Introducing your repository as the source of the item

Many visitors will come via a search engine to the full text file, bypassing your repository home page and metadata record, and a cover sheet is the only way to inform them of your repository's existence as the source. This is an opportunity to demonstrate the value of repositories to researchers and a chance to market your own institution. You can link to your repository home page, or to the metadata record for the item in the repository as a way of helping visitors to find more information or more content. The link to the metadata record may be all you need to include, as all other information could be in your metadata record. Tying the work to the repository can also be of benefit to authors, adding the weight of your institution's reputation to the item. Consider whether your cover sheet should contain any branding such as logos or images: it might become labour intensive to replace cover sheets if your repository and/or the institution are re-branded.

Meeting copyright holders' policies

If you are using cover sheets, then displaying a copyright statement is highly recommended. Some publishers allow post-prints to be made available online whilst insisting upon standard phrases being displayed along with the text: the cover sheet is one way to meet those requirements. Even when publishers do not require such statements, a standard statement referring to copyright demonstrates respect for rights holders, just as others who are reading your content should show. A simple statement that all rights are retained by the copyright holder(s) and the terms under which you make the item available in your repository can be included on a cover sheet. Consider that your policy might change over time, so you might prefer that a standard statement refers to a policy on your website, rather than using the cover sheet to detail the policy itself.

Information about which version is presented

Repositories don't all come with metadata fields for recording article version information. The cover sheet is an opportunity to redress such a lack in the metadata record, but even if the metadata record does make it clear which version the full text represents, of course the reader arriving via a search engine may only view the full text file so it is appropriate to include version information on cover sheets. It is often difficult to describe the version held in the repository, owing to the confusion over terminology and authors' imprecise records. However, referring to the published version elsewhere can make it clear that yours is not the published "version of record". It may also be worth pointing out that access to the published version may require a subscription, which explains the reason for making an alternative version available. VIF guidelines on cover sheets give more detail about version information [1], and the LSE repository [2] has cover sheets giving information about versions.

Helping others to trace the published version

It is the published version, the "version of record" that anyone wishing to cite the article is likely to want to cite (see page 9 of the VERSIONS toolkit) [3], and the cover sheet can be used to give the reader the information needed to trace and cite the published article. It would be a shame for an author to lose a potential citation because the repository version of the article itself did not contain enough information to make it easy for the reader to cite. [4] If possible, it would be ideal to put a full reference for the

repository version and for the published version onto cover sheets, making it extremely easy for the works to be cited. [5]

Reasons not to use Cover Sheets

If your metadata records are stored as static web pages then they will be indexed by Google, even though Google does not harvest through OAI-PMH. The metadata record is often the link we encourage authors to use as a handle for the items in the repository. As the pages with links to them, metadata records are likely to appear highest in Google results lists, so you may find that the metadata records are the pages that most people will come across, anyway, rather than the full text items, thus negating the need for cover sheets.

Your authors may prefer to attach their own cover sheets rather than have a standard one displayed. Especially if they wish their own work to appear in any "rollover" images in the metadata record, rather than a standard cover sheet. The cover sheet need not appear on every item or item type in your repository. Your cover sheets might be different for theses than for journal articles. You might have a policy to only attach cover sheets when authors have not supplied sufficient information in the text, to meet rights holders' requirements and enable others to trace and cite the final published work.

A cover sheet can confuse metadata extraction tools like Data Fountains [6], which finds things such as a rights statement, mission statement, name/ URL of the repository, or something else in a prominent position where it would normally find information from which it could generate a metadata record. If you plan to use such tools in your metadata creation, then you might not want to use cover sheets.

How to attach/ display cover sheets

A cover sheet might be page one of the file itself, added either by authors or repository staff, either manually or automatically as part of the deposit process. A repository could offer authors the facility to add an automatically generated cover sheet at the deposit stage, thus sparing people the effort of manual creation whilst also ensuring that appropriate data is displayed along with the full text, as Glyndŵr University's repository does [7].

Alternatively, the cover sheet might be generated on the fly at the point the document is requested by the reader, rather than being a part of the file itself. An example of on the fly coversheet generation can be seen at Southampton Solent University [8]. Such an

automatically generated cover sheet would not interfere with any automated metadata creation tools, nor with authors' wishes to have the front page of their work displayed in rollover images just as they intended it to look, and it would mean no extra work for depositors or repository administrators in attaching such cover sheets. Plus, any later branding or policy changes can be altered in the source information for such cover sheets.

Conclusion

There are many purposes that cover sheets can serve in a repository, but it is not necessarily certain that you should use them. Having given consideration to all the issues around cover sheets, you will need to balance your ideal scenario against your technical capacity and workflows, to decide on what it is actually going to be possible for you to do. Cover sheets are something that you might wish to re-address in the future as your repository matures and technological solutions are developed.

References & Further information

1 VIF guidelines (2008)
http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/vif/Framework/Object/cover.html
2 LSE Research Online example record giving version information.
http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/2631/
3 Versions Toolkit (Feb 2008)
http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/versions/VERSIONS_Toolkit_v1_final.pdf
4 WRAP example record with no metadata in the file itself.
http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/29
5 Birkbeck Eprints example record with citations for both repository and published versions.
http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/628/1/628.pdf
6 Data Fountains (2006)
http://datafountains.ucr.edu/
7 Glyndŵr University Digital Commons cover sheet example:
http://epubs.glyndwr.ac.uk/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1035&context=cair
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http://ssudl.solent.ac.uk/233/2/SubjLibPreprint3.pdf