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Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University

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How a young university can launch and grow a digital repository, and why it should

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How a young university can launch and grow a digital repository — and why it should




In 2010, **Singapore Management University (SMU)** was just 10 years old with aspirations to keep growing and attain a global reputation. But how could the University highlight the good work taking place in its schools and institutes? A core group of stakeholders decided that a digital repository was crucial to making the institution's intellectual output openly discoverable in order to achieve a more globally visible profile.



ELSEVIER

This case study shares SMU's journey, as well as tips that can help other young institutions launch a digital repository and open their research and scholarship to discovery by the world.



“[Our repository] is a very important and integral part of having our research made available to the world.”

— Professor Lily Kong
President and Lee Kong Chian Chair Professor of Social Sciences

The road to reputation: Singapore Management University (SMU)

Established in 2000, SMU is now home to around 10,000 undergraduates and postgraduates in the disciplines of accountancy, business, economics, social sciences and law, as well as computer science and information systems. It is also considered among the top 100 best young (under 50) universities in the world (Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings 2020¹).

Back in 2010, the University was in an earlier phase of building its reputation and was keen to find an institutional repository that could meet three key needs:

- Improve the visibility and profile of SMU research and scholarly publications
- Provide access to full-text articles (wherever possible)
- Organise the university's records for research and publications

After exploring the options available, an advisory committee that included the Provost, the Chief Information Officer and faculty members concluded that Digital Commons ticked all the boxes. According to Pin Pin Yeo, Head of Scholarly Communication (SMU Libraries), Digital Commons offered another clear benefit: “At that time, there were only three of us working on the repository with no dedicated technical support. Because Digital Commons is fully hosted, we were free to focus on the content and did not have to worry about the technology.”

SMU's repository, **InK: Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University**², was launched in January 2011 and achieved 1 million downloads in April 2016. As of this writing, InK is on pace to exceed **4 million** downloads by July 2020.

Tips for growing content in your repository

One of the challenges that many libraries face, whatever software they choose, is encouraging researchers and students to load their publications and scholarly works to the repository.

Currently, full-text versions of nearly 50 percent of the articles that SMU has published in its 20-year history are deposited in InK. When it comes to content published over the past two to three years, that figure exceeds 70 percent. The library team has achieved these impressive results with a **5-step** approach.

1. Automated transfers from the current research information system (CRIS)

Pin Pin explains: “Our current research information system is used for faculty appraisals so there is a built-in system to encourage faculty to update their records. When we talk to faculty, our focus is on encouraging them to keep their publications up to date in our CRIS. We then transfer the content from our CRIS to supply a regular influx of records to InK.”

2. Harvesting full-text articles from other online sources

The library team searched the internet for full-text articles written by faculty, which they then loaded to InK. This not only boosted the volume of content in the repository but triggered a motivational monthly email to those faculty members, containing download numbers and a dashboard link. Some faculty became converts and uploaded their full text regularly. The team also discovered that faculty from finance, accounting and law had been loading full-text content to SSRN³, so the library sought their permission to copy over that content too.

3. Driving compliance via policy

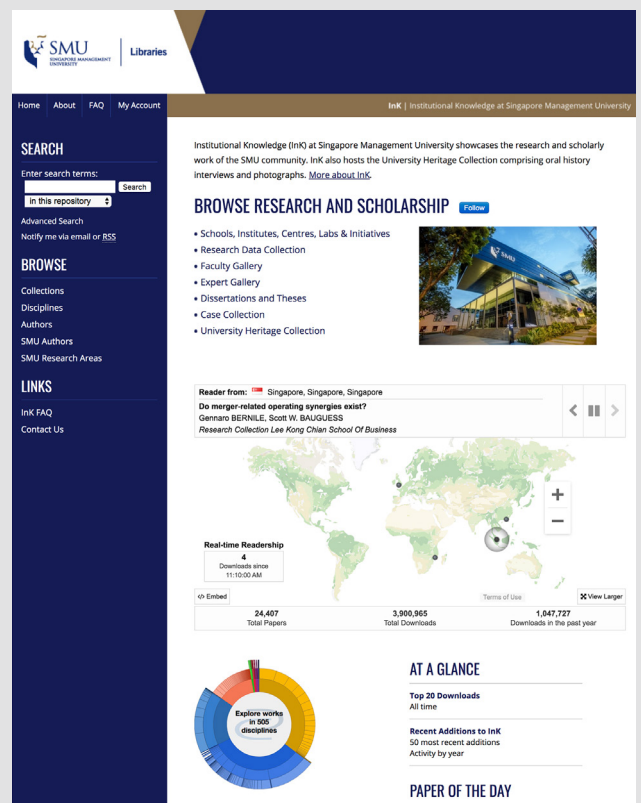
SMU already had an intellectual property policy requiring researchers to share copies of their publications with the University. However, not all faculty were aware of the requirement, so an open access policy was introduced, which highlighted the importance of providing the library with a full-text copy of each paper.

4. Nurturing ambassadors

The library sought the help of the Vice Provost for Research who became an advocate, and he actively encouraged faculty to submit full-text content to the library. The research librarians assigned to each of the University’s six schools took on a similar role, which resulted in another “big bump” in the amount of full text added. Pin Pin elaborates, “Whenever our research librarians would interact with our faculty on an everyday basis, they would be encouraged to deposit their full-text versions into InK. Because of this outreach, and because of the support of our Vice Provost Research, over time we could see a substantial increase in faculty buy-in and participation.”



Pin Pin Yeo, Head, Scholarly Communication



InK, Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University



“This type of information [Digital Commons reports] can help us to identify work being done at SMU that is attracting significant interest externally.”

— Professor Steven Miller

Vice Provost (Research) and Professor of Information Systems (Practice)

5. Engaging new faculty

Each time a new faculty member joins the university, their research librarian informs them of the library services — which includes InK. And if those faculty members arrive with a long publication history behind them, the library team helps them load those prior publications to the University’s CRIS, adding full text wherever possible and where it was not available, proactively asking for it.

Reaping the rewards of your efforts

A robust institutional repository brings many benefits in its wake, which has proved to be the case for Singapore Management University.

At the time of this writing, total downloads of the 24,000+ records with 10,000+ full-text papers in InK had reached 3.8 million. And that content is being viewed around the globe.

Boosting citations and benchmarking

Pin Pin and her colleagues in the SMU library used data from the InK repository along with citation data to investigate two hypotheses: that downloads in InK correlate to citations, and that citations for articles with a PDF in InK are higher than for those without.

The dataset used had more than 1,000 journal articles written by SMU scholars published between 2009–2018; then they checked the download figures in InK, the citation counts in Scopus⁴ and the Field-weighted Citation Impact (FWCI)⁵ in SciVal⁶. They found a positive correlation between high downloads in InK and high citation counts. In terms of SMU’s overall impact for the same period 2009–2018, SMU publications had an FWCI of 1.83, and 15 percent of their output was in the top 10 percent citation percentiles. Pin Pin notes: “For me, all the data showed that we are on the right track.”

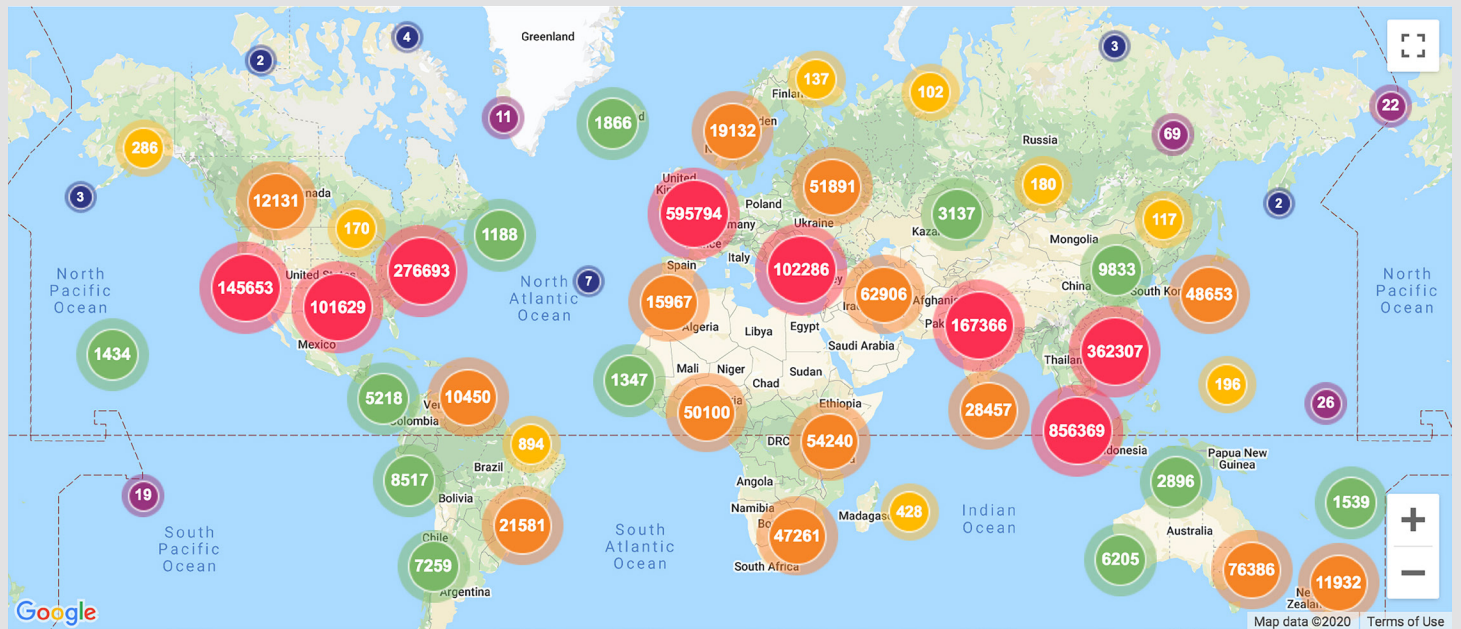
But downloads are not the full story. As Pin Pin explains: “We surveyed faculty members and found that it was not only downloads they find important. Other examples of what

mattered to them — and mattered more than just download numbers — were citations to their papers, recognition by their peers, media picking up on their research, invitations to speak at other universities, their papers being used in course readings. These were the ways they wanted to make an impact. They really appreciate InK for making their research discoverable and visible.”

That discoverability has led to some great individual success stories. For example:

- One faculty member received two separate collaboration requests from commercial companies. In both cases, they reached out after reading her work on InK.
- Other faculty members have seen citations of their articles rise after sharing the full-text versions in InK.
- Some faculty received invitations to speak at external events and institutions.

In addition, the success of InK has been highlighted in the President’s annual address to the University, and the download data has been widely shared when the library communicated with the schools. SMU’s efforts have been recognized by the National Research Foundation Singapore⁷ (NRF), which congratulated SMU for its repository that had a high proportion of NRF-funded publications deposited.



SMU’s readership map from their Digital Commons repository dashboard



Building on early success

The next steps for Pin Pin and her colleagues are to continue growing the full-text content in InK and to ensure that record metadata is accurate and complete to help with search engine optimization (SEO). They are also keen to explore whether there are other ways the library team can improve the discoverability of the content in InK.

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About Singapore Management University

A premier university in Asia, the Singapore Management University (SMU) is internationally recognised for its world-class research and distinguished teaching. Established in 2000, SMU's mission is to generate leading-edge research with global impact and produce broad-based, creative and entrepreneurial leaders for the knowledge-based economy.

www.smu.edu.sg



About Digital Commons

Digital Commons is a best-in-class turnkey solution for institutions to openly publish, manage and promote the full spectrum of their work. Built for discovery, our cloud-hosted digital repository software includes a professional-grade publishing platform for faculty and student scholarship, open access journals and books, conference proceedings, open educational resources and more. Nearly 600 institutions — and growing — use Digital Commons to preserve and promote their intellectual output and expertise.

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