IR surpasses expectations with 500,000 downloads

South Dakota State University’s scholarly output is getting into the hands of researchers through the school’s institutional repository (IR) – and at a rate faster than anticipated.

The IR hit 500,000 downloads of SDSU documents this past April, less than four years after it launched.

The IR is a website that provides public access to academic materials created by SDSU departments, faculty, staff and students. It came online in September 2015 as a service of Briggs Library under the name Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange (Open PRAIRIE). The SDSU IR was the first of its kind in South Dakota.

Open PRAIRIE (https://openprairie.sdstate.edu) meets several significant needs for institutional research materials. It serves as a central digital home that preserves and stores items contributed by SDSU authors from multiple disciplines. Many types of content are included on Open PRAIRIE, such as journal articles, Open Access books and conference papers.

Researchers worldwide are discovering and downloading SDSU scholarly work through Open PRAIRIE. There have even been downloads in the Vatican City State, the smallest country in the world. Michael Biondo, Institutional Repository Coordinator, has managed the growth of the IR since its early stages.

To get Open PRAIRIE started, Biondo first added departmental and campus materials that were already digitized and available to upload.

“The initial plan was that between the heritage thesis digitization project and other materials, we should be able to upload 5,000 items in the first year, and then 2,500 items in year two,” Biondo Continued on page 2

Notes from the Chief University Librarian

A topic of particular interest to librarians and archivists in recent years is digital preservation. When it comes to paper resources, we have a pretty good understanding of the dos and don’ts. No water or fire or smoke! No bugs or mold! Climate control expectations are clear. We know how to handle and store paper resources as well as photographic images and other media we may have in our collections.

Digital resources present additional challenges. Of course, fire and water are always a concern. In addition, electrical outages and power strikes can decimate electronic storage. Thus, backups and off-site secondary storage are a must. Even with these protections in place, we know that digital files suffer degradation over time and also when they are opened or copied. So, a regular review of the accuracy of the digital content is necessary. This is accomplished through the use of a digital fingerprint called a checksum. If the checksum no longer matches the original, we know a file has been corrupted. Backup copies are then reviewed to locate an unadulterated file.

Another complicating factor for digital preservation is a concern with identifying and selecting important materials. In the past, paper copies of the university’s records were fairly easy to manage. The physical presence of a document was a reminder the record exists. Now those records might reside on one person’s computer and if a person changes jobs, locating those files may become difficult because of naming conventions, file structures, etc. Further threats include damage to com-
Ag and Native American records’ digitization ongoing, thanks to grants

Historical agricultural publications and Native American collections will continue to be digitized thanks to two recent grants to the Archives and Special Collections.

The new digital items produced by these grant projects will be added to SDSU’s institutional repository Open PRAIRIE (https://openprairie.sdstate.edu) and to the Digital Library of South Dakota (https://explore.digitalsd.org), making them publicly accessible to researchers worldwide.

The Archives project “Digitization of South Dakota State University’s Agricultural Publications: Cooperative Extension” was awarded $8,525 by the United States Agricultural Information Network’s Project CERES Grant. The project will digitize SDSU Cooperative Extension publications from 1917 – 1988. More than 1,200 print materials are in this collection.

The project complements the Archives’ first Project CERES grant (awarded in 2016) that digitized more than 700 scholarly publications from the SDSU Agricultural Experience Network’s Project CERES Grant. The project will digitize SDSU Cooperative Extension publications from 1917 – 1988. More than 1,200 print materials are in this collection.

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None of these matters are localized to SDSU. None of these concerns result in a need for a robust preservation plan and strategy to maintain the digital record of the university. We recently underwent a preservation review by the Northeast Document Conservation Center and have created a plan to address the identified areas for improvement here at SDSU.

Our goal for Briggs Library is not just to preserve important records but to also make them readily available for people to use. This is best done by a careful analysis of what to save, the selection of appropriate storage options, and a determination of how materials should be identified for future discovery. In addition, a regular review for degradation and the migration of files to stable digital formats are a must.

All of these matters are localized to universities. Thus, we urge all of you to think about these issues with respect to your own personal recordkeeping.

Open PRAIRIE is the SDSU public access institutional repository (IR). A Briggs Library service since September 2015, the IR supports the collection, preservation and dissemination of SDSU’s scholarship and creative output. It provides permanent storage of and public access to institutional materials.

IR, cont. from page 1

said. “We exceeded that expectation by posting over 5,000 items in the first six months, and almost 9,500 items in year one.”

The 500,000 downloads is a milestone that Biondo hadn’t anticipated to arrive as quickly as it did. Building the IR’s foundation came with challenges. Since Open PRAIRIE hosts content from SDSU departments and personnel, it was important for Biondo to do outreach that educated the university community about the IR and its benefits, and to encourage stakeholders to share their materials.

“An IR can be a great library initiative, but in order to succeed it needs the support of the other units across campus. Luckily, we’ve had leadership that supports it and departmental involvement throughout the university,” Biondo said.

He also credited collaboration among library staff and good student workers as part of Open PRAIRIE’s success.

Biondo said the IR furthers the university’s land-grant mission by “disseminating and sharing the knowledge and research that is generated by SDSU.”

“It has increased our reach across the globe. It’s provided a platform for SDSU to showcase its heritage materials and highlight the research and scholarly output of its faculty and students,” Biondo said.

The heritage thesis and dissertation digitization project that was part of the beginnings of the IR is halfway done and will take several more years to finish, Biondo said, but will result in all SDSU graduate theses and dissertations with copyright approval — dating back to the first one in 1893 — being in Open PRAIRIE.

Biondo expects the IR will hit one million downloads in October 2020.

“We’ll continue to grow and be here to meet the needs of the SDSU campus community as a place to house their digital materials,” he said.

Notes, cont. from page 1

puters, deletion of files whether on purpose or inadvertently, multiple revisions without documentation, and a host of other possible problems.

Additionally, even if materials are stored and organized in appropriate ways, the technology to view them may have changed over time hindering long-term accessibility. This necessitates a constant monitoring of technologies and the conversion to new formats (which could lead to further corruption).

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SDSU theatre history could be saved with donor help

There may be a second act in store for the SDSU theatre history left behind in Doner Auditorium.

The auditorium’s green room and makeup rooms hold nearly four decades worth of inscriptions from theatre students who covered the walls, ceilings and other surfaces with their signatures, dates, season lineup schedules, quotes and favorite lines from plays.

Built in 1912 as part of Morrill Hall (formerly known as the Administration Building), Doner Auditorium was home for hundreds of State University Theatre and Prairie Repertory Theatre shows. With the new Performing Arts Center addition, Doner Auditorium is no longer used for university productions and will eventually be repurposed, taking with it this historical record of theatre student perspectives that have accumulated since the early 1980s.

The Archives and Special Collections would like to document and digitize the content of the auditorium’s backstage areas. The department seeks donor assistance to fund the preservation of this unique institutional history.

Using high-quality photographs, printed theatre materials and open-source software, the Archives proposes to create an interactive exhibit in the form of a virtual map of the backstage rooms. With this map, users could select individual inscriptions and see related information, like digitized programs and production images. The online exhibit will provide a literal behind-the-scenes view of the theatre program that highlights the work and lives of the students themselves, not just the SDSU theatre history could be saved with donor help.

Friends of the Hilton M. Briggs Library

Gifts from Friends of the Hilton M. Briggs Library directly support the library’s efforts to advance scholarly excellence in a welcoming space for South Dakota State University’s students, faculty, staff and community.

To make a gift as a Friend of the Hilton M. Briggs Library, fill out and detach this portion of the sheet, and send it and the contribution to:

SDSU Foundation
(70760 SDSU Library Fund)
Box 525
Brookings, South Dakota 57007

Name: ________________________________________________________________

Email: ________________________________________________________________

SDSU Affiliation: _______________________________________________________

Enclosed: ___ $50  ___ $100  ___ $250  ___ $500  ___ $1,000  ___ other: _________

How would you like your gift to support the library?

___ book purchases or online resources   ___ library event sponsorship
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Would you like: ___ a digital bookplate and/or ___ a Jack Read poster

Please note any correction to the name or address as listed on the back:

The Impact of Friends

For decades, theatre students left their marks on the Doner Auditorium backstage areas, like in this corner of a makeup room. (Briggs Library photo)
Explore Briggs Online!

A Highlight from the Digital Library of South Dakota

Teams struggled to stay out of the mud pit during the 1958 Hobo Day week tug-of-war game. More images from the Hobo Day Collection are on the Digital Library of South Dakota (explore.digitalsd.org).

Grants, cont. from page 2

The Archives also received support for its project “Growing the Digital Footprint of American Indian Records: American Indian Student Assistants in the SDSU Archives” from the SDSU Wokini Initiative Challenge Grant for $10,000. Through this project, American Indian SDSU students will work in the Archives to organize, preserve and digitize American Indian related records. The collections they will process include the Oak Lake Writers Society, the SDSU American Indian Student Association and the SDSU American Indian Student Center. The digital records from these collections may be used to create online exhibits.

This project was modeled on the successes of last year’s Wokini grant to Archives, which focused on American Indian students digitizing the Ben Reifel Papers and culminated with SDSU senior Sophie Felicia curating physical and online exhibits from those materials.

Doner, cont. from page 3

characters they portrayed onstage. This publicly accessible exhibit would be a new resource to anyone interested in theatre in South Dakota, such as current and former theatre participants and instructors; scholars of performing arts, history, or culture; prospective theatre students; and theatre fans. The project would also include opportunities for theatre program alumni to share memories of the work involved in bringing a performance to life.

Donations of any amount will be accepted toward the preservation of this one-of-a-kind SDSU theatre history. The total project cost is estimated at about $10,000.

For more information or to donate, please contact Library Operations Manager Emmeline Weber by emailing emmeline.weber@sdstate.edu or calling (605) 688-5106.