

E-LIS: The Open Archive for Library and Information Science

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This article is an introduction to E-LIS, the open repository for library and information science (LIS) documents. Alberta library workers may want to contribute content to E-LIS and may also be interested in using E-LIS as a source of information on LIS topics.

The Open Access (OA) movement is one of more striking developments in the world of scholarly communication. The aim of OA is to make the recorded output of research, most of which is publicly funded, freely available to all over the Internet. At present, much of this information is hidden behind tolls such as subscriptions and is limited to those who have an association with an institution who can afford these costs or to those who can afford to pay on their own. There are two main avenues of OA: open access publishing; and author self-archiving in repositories. The latter includes institution-based repositories (many universities in Canada now have these; see the list at http://www.carl-abrc.ca/projects/institutional_repositories/canadian_projects-e.html) and subject-based repositories. E-LIS is a subject-based repository.

A non-profit, volunteer-run endeavour, E-LIS began in 2003 and is hosted by the Italian Consorzio Interuniversitario Lombardo per Elaborazione Automatica (CILEA). It can be found at <http://eprints.rclis.org>. E-LIS acts as a repository for LIS documents from outside the United States (a separate repository, dLIST, collects LIS material from the United States; dLIST can be found at <http://dlist.sir.arizona.edu/>).

E-LIS accepts content of many different types. Though most of the submissions are journal articles or PowerPoint presentations, E-LIS also includes books, book chapters, conference posters, datasets, library instructional materials, and newspaper articles, among many others. The preferred format for submissions is PDF but other formats can be accepted as well. The submission process is easy and is designed to be carried out by an individual, normally the author. Submitted documents are approved by E-LIS editors for the author's country; unless there are problems, acceptance usually occurs quickly after submission.

There are a number of advantages to depositing documents in E-LIS. First, it helps to "spread the word" about the research, writing, and presentations that occur in the library world. We do many interesting things in libraries but we often fail to report these activities beyond local circles. Second, a document in E-LIS receives increased distribution, something that every author wants (if an author doesn't want this, why publish?). E-LIS material is picked up by standard Web-based search engines and by OAlster (<http://oaister.umd.umich.edu/o/oaister/>) a search tool that concentrates on content in repositories. As a cogent example of

this, I deposited an article in E-LIS in early September and, less than two weeks later, the abstract for the article had been viewed 106 times and the article itself had been downloaded 40 times, not shabby numbers. Third, having a document in E-LIS adds a measure of preservation and backup access for the item. Finally, E-LIS helps in the growth of OA content, providing toll-free access for all readers; this is especially useful for those users who will never be able to afford to pay for toll-access content.

In addition to its utility as a repository, E-LIS acts much like a fulltext article abstracting and indexing tool. It can be searched easily and content retrieved without difficulty. It is also possible to set up alerts in E-LIS; I regularly receive email messages indicating that new material has been deposited that deals with subjects of interest to me.

As with any new tool, questions sometimes arise. For example, I am often asked if publishers allow articles that have appeared in their journals to also be placed in repositories. The answer is “yes”, mostly; the majority of publishers (including the Library Association of Alberta) permit article preprints and/or postprints to be placed in institutional and/or subject repositories. At present, there is no evidence to suggest that having journal content in repositories leads to a decline in subscriptions. A list of many publisher policies regarding repositories can be seen on the SHERPA site at <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo.php>.

To conclude, I invite members of the Alberta library community to deposit their writings, presentations, and more in E-LIS. As of late September, the number of documents in E-LIS is over 4500; additional contributions are always welcome and will help this great resource grow.

I am a member of the Canadian editorial team for E-LIS. Questions about E-LIS are always welcome. You can contact me at waller@ucalgary.ca.