

The global advantages of Digital Commons: Perspectives from librarians around the world

Six institutions explain what prompted them to
adopt the Elsevier solution and the benefits they
are now reaping



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Finding the right solutions to drive institutional success isn't easy. In this eBook, customers from Singapore, Indonesia, India, Canada and the US explain how the Digital Commons modules are helping their institutions to:

1. Increase visibility and accessibility of their institutional outputs
2. Preserve and protect intellectual property
3. Reduce the burden on their IT departments
4. Comply with important mandates and guidelines
5. Professionalize their publishing programs

They also reflect on the reasons they selected Digital Commons, including the platform's **author dashboards insights**, and ability to **save time** and **streamline workflows**.

Greater content visibility and access

Institutions want to showcase the full spectrum of their scholarly outputs to a global audience

Digital Commons not only provides an SEO-optimized home for the full breadth and depth of an institution's scholarly output. This results in:

Improved reach and accessibility

For the American Dental Association (ADA), this was a key motivator for introducing their *Digital Commons Institutional Repository (IR)* [ADA Commons](#). Alisun DeKock, Digital Archivist and Publishing Librarian for the organization's Libraries & Archives, explains: "Our member societies create publications with clinical research articles and practical day-to-day guidelines, but their websites aren't really designed for archiving and searching. And issues and articles are not indexed, so they aren't discoverable. In fact, most of their content is really only accessible to their state or local membership."

"When we launched, someone at the national office asked us whether our goal was to get downloads from five states in the next five years. I told them we blew that metric out of the water in week two! We are really excited about what's happening with the content. **Key to providing access is global reach, and Digital Commons gives us that.**"



Alisun DeKock

Digital Archivist and Publishing Librarian for the American Dental Association (ADA) Libraries and Archives, USA

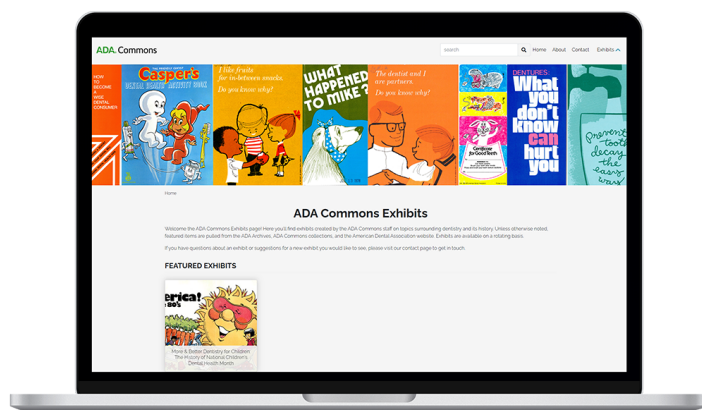
This resulted in members duplicating efforts and missing out on opportunities to learn from colleagues who had encountered similar legal, HR and clinical issues. The problem grew when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and dentists were scrambling to find information on how they could keep their patients – and themselves – safe. Alisun adds: "At the same time, they were writing about how they were operating during that unprecedented time, and they realized it was vital to preserve that knowledge for future pandemics."

Today, ADA Commons is available to all member groups to publish and archive their journals, newsletters, conference materials, videos, podcasts and scholarly works. And although the IR has only just celebrated its first birthday, it's helping the organization to expand its readership and reach, with more than 140,000 downloads from over 150 countries to date.ⁱ

ⁱ Figures current as of 07 March 2025.



The homepage of ADA Commons, the American Dental Association's *Digital Commons IR*.



The homepage of the American Dental Association's *Digital Commons Exhibits* module.

To help boost its readership further, the American Dental Association integrated the *Digital Commons Exhibits* module a year after the IR launch. Alisun DeKock, adds: “We just love having Exhibits – **it makes the content in our repository that much more accessible**. We can create exhibits that are entertaining, engaging and timely, and everything links back to the IR.”

For IRSST (L’Institut de recherche Robert-Sauvé en santé et en sécurité du travail), one of Canada’s leading occupational health and safety research institutes, providing easy access to content was also an important factor. In fact, it was one of the key reasons the organization chose Digital Commons for its IR, [PhareSST](#), says Library Technician Catherine Dufresne.

“Ensuring people in workplaces can access our information to help them work safely and stay in good health, that’s the most important thing for us. And Digital Commons makes that happen.”



Catherine Dufresne

Library Technician at IRSST (L’Institut de recherche Robert-Sauvé en santé et en sécurité du travail), Canada

The content in Singapore Management University’s *Digital Commons IR*, [InK](#), has received an impressive 9+ million downloads since the IR.ⁱ While this is a testament to the hard work of the Research and Data Services Librarian Danping Dong and her colleagues, she also points to Digital Commons’ strong search engine optimization and discoverability as contributors to their success. Danping Dong, Research and Data Services Librarian at Singapore Management University, adds: “We are a very pragmatic county, so we care about metrics. It used to take us around two years to grow our IR downloads by 1 million, now it takes just a year. **With Digital Commons, usage is growing exponentially.**”

The IR is also giving greater visibility to some of the university’s special collections. These include infographics produced by the Singapore institution’s Office of Research to increase the reach of important research findings, and a collection of oral history interviews with the university’s pioneers.

ⁱ Figures current as of 07 March 2025.

Greater faculty engagement

According to Danping, InK has developed into a virtuous circle. It raises the visibility of faculty content, which, in turn, encourages faculty to pass the full text of their publications to the library for uploading to the IR. This draws more visitors to the site, and the circle continues.

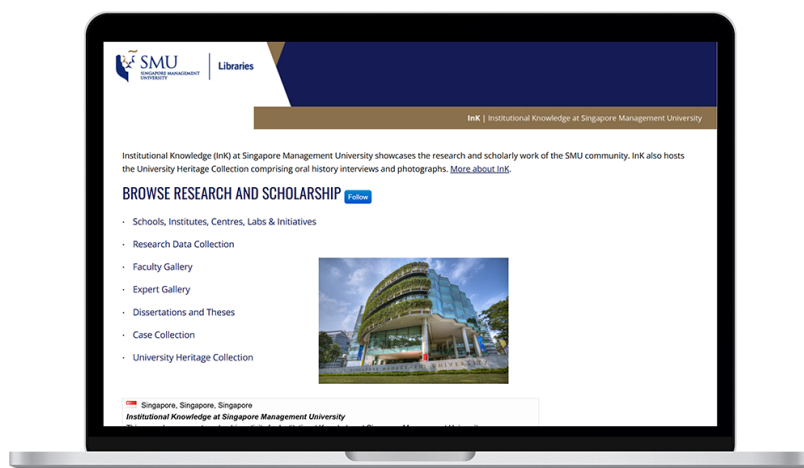
“Up to 80% of the academic publications on our IR are now full text. This helps to make our research more discoverable, potentially reach more people and achieve a bigger impact. And this not only makes researchers happy, it also aligns with institutional strategic goals.”



Danping Dong

Research and Data Services Librarian at Singapore Management University, Singapore

Danping believes the *Digital Commons author dashboards* have helped to boost the IR's brand and popularity on campus. For example, they have played a vital role in helping faculty understand how the IR can increase the reach of their work. The dashboards offer granular, shareable and exportable metrics on article usage to both authors and administrators. In addition, authors receive a monthly email from Digital Commons, featuring their readership metrics.



The homepage of InK, Singapore Management University's *Digital Commons IR*.

Preservation and protection of intellectual property

Keeping their hard work safe and secure is crucial for institutions

In the hypercompetitive world in which institutions operate today, preserving their intellectual property is critical – particularly in countries where phishing and hacking are rife. The Digital Commons platform offers institutions:

Protection from cyber attacks

For University of Indonesia, its journal publishing program is a strategic priority. It not only helps it comply with government guidelines, it also plays a role in delivering on the institution's aim to grow global visibility. For many years, the university used the open-source software OJS to publish its expanding portfolio of titles. However, the country has some of the highest rates of cyber attacks and phishing in Southeast Asia, and University of Indonesia journal sites were among those hacked. “We lost the archives of a journal that has been around for 20 years,” reveals Munawar Khalil, Associate Professor and Director of Research and Development.

Incidents like these prompted the university to introduce *Digital Commons Journals* on campus. According to Munawar, who is also an editorial board member of the university-affiliated *Makara Journal of Science*, the institution was attracted by Digital Commons' *continuous monitoring, automatic security updates* and *strict protocols*. And since Digital Commons' introduction, the institution's ongoing safety issues have been resolved.

"With Digital Commons, we don't have to worry about security. **We know our journals are safe.**"



Munawar Khalil

Associate Professor and Director of Research and Development at the University of Indonesia, Indonesia

Clear intellectual ownership

At Singapore Management University, Digital Commons is providing a different kind of security – protection from plagiarism.

"A faculty member was thinking about solutions to combat plagiarism during the publication process... I realized that our Digital Commons IR could provide that – there are time stamps, version control and other options like embargos. In fact, **this could further motivate faculty to give their full text to the IR!**"

Danping Dong

Research and Data Services Librarian at Singapore Management University, Singapore

Archiving in perpetuity

For the American Dental Association, Digital Commons offers the *effective archiving* it was seeking. According to Alisun: "None of our member organizations' websites really archive content. One group invested in digitizing all their issues back to the 1860s, but that content is currently buried in external hard drives and there's a risk associated with that."

ADA Commons not only provides a safe home for all these individual societies' content, it also enables Alisun and her colleagues to build an archive for the American Dental Association itself. The new accessibility of this content has already borne fruit; for example, a development in the ongoing conversation around fluoride led to a sharp spike in downloads of a recent ADA meeting on the topic. Importantly, the IR also provides a place for members who aren't affiliated with an institution to preserve their research publications.



The American Dental Association's archival collections.

Expert IT knowledge and support

Institutions require solutions that reduce the IT burden, not add to it

As a fully hosted solution, Digital Commons is easy for institutional libraries to manage and maintain, greatly reducing their dependency on other departments. With Digital Commons, they enjoy:

Reduced reliance on IT teams

Many of the interviewees for this eBook work at institutions with little or no IT capacity on campus, so the automatic updates and maintenance offered by Digital Commons are a major draw. Catherine Dufresne, adds: “Prior to Digital Commons, we had a homemade institutional repository, but **our main issue was the amount of work it required for our small IT team** to develop and improve it.”

“Due to the small size of my institution and the limited amount of support that we can have, **we knew we needed a cloud-hosted, service-based kind of institutional repository.**”

Danping Dong

Research and Data Services Librarian at Singapore Management University, Singapore

This support has proved particularly important at the University of Indonesia. Alongside suffering higher rates of hacking and phishing than the norm, the country’s technological infrastructure has struggled to keep pace with the rising demand from its internet users. So, when the university’s journals were on the open-source platform OJS, they not only faced security issues, but slow journal site response times, and even loss of access.

“**Our IT department is spread quite thin**, so updates weren’t always applied to our old servers on time. And when there was a problem, we would have to wait quite a while to get it fixed. We also experienced some security loopholes with both our server and the software.”

Munawar Khalil

Associate Professor and Director of Research and Development
at the University of Indonesia, Indonesia

Now the university’s journals are stable – Digital Commons is hosted on a secure cloud platform with 99.999% uptime. In addition, updates are applied automatically, reducing the burden on the IT, research and journal editorial teams.

For the American Dental Association, these benefits made Digital Commons the natural choice.

“Our affiliate societies just don’t have the IT capacity, the staffing levels or the knowledge to archive their publications. **With Digital Commons, we can do that for them.** Another plus point is that each of those organizations can have its own customized site, enabling them to maintain their individual brands and identities.”

Alisun DeKock

Digital Archivist and Publishing Librarian for the ADA Libraries & Archives, USA

No need for prior programming knowledge

Not all institutional repositories are intuitive or simple to use – to operate them effectively, administrators must master basic computer programming skills.

“We also considered Eprints and dSPACE, but **there are only four of us in the library and we don’t have the programming knowledge they require.** That made Digital Commons the perfect platform for us - we can work directly with our consultant to have improvements made.”

Catherine Dufresne

Library Technician at IRSST, Canada

Comprehensive support

Catherine and her colleagues also appreciate the guidance they received from Digital Commons when rolling out the IR at IRSST. She adds: “**Our consultant Jennifer provided the help, the information, the training, the templates...everything.** We didn’t have to think about a lot of things.”

Ease of regulatory compliance

Digital Commons Data streamlines the process of complying with funder mandates and guidelines

In January 2023, a new data management and sharing policy from major US funding body the National Institutes of Health (NIH) came into effect. Washington University’s St Louis School of Medicine is a recipient of substantial NIH funding, so it was important that the library had all its “ducks in a row”, according to Brittney Sandler, Research Support Librarian in the university’s Bernard Becker Medical Library. “Researchers are not only required to have a data management sharing plan, but to upload their research data. So, we wanted to provide them with a generalist repository associated with the medical school.”

She and her colleagues initially used the library’s *Digital Commons Institutional Repository (IR)* for this purpose – [DigitalCommons@Becker](#). However, although it was functional, the team soon realized that they needed a specialist data repository. And *Digital Commons Data* ticked all the boxes.

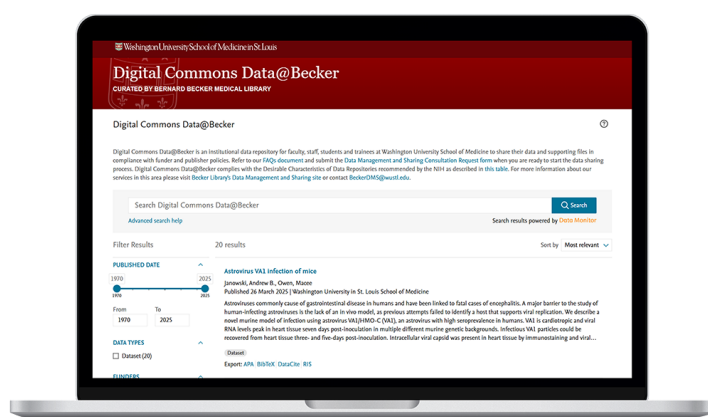
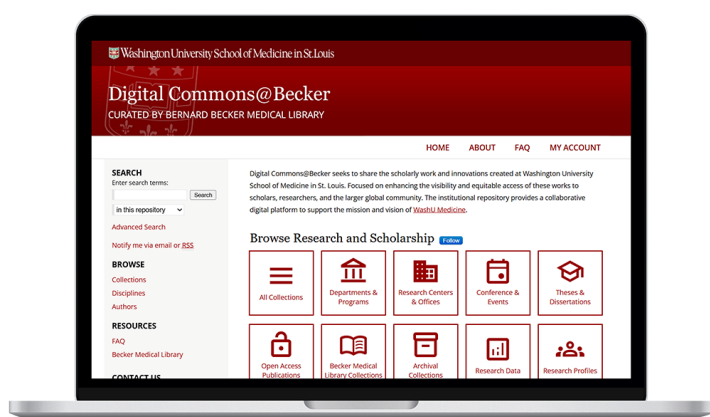
“Digital Commons Data complies with all the desirable characteristics and FAIR data principles. And it’s already been identified by the NIH as part of GREI – the generalist repository ecosystem initiative. **This gave us confidence that we would get the expanded and unified metadata that we needed.** And it also automatically gives us a DOI.”



Brittney Sandler

Research Support Librarian, Bernard Becker Medical Library at Washington University in St. Louis School of Medicine, USA

The university’s *Digital Commons Data* site DigitalCommonsData@Becker also offers *licensing information, customizable workflows, flexible download options, version control and high storage capacity (up to 100GB)*. Another major plus point for the library is *Digital Commons Data’s restricted data controls*: “We can create a work in progress and give the grant funders or the journals the DOI. Most datasets take quite a long time to curate, but this gives them reassurance.”



“With Digital Commons, we also have what I call my icing on the cake – **the ability for visitors to move seamlessly between our Digital Commons IR and our Digital Commons Data site.** Because the two share the same branding and user experience, visitors think they are on the same platform.”

Brittney Sandler

Research Support Librarian, Bernard Becker Medical Library at Washington University in St. Louis School of Medicine, USA

A world-class institutional publishing program

Digital Commons Journals empowers institutions to grow their global reach and reputation

By supporting the full publishing process, *Digital Commons Journals* enables institutions to:

Improve the standard of their publishing program

Another major motivator for University of Indonesia to move to *Digital Commons Journals* was the opportunity it offered to enhance journal quality.

“Like many other Southeast Asian universities, we think about how we can capitalize publications and scholarly outputs to improve our institutional reputation. **By having Digital Commons as our platform, we have been able to professionalize and push forward the quality of our journals to be indexed in reputable databases.**”

Munawar Khalil

Associate Professor and Director of Research and Development at the University of Indonesia, Indonesia

Munawar believes this focus on quality is also creating an opportunity for the institution to move up the global and national university rankings. He explains: “They use metrics on justifications of both academic and research reputation, and this is typically done by survey. Having your journals exposed in a top tier in Scopus can only be beneficial for your university’s profile.”

It also helps University of Indonesia comply with a government policy that requires institutions to focus on the *quality* of their journals, not just the quantity. Munawar adds: “**Trust from our current and potential readers is increasing, because we have an Elsevier platform with a strong track record.** That is really benefiting our journals.”

It was a similar desire to enhance the quality and reputation of its journal publishing program that led India’s Vishwakarma Institute of Information Technology to adopt *Digital Commons Journals*. Vivek Deshpande, Head of the Engineering Department, explains: “There are multiple rankings in India – not just the global university rankings, but our National Institute Ranking Framework. Previously, we were really only targeting education, but to ensure we do well in these rankings, our focus has to be on education *and* research.”

Another benefit for Vivek is that *Digital Commons Journals* can support publications from all disciplines, whatever their domain-specific requirements.

Another benefit for Vivek is that *Digital Commons Journals* can support publications from all disciplines, whatever their domain-specific requirements.

“Multiple faculties are coming to us with multiple publications. **We felt that Digital Commons Journals could help us meet that growing need.**”



Vivek Deshpande

Head of the Engineering Department at Vishwakarma Institute of Information Technology, India



The homepage of *Makara Journal of Science* on Digital Commons Journals.

Grow readership

When the University of Indonesia-affiliated [Makara Journal of Science](#) moved to Digital Commons, it saw a sharp rise in usage of its content – visits within Indonesia nearly quadrupled, while visits from outside the country tripled. Importantly, the journal was also indexed in Scopus. According to Munawar, “Ten of our journals have now been indexed in Scopus, the gold standard for journal quality. Two have even been listed in a top tier and are among the top 25% of journal publications in the world! **Having Digital Commons has really facilitated and improved our reputation in a global market.**”

Increase submissions

Another big benefit of introducing *Digital Commons Journals* at University of Indonesia has been a faster turnaround time for journal articles, largely thanks to the automation of many processes that used to be manual. According to Munawar, “**Journal publication is just more streamlined with Digital Commons.** With our old OJS platform, it took at least six months to get every article published. That timeframe has reduced significantly, and submissions have risen rapidly as a result.”

Showcase your institution’s research and scholarly work with **Digital Commons**

Digital Commons is a versatile, interoperable solution that helps hundreds of institutions worldwide publish, showcase, save, share and promote their research, scholarship and collections. The four Digital Commons modules operate separately or in combination to amplify institutional reputation and impact.

For more information about digital commons, visit elsevier.com/solutions/digital-commons



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