Advocacy and outreach in the arts

lessons from research outputs repositories.

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Repositories of research outputs are now a familiar feature of the global scholarly landscape.
Though researchers themselves instigated the first repositories, once institutions took over the responsibility of providing them, it became clear that we had not understood the importance of advocacy and outreach:

...the baseball players did NOT come out of the cornfield.
Advocacy Basics

Advocacy is essential – Sell the benefits – get out of your office – find your allies and champions – experiment and be flexible – use patchwork mandates backed up with action – have a core message – don’t underestimate the difficulty of accomplishing culture change – aim for emotional and intellectual engagement – use both top-down and bottom-up strategies – meet stakeholders one-to-one – target your message to specific audiences – and be prepared for advocacy fatigue!

(with thanks to Arthur Sale, Sally Rumsey, Gareth Johnson, and Anne Spaulding)
“Repositories are as much about people as they are about objects.”

University Governors
Vice Chancellor
Pro-Vice Chancellor of Research
Director of Research and Enterprise
Pro-Vice Chancellor Learning and Teaching
Research Office
Research administrators/co-ordinators

Research staff (including technicians) and students
Heads of departments
Learning and development team
Library staff – faculty and subject librarians
IT department
Marketing department including Web marketing team
Enterprise/KTP office

(Anne Spaulding, Gareth Johnson)
Communication Methods

Open demonstrations at suitable events

Workshops and training, with small groups, properly targeted for that group

Drop in sessions in the right locations and at the right times

Blanket publicity: newsletters, news items on university website. brochures, posters, and other print communications

Twitter, used strategically

Phone calls and skype and emails

Online, downloadable screencasts

Infiltration of scholarly communication networks; their conferences, seminars, workshops, etc.

(with thanks to Anne Spaulding)
‘does my art look good in this?’

(Andrew Gray 2009)
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(Andrew Gray 2009)
does my art look good in this?'

(Armond Gray 2009)
Andrew Gray 2009

Ronten, Andrew van den Broek, Koen and Verhoeven, Thibaut. 2010. 
Koen van den Broek: Curbs and Cracks. In: "Curbs and Cracks", Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent, Belgium, 26 January to 10 May 2010. [Catalogue/Exhibition]
Don’t use a foreign language

Step out of our bubble (librarians, systems managers, programmers, research support staff, etc.) and its discipline-specific jargon and learn how to communicate in the right language: visual artists understand their ‘method’ very well but may not be receptive to that term; likewise ‘data’.

"institutional repository" implies that the system is designed to support and achieve the needs and goals of the institution, not the researcher (Foster and Gibbons 2005).

De-science the repository: Re-engineer the technical tools so that they speak visual art.

Other language: process, reflection, relationship, archive, practice, context, curation...
UCARO generates individual researcher profiles, drawing on repository data.
Case study: GRO

(from Cooke and Nadim 2011)


Spalding, Anne (2012). Advocacy Toolkit: advocacy to increase arts research deposit. Available at http://www.vads.ac.uk/kultur2group/toolkits/advocacy/
Image Credits

Markus Tankard, Gordon Company (for Field of Dreams), Rob Adams, Goldsmiths Research Online, Andrew Renton.

Specialist Arts, design and media research repositories:

http://crco.cssd.ac.uk/ Central School of Speech and Drama
http://researchonline.rca.ac.uk/ Royal College of Art
http://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/ University of the Arts London
http://eprints.gold.ac.uk/ Goldsmiths
http://www.research.ucreative.ac.uk/ University for the Creative Arts