

Addressing Impediments to Reuse – The Open Folklore Portal

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Background

Open Folklore <http://www.openfolklore.org/> is a collaborative project between the American Folklore Society and the Indiana University Bloomington Libraries. The members of the Open Folklore team come from both the folklore community and the library community. The group was created on a sustainable model of cooperation between organizations rather than relying on grants to support its primary operation.

The Open Folklore project team is engaged in a number of activities to further the Open Access and preservation of Folklore materials including: securing rights and permissions to make the materials available; putting the materials in a secure place, such as a repository to assure the long term preservation of the resource; bringing the materials together in meaningful collections to make them accessible; and educating and advocating to others about the importance of preserving these materials and making these materials accessible.

Open Folklore Portal

The Open Folklore project team is currently engaged in improving the Open Folklore portal <http://www.openfolklore.org/> to make it a better research platform for the discipline of Folklore. In this process we have enlisted our library's Metadata Analyst/Librarian, the Head of Teaching and Learning, and a designer. The Open Folklore portal is a Drupal application that

harvests metadata from Folklore Open Access repositories and journals all over the world using the OAI-PMH protocol. The harvested records are then discoverable via an Apache Solr faceted search. This collection of folklore research materials is “curated” by the Open Folklore group and is expanded / added to by working with partners in the Folklore community. One of our project’s activities is to educate folklorists about how they can add their Folklore research materials to repositories and Open Access journals so that research can then be added to Open Folklore for further discovery and access.

Current Project

There are many potential impediments to the reuse of the material by researchers. Some of the impediments to reuse are caused by the nature of self-submitting repositories and Open Access, such as uneven metadata. Other impediments to reuse are caused by what we perceive as a lack of understanding by many researchers of both the richness of these research materials (gray literature, archived websites, Open Access journals, and archival material), and how these somewhat unfamiliar materials will fit into their research. The Open Folklore project team is trying to improve the reuse of these materials in a number of ways including: rethinking our technological approach to indexing and contextual approach to faceting the material, working with repository and journal editors about improving the metadata in their collections, and working with our head of Teaching and Learning department and our designer to develop approaches to presenting the material (such as contextual help) so that users better understand how research materials such as “Gray Literature” and “Archived Websites” fit into the Folklore research process.

The Open Folklore portal has aspired to be a type of “teaching tool.” We have tried to educate users about the Open Access movement as well as how to use new types of research materials (such as Grey Literature and Archived websites). With our current project, we also aspire to teach in a more intuitive way. We hope to teach within the interface and within the design. We hope moving our teaching into the interface will help remove what we see as impediments to the understanding and reuse of valuable research materials in the Folklore discipline.