, breaking downloads down by country by institution, and running special reports like the ETD Report across all institutions. The authors anticipate that many of the functionality barriers identified during the assessment will be mitigated by an expanded service, comparable to the increased functionality found in the full-scale IRUS-UK platform.

Satisfaction with Pilot

Overall, most were satisfied, with two saying "Very satisfied," five saying "Satisfied," and one saying "Somewhat satisfied." When asked how likely participants were to recommend IRUS-USA to a colleague or peer, three indicated they were very likely to recommend it, four were near neutral, and one was not as likely to recommend it.

Fee-based pricing model

When participants were asked if they would support a fee-based pricing model, five indicated they would, while three indicated they would not. Those not willing to support a fee-based model did not address how much they anticipated their institution would pay. Of those that did answer, one suggested up to $500, two suggested between $501 and $1,000, and two suggested $1,001 to $1,500. This indicates a price range around $1,000 (an average of the high ranges) is a reasonable amount. In the final open-ended question, one participant suggested that the pricing model should be dependent on the "bells and whistles offered," with a higher price, meaning a tool with more functionality.

Participation in Community Support

When participants were asked if they would be willing to participate in community support, five said "Yes" and three said "No."

Focus Group

Three of the survey participants agreed to a focus group, and the prompts of the focus group were created after the survey to clarify some results and get further detail. Even though there were only three participants, the level of agreement among them suggests that others in similar situations would have similar answers.

When asked why the participant's institutions joined the pilot project, two said their institution joined because of the value of reliable, verifiable, standardized statistics. The statistics were seen as necessary to demonstrate value. One respondent expressed that they have very specific statistics needs that IRUS-USA does not fully meet, but that it does provide verifiable statistics that are not easy to obtain otherwise. The added benefit of being able to compare to other institutions was considered potentially interesting, but reliable statistics were more important for the foreseeable future.

Regarding why some of the built-in reports were not used, all participants agreed that it was not always clear how the reports worked or what they were trying to show. They agreed that there is a need for more documentation and more education regarding how the statistics are gathered and displayed. One reported inconsistencies between their expectations and what the reports showed, which indicated a need to investigate more deeply to see if the anomalies are a problem on the repository end or a problem interpreting the report.

Respondents expressed varying needs when asked about how IRUS-USA could be better. One said graphical representation of data would make it easier to share results and facilitate integration with altmetrics (n2). Another respondent noted that they needed usage data by academic department, a national roll out to generate a larger pool of comparison data, and more automated actions to save on time and labor in preparing statistics for others as well as aligning item type with types in the repository. The third respondent added that anything that helps them turn the data into a story to report back on the success of their OA policy would be useful.

Some cited several challenges. One respondent said they would love to be able to refine report searches instead of having to start a new search in order to edit their search. Another suggested that the real barriers for them were aligning the tool's data retention policies with their own internal policies.

When asked about what data was needed to make a case for IR value, all participants agreed that geographical usage data was most valuable. People want to know where their users are. For some groups, very specific regional data are important.

Regarding continuing education, all three participants said that documentation explaining how IRUS-USA works is most needed. They also noted that working with a group interested in developing policies and standards would be very valuable. It should be noted that many of the feature requests and enhancements suggested during the focus group are already provided through IRUS-UK and its program of services. Resource constraints, however, necessitated that IRUS-USA offered reduced functionality for the purposes of the pilot.

When asked about the service models and the possibility of a membership cost, the answers were cautious. Many questions asked how the service is funded in the UK. One of the participants suggested a collaboration with the DuraSpace community might provide some mutual benefit for both groups (e.g., giving IRUS-USA a home and community and giving the DSpace community options for more consistent and standardized statistics). The participants were worried that a membership model could price out smaller institutions and proposed a tiered pricing structure. They indicated interest in a nominal fee structure paired with community driven engagement.

Practical Implications

Research Questions

The assessment of IRUS-USA started with two broad research questions:

1. What are the primary repository usage assessment needs, barriers, and opportunities for IRUS-USA pilot participants?

2. What is the perceived value of international measurement and benchmarking among IRUS-USA pilot participants?

In response to question one, the authors believe that institutions have a strong need for reliable and standardized statistics and for a tool with transparent functionality. Of the stats that are needed, there was interest in geographic usage data and the ability to share statistics in various ways with different groups. For some, their local system impeded implementation. For a majority of participants, a significant barrier was a lack of understanding report content and meaning. Increased education on what the reports do and measure, how they are compiled, and how items are mapped from the local repository to IRUS-USA would greatly increase their value to participating institutions. Finally, many participants saw the value in having reliable statistics and could think of local uses for these statistics, such as demonstrating value and telling stories of the usage of collections. Finding and highlighting successful examples of useful collections, and better communicating to stakeholders that the statistics use an internationally-recognized standard (COUNTER), would add validity to their results.

In response to question two, the authors believe that many of the participants thought international benchmarking would be interesting but was not currently a top priority. The need for reliable, internal, standards-based statistics comes first. That said, many of the participants acknowledged it would be useful to compare their statistics with similar institutions and collections.

Broad Implications

Beyond the research questions, the results of the IRUS-USA pilot project speak to broader implications for IR usage statistic assessment. The pilot project serves as an important use case for a full-scale IRUS-USA service. According to this survey and focus group, it is likely that most institutions in the US would find the service valuable and would support a fee-based model. A few institutions will find more value in the service when it is more widely adopted nationally. There was additional interest and curiosity among pilot participants in IRUS-USA's international benchmarking capabilities. Based on this assessment, however, the international collaboration opportunities are secondary to reliable intra-organizational statistics at this point. As a result, the authors of this paper recommend that the project first focus on widespread US adoption, which will provide institutions with the means, over time, to benchmark against local peers.

Limitations

Because of the small size of the pilot group, it is difficult to extrapolate results to new institutions that may adopt IRUS-USA. In fact, from this limited sample, it seems there may be a divide in institutions who find the tool very useful and those who do not. Because of this, the authors consider these results exploratory in nature; they are intended to inform the next steps for IRUS-USA.

Conclusion

Overall, the pilot can be considered a success with most of the participants responding favorably to the idea, the need for the service, and sharing a general agreement that they were happy with the pilot. The assessment revealed that institutions want more documentation surrounding use of the service, more functionality and granularity available in the reports, and more visual and easy-to-share statistics. Much of the desired platform functionality and system documentation already exists with full-scale service deployments of the IRUS program and these more robust statistical repositories will address many of the needs expressed by IRUS-USA pilot participants. Where organizations are contributing towards service support, such as in the UK and elsewhere, these features are already provided. The service is designed to address the local needs for generating reports and creating stories of value from the data, but the use of open standards and full disclosure means international benchmarking is viable, which was interesting to some.

The IRUS-USA pilot will consider these assessment results as it aims to identify next steps and, ultimately, expand the scope to a full-fledged usage statistic platform. As a first step, they will draft recommendations for Jisc and CLIR/DLF focused on enhancing functionality through access to the production service, increasing awareness and an understanding of IRUS-USA benefits, and sharing potential collaborative models for community support. These recommendations, in conjunction with the cooperative spirit established by multiple parties who make up the pilot project, will fuel this much-needed assessment resource moving forward.

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