

PROWE

Personal Repositories Online Wiki Environment

'How To/Questions to Ask' Guides



Guide Three: The Knowledge Perspective

Overview

The content of any wiki or blog or other informal repository set up by any institution to support the continuing professional development (CPD) of part time tutors obviously does not define or describe itself. But, effectively, since it may look attractive (or not), may encourage participation (or deter it) it does indeed have a “face”, and offers the semblance of active participation in the ongoing development of the system as a CPD initiative. Ownership and practice within may be controlled by the combined (and variably important) input of both users and institution but content will be viewed by others in the process as the actual practice of the system - along the lines of “it's great” or “it just wont let me in!”; that is, as having a character of its own.

Critical issues

Content in such an informal repository is unlike that to be found within a large formal repository where deposit is mandated, quality assured, structured and enforced by institutional, or even national, controls and systems. In a CPD informal repository content is likely to be extremely mixed, variable in quality and, quite possibly, of very limited **value** or interest to anyone but its immediate original author and a small associated group. The need for its **storage** over any period of time will be uncertain. Most critically, does content have lasting value and, if so, what is that value and how is it best nurtured and its equity harvested? **Metadata needs** and questions of **ownership and rights** are also important.



Storage

- Where is content being stored? Within an existing institutional repository or other electronic location, VLE etc.?
- What, if any, volume controls are in place? Format controls?
- Who has access to the content? Under what circumstances? How do rights of access match (or not) to rights to deposit, create or modify content?
- What content is being stored? Documents? Presentations? Databases? Others?
- How long will the content be stored for?
- How long will access to materials, or re-use thereof, be possible or guaranteed? What conditions might apply?
- What happens to stored content when authors and/or those who have re-versioned stored materials move institutions or retire?
- What means, if any, are available for transferring content to other repositories?
- What licensing arrangements cover storage?

Ownership and control - *including versions and re-use*

- How is content licensed?
- How is the creation of licenses organised?
- Are there any materials which cannot be licensed?
- What arrangements are made for work already published elsewhere, or en route to being published elsewhere?
- What role do authors/re-versioners play in licensing?
- What, if any, arrangements are in place for informing first authors (or any one else) when their material is downloaded/re-versioned/re-uploaded?
- What arrangements are in place for authors who subsequently wish to remove their material? (e.g. for print publication)

Monitoring and quality

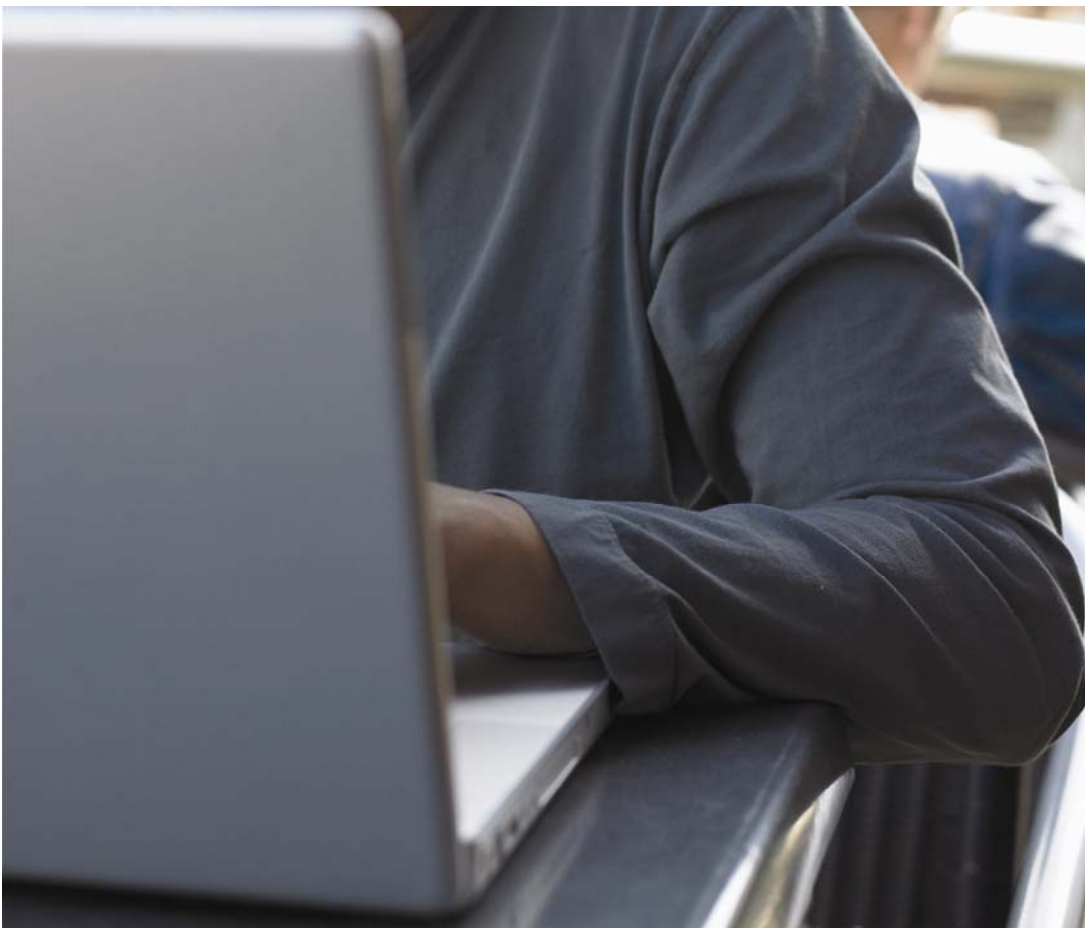
Repositories like PROWE are informal and largely under the management of users. They are nonetheless formally “owned” by the institutions hosting them. Branded as such the content, its nature and quality, become of concern more widely than simply to the user base.

- Is content monitored? Under what circumstances and by whom?
- Is quality of content monitored? How? (Peer reviews, public merit award e.g. stars etc.) By whom? How often?

- Is there any centrally determined institutional control over quality of content? What guidelines determine this?
- What mechanisms exist for reporting and taking action on failures and other problems?
- Are there controls on the volume or nature of material that can be added to the system? How are these advertised?

Metadata - *and other classification systems*

It might seem that applying full metadata to the content of an informal repository would be overkill and that perhaps an author tagged folksonomy would be more useful. However, reaching the critical mass of tags for a folksonomy to yield sensible results is in fact unlikely given the probable content input for any single institution. The report on the PROWE metadata experience is available from the PROWE website¹.



¹ The full metadata report with profile printouts and the abridged version are available online from the PROWE website at www.prowe.ac.uk

Other questions are:

- Is metadata attached? By whom? When?
- How is metadata for re-versions dealt with?
- If formal metadata is not used, is an alternative used?
- Whatever scheme is used will it support transfer of content to other internal systems repositories if needed?
- Whatever scheme is used will it support transfer of content to externally managed repositories if needed?

Legal stuff

It is not easy to establish issues of ownership for content in informal repositories. Nonetheless, authors need some visible guidance as to their responsibilities and rights as authors, users and re-users.

- What marks of ownership (of any kind) are visible within the system?
- What guidance is provided to authors/re-versioners/depositors? (Copyright statement from PROWE can be found below)
- How is content (to be) policed?
- What happens (will happen) when something is added that infringes copyright?
- Is there (will there be) a take down strategy?
- How are penalties (to be) sorted out?

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PROWE

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