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Journal Gazette-Times Courier, Journal Gazette-Times Courier
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With a few computer keystrokes, these and thousands of other materials can be accessed in The Keep, according to an EIU press release.

The Keep, administered by Booth Library, is the institutional repository for Eastern Illinois University. The electronic, open-access database is accessible through the library’s website, www.library.eiu.edu.

Since it launched in early 2012, nearly 30,000 documents have been added to the database, and those materials have been downloaded more than 100,000 times. The Keep is the second largest academic repository in Illinois and among the largest in the Midwest. And it’s growing every day.

The Keep is different from other library databases because it focuses on materials generated on campus or of local interest.

Allen Lanham, dean of library services, said: “The Keep is an integral part of providing worldwide access to locally produced information and research, especially by Eastern faculty but also for worthy projects throughout our region. We want to promote the best work of east central Illinois.”

“We try to include what we think will have an impact historically,” said Todd Bruns, institutional repository librarian at Booth Library. This includes information and images from EIU exhibits, conferences, video lectures, podcasts, posters, brochures, newsletters and press releases, as well as hundreds of photos and documents from University Archives.

Many EIU faculty and students contribute their research, papers and master’s theses by creating a “Selected Works” page in The Keep. Bruns continues to recruit more faculty members to post their documents this fall.

“It’s a really good tool, and it’s a way for faculty to promote their work,” Bruns said. In fact, for several months the most downloaded item in the database was a locally written master’s thesis about wind turbines, he said. People doing research on a particular subject often are directed to The Keep after they conduct a search on a web browser such as Google.

“The Keep helps me to make connections with a global audience,” said Betsy Pudliner, assistant professor of hospitality management at EIU.

“Because of the ability to upload work and create a place to enhance my own online digital portfolio, I have been able to reach a far greater field of audience than just here in the United States.”

In addition to individual faculty research, special collections in The Keep include Warbler yearbooks, past library exhibits and a plant inventory from Wesley Whiteside’s Botanical Garden, among many others. One popular collection highlights materials from the EIU theatre arts department.

Programs and photos for productions performed by EIU theatre from 1940 to today have been scanned into The Keep. “Although primarily from the files of the theatre arts department, these documents were found everywhere — on people’s laptops, file drawers and desks,” Bruns said. “We’ve put them all in one spot, and it’s searchable. The theatre arts department is ecstatic.”

Future collections will include photographs and programs from the 56-year history of the Little Theatre on the Square in Sullivan and editions from the 96-year history of the Daily Eastern News student newspaper.

The Journal of Collective Bargaining, a national publication of the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, also is housed in The Keep. The publication’s editor is EIU Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs Jeff Cross.

The journal’s access numbers “exploded” once it was added to the EIU repository, Bruns said.

While Bruns oversees the development of The Keep, many library staff members help with gathering materials, conducting research, and providing computer and programming help. In addition, student assistants spend dozens of hours per week scanning materials for addition to the database.

“One of the college deans said we’re essentially building a second library here — an all-electronic library,” Bruns said. “Like any library, it takes a lot of resources. This is paying off.”

The Keep has received download requests from all 50 states and 135 countries around the world, from Fiji to the United Kingdom.

“EIU’s name is getting out there in a different way,” Bruns said. “We’ve extended the university’s reach immensely.”

For more information about The Keep, email thekeep@eiu.edu, call Bruns at 217-581-8951 or access the repository at http://thekeep.eiu.edu/.