

A new service has begun that will allow the UConn community to take advantage of developing technologies in order to solve a number of questions regarding the presentation, distribution and preservation of research and educational materials in electronic form. Participants from centers and departments to individual researchers can use the service to maximize the visibility and usefulness of their intellectual output, ensure its stability and preservation, provide access to a global user community, and enhance the reputation and impact of the University.

The service - and the solution - is [DigitalCommons@UConn](#). DigitalCommons@UConn is UConn's institutional repository - an electronic library of articles, working papers, theses, presentations and other files. After a successful one-year pilot, the Libraries are opening up the repository to the entire University, as well as the branch campuses, the Health Center, and the Law School.

DigitalCommons@UConn serves a variety of functions in the scholarly communication process. As an information-sharing tool, it provides access for the entire world to the valuable research conducted here. Documents are easily and reliably found via standard Internet search tools such as Google and Yahoo. The site itself provides a search tool as well. Documents are all open access, meaning anyone with an Internet connection can view, print, and download them. The only exception is UConn dissertations, which are also made available in [DigitalCommons@UConn](#), going back to 1997. The fulltext of the dissertations is available only to UConn-affiliated individuals.

As a preservation tool, DigitalCommons is superior to the diverse and uncoordinated efforts now in place at UConn. Currently, the uncertainty of staffing and budgets can lead to sudden changes in the availability of materials on department sites and servers. With [DigitalCommons@UConn](#), that uncertainty is removed. Files are assigned a URL, which is guaranteed not to change. So when you want to point your colleagues to your research, you can provide them with a link, and know that the document is going to be there – always. Files are backed up nightly, so they will never be lost. This should free up valuable staff time for departments, since they will no longer need to provide this service.

A number of individual researchers, departments and centers on campus have already taken advantage of [DigitalCommons@UConn](#), and seen its benefits. Faculty from the Center for Health/HIV Intervention and Prevention have used the repository to increase access to their published articles and book chapters – as many publishers allow posting of documents in repositories (and we can help identify which publishers do). Faculty from the College of Agriculture have likewise contributed peer-reviewed articles. The Senior Honors Program has begun storing Senior Honors' theses here. Before [DigitalCommons@UConn](#), these theses would have had almost no visibility to the outside world – now, usage statistics indicate that users around the world have downloaded them hundreds of times already. The Teachers Education Research Community, an interdisciplinary research group of educators and scientists, have opted to place conference presentations – both as PowerPoint and pdf files - in the repository.

These are just a few examples of what can be included. Working papers, sound files, video files, artwork, educational materials – all can be included. Dr. Cindy Tian, Department of Animal Science and the Center for Regenerative Biology, has begun submitting her peer-reviewed articles to the repository. In addition, she sees the site as an ideal location for “laboratory techniques and protocols, undergraduates’ honor’s theses, independent research term papers, ...and preliminary and supplementary data that are not included in formal publications in research journals.” Of course, there are many other possibilities, and new ideas are encouraged. The only restriction is that they be realized and submitted in electronic form.

Copyright issues may deter potential contributors – but they shouldn’t. As mentioned, many publishers now allow posting of published materials in institutional repositories – sometimes as pre-prints, sometimes as post-prints. Information on copyright, and other concerns, are addressed on a “For Authors” page within the repository. All repository policies, as well as information on how to establish a presence and the submission process are also available there.

DigitalCommons@UConn is open to all faculty, staff, and graduate students of the University of Connecticut. Contributions from undergraduates are considered on a case-by-case basis. Documents from UConn-sponsored conferences, meetings, etc., are also accepted, whether or not the author is from the University of Connecticut.

Throughout the coming months, informational sessions on how to participate will be organized for departments, centers, and individuals. Keep an eye open for these opportunities. For more information, or to establish a place in the repository, visit the site at [digitalcommons.uconn.edu](http://digitalcommons.uconn.edu), or contact Jonathan Nabe, Coordinator, at [jonathan.nabe@uconn.edu](mailto:jonathan.nabe@uconn.edu).