



Scopus



Digital Commons

Case study: A.T. Still University of Health Sciences

How Scopus and Digital Commons are helping one US library contribute to *institutional research goals*



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Founded in 1892 as the first osteopathic institution in the world, A.T. Still University (ATSU) has a long and rich history. Over the years, it has continued to expand its range of courses, and today it is widely recognized for the strength of its multidisciplinary healthcare education. Although teaching absorbs the majority of faculty's time, all professors are required to conduct research. In addition, many students complete research assignments as part of their training.

Supporting and promoting the university's research endeavors is a key focus for ATSU's A.T. Still Memorial Library. In this case study, Library Director, Hal Bright, explains how Scopus and Digital Commons enable his team to deliver on that aim.

Background

When Hal arrived at ATSU in 2012, it was his first foray into the world of academia. He explains: "Although I've been a librarian for almost 25 years, I started out in the public sector." Initially, Hal took on responsibility for the university's electronic resources, before accepting the role of ATSU's Library Director five years ago. "That's when I started dipping my toe into research," he recalls.

ATSU's library supports scholarly efforts across all disciplines taught at ATSU.

In addition to training Doctors of Osteopathy (DOs), the university's three campuses offer courses in areas such as dentistry, physical therapy, occupational therapy, audiology, speech-language pathology and athletic training, as well as other health sciences. They are also home to several clinics.

To help his team optimize support for research in these disciplines, in 2021, Hal subscribed to the [Institutional Repository](#) and [Journals](#) modules of Elsevier's [Digital Commons](#). In 2022, he added Elsevier's abstract and indexing database [Scopus](#). Here he runs through his three key use cases for the solutions and explains how stakeholders benefit.

“We can easily harvest articles in Scopus that are affiliated with us and import them to our IR. And the full text of open access articles comes too, which is awesome.”

Hal Bright

Library Director at A.T. Still University of Health Sciences, USA

Increasing the visibility of ATSU and its research

Solutions used:

- Scopus
- Digital Commons

Key benefits:

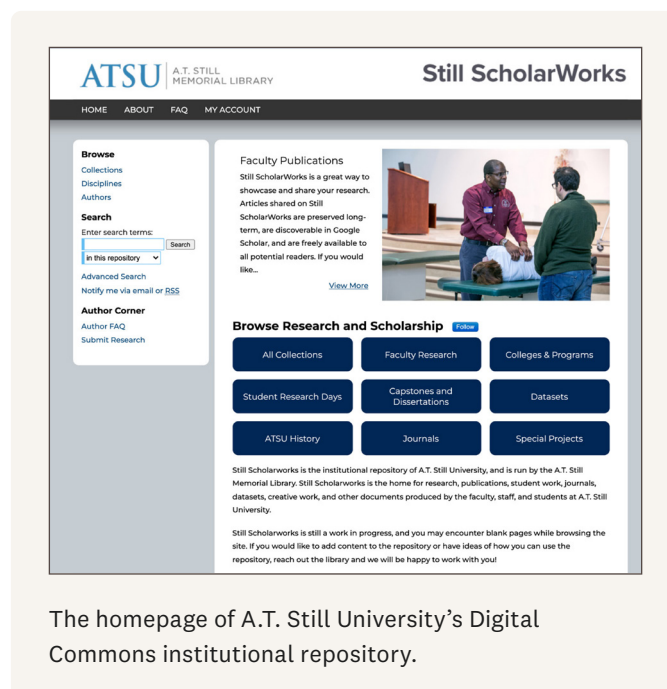
- Raise brand awareness
- Highlight faculty and student research outputs
- Support the university’s open access strategy
- Help the university meet equity goals
- Reduce the administrative burden for library staff and faculty

According to Hal, raising the profile of ATSU’s research is a key priority for the university: “Currently, the research of other health sciences universities is better known outside our field, and that’s something we want to change.” Hal began advocating for an ATSU institutional repository (IR) around seven years ago as a way of branding the university’s research. But that wasn’t the only factor that led him to suggest an IR. “We were also looking for a place to highlight our student research,” he explains. “And I felt an IR would help us deliver on our diversity, equity and inclusion strategic plan initiatives, by improving access to our research.”

Although Hal came close to getting approval for an IR twice over the years, both times it wasn’t going to be Digital Commons. However, when the administration team finally gave the go-ahead, there were a couple of compelling reasons that made Hal select the Elsevier option. “We found the support was just so comprehensive,” he explains. “And Digital Commons is indexed by Google, so it does a much better job of exposing the university’s work than other resources.”

Today, ATSU’s Digital Commons site — [Still ScholarWorks](#) — is home to the university’s research outputs, which include research articles, posters and presentations, along with student capstones and dissertations. Hal is still in the process of encouraging faculty members to add their full article text:

“Although our library is beloved across the institution, it’s been more difficult than I thought it would be,” he reveals. “Often faculty struggle to identify which version of the article they can post if it’s not open access.”



The homepage of A.T. Still University’s Digital Commons institutional repository.

“The institutional repository supports so many goals that I want to accomplish.”

“My team and I all followed the Scopus Certification Program for Librarians and that has really helped us unlock the tools in Scopus.”

Hal Bright

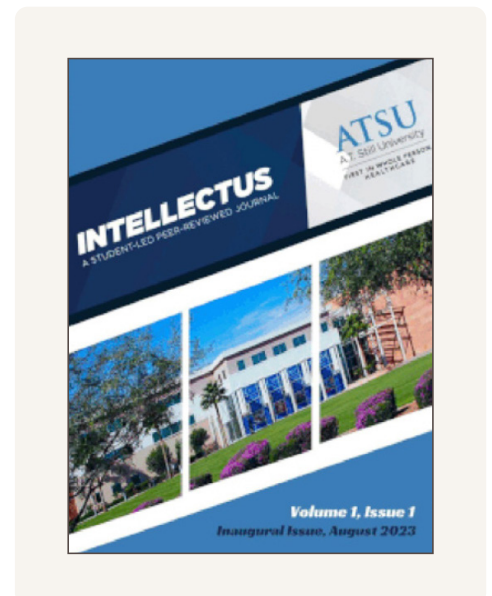
Library Director at A.T. Still University of Health Sciences, USA

However, he’s recently started using the [Digital Commons Harvesting Tool](#) to add article metadata. The tool automatically collects it from faculty publications indexed in Scopus, and Hal and his team then review and upload it to the IR. This greatly reduces the time they spend on data entry tasks and it helps them comply with open access (OA) mandates by flagging OA content.

Hal says: “I’ve just used the harvesting tool to create a list of our physical therapy department’s publications on Still ScholarWorks. They are going through an accreditation process, and a list highlighting their scholarly activity is a much more impressive resource to share with the accreditation board than a pile of CVs.”

Although building faculty content is still a work in progress, Hal is very pleased with the volume of student outputs in the IR. Students have even launched their own peer-reviewed journal, [Intellectus](#), using the Digital Commons Journals module. He says: “They approached us with the idea just as we were launching Digital Commons. I was able to tell them, ‘I’ve got just the tool for you!’” Using the module, the students manage the complete publishing process, from submission to publication.

Hal is also using Scopus to track potential new IR content: “Scopus alerts notify us whenever new articles affiliated with our schools are added. This helps us maintain contacts with our faculty as I can reach out and say ‘hey, we’d like to put it to the repository, can you get us the correct article?’ Or, if it’s an OA article, we just upload it for them.”



“The fact that you can enter the title, keywords or subject area of an article into Scopus and find relevant journals to publish in just blows my mind.”

Hal Bright

Library Director at A.T. Still University of Health Sciences, USA

Supporting researchers to publish

Solution used:

- Scopus

Key benefits:

- Reduces the administrative burden for library staff
- Enables open access publishing
- Helps the university meet equity goals
- Ensures articles are published in reputable journals

Questions from faculty and students around which journal they should publish in are common, says Hal. “Before Scopus, we’d have to hunt and peck for suggestions; for example, we’d manually check lists of journals to see whether they were a suitable fit,” he reveals. “Now, it’s really easy! I just say, give me the keywords of your article, I type them into Scopus, and I get back a list of relevant journals. It saves us so much time.”

Open access (OA) is an important part of ATSU’s diversity, equity and inclusion targets. According to Hal, the library takes a three-pronged approach:

- It provides the Digital Commons institutional repository for sharing the university’s wide range of scholarly outputs.
- It enters into read and publish transformative agreements with publishers.
- It supports open access publishing — this includes helping authors find suitable OA journals for their papers.

“When I look up journals for researchers in Scopus, the open access ones are flagged, so it’s easy to point them out,” says Hal. Importantly, because the titles featured in Scopus have all undergone a rigorous selection process by a panel of independent experts, he can also verify the integrity of

journals or publishers. He explains: “If someone asks me about a specific journal, I always check whether it’s in Scopus. If it isn’t, I check whether there are any journals in Scopus by that publisher, which helps me to determine whether they are reputable. It has given me a lot more confidence in recommending where to publish.”

While Hal also uses PubMed for finding and vetting journals, he finds the comprehensive coverage in Scopus is often more suited to his needs. “PubMed focuses on the medical sphere and doesn’t feature some of the other content we are interested in; for example, dentistry or audiology publications. It also misses some of the European literature.”

He adds: “I’ve also used Scopus to assess journals that faculty have been invited to be editorial staff on, or to find lists of journals they should read if they want to keep abreast of developments in their field. It’s incredible the amount of research that we can do.”

Another benefit is that Hal can use the Scopus metric [CiteScore](#), along with a range of other indicators in the database, to assess the citation impact of a journal. “I can say to researchers, these are the top journals in your area. And if they are too high impact for their paper, I can easily look up comparable journals.”

These kinds of insights are proving particularly valuable given that a number of Hal’s library team are new to the field of academia: “I’ve hired around seven librarians over the past five years, and I don’t think any of them came with direct health sciences library experience,” he explains.

“The addition of Scopus and Digital Commons has really firmed up our research support area. A lot of things they help me do match the strategic plan of the university, as well as the library.”

Hal Bright

Library Director at A.T. Still University of Health Sciences, USA

Enhancing search and discovery

Solution used:

- Scopus

Key benefits:

- Enables students to complete the research component of their studies
- Fills a previous gap in the library’s scholarly coverage
- Contributes to more robust review articles

While a comprehensive abstract and citation database had been on Hal’s wish list for a while, it was COVID-19 that provided the definitive push.

“The systematic review output for our university grew dramatically during the pandemic,” Hal recalls. “Although faculty and students didn’t necessarily have the access to patients or labs to do clinical research, they could do systematic, scoping or literature reviews. The demand for support for these types of reviews multiplied exponentially.”

According to Hal, best practice for systematic reviews in medicine is to use PubMed; a second specialty database in a field like nursing or psychology; and then a third database that includes the social and hard sciences — usually Web of Science, Embase or Scopus. “We were missing that third database,” Hal explains. “The problem was it was never going to be a core resource; rather a tool that would complete our coverage. And before the pandemic, I couldn’t justify the cost, given its potentially limited use.”

After reviewing the options on the market, Hal says he chose Scopus for three key reasons: “The price was good and the affiliation information for articles was complete. I also wanted that option to find and evaluate journals.”

Future plans

A short-term priority is to build ATSU’s usage of Digital Commons and Scopus. “I would say I’m pretty happy with where it is now, but it could be higher,” Hal admits. One step he is considering is adding a Scopus search box to the library webpages during an upcoming redesign. Another is integrating it into education courses for students. He is also exploring options to link Scopus with the university’s EBSCO tools.

And Hal is leading by example, providing faculty and the university with analyses that demonstrate what the solutions can do for them. “For our library’s 100th birthday last year, we analyzed the university’s publishing history in Scopus. We created graphs and posters showing what schools have been publishing; how many articles and which researchers have published the most. This year, I’ll prepare a separate analysis for each school Dean to show them the benefits of Scopus; for example, how it can support them with their advocacy to alumni and outside organizations.”

Hal also has plans to mine Scopus metrics to provide faculty with citation analyses. This might include showing them who is citing them the most, or doing similar work in their field. “I think it will unlock collaboration possibilities for them, and show them the power of the database.”

For Digital Commons, Hal would like to explore the option to use it as an archive for the university. “We haven’t had one for 30 years, so that’s something I’d really like to resolve.”



About A.T. Still University

A.T. Still University (ATSU) is the oldest osteopathic institution in the world, founded in 1892 by Andrew Taylor Still. Dissatisfied with 19th century healthcare, he pioneered the concept of a whole person approach to caring for patients and identified the musculoskeletal system as a key element of health.

Today, ATSU has three campuses (Mesa, Arizona; Santa Maria, California; and Kirksville, Missouri) on more than 200 acres with seven schools. They offer residential and online

healthcare-related graduate degrees, as well as community-based partnerships worldwide. ATSU has more than 1,300 employees dedicated to its not-for-profit mission, and an average annual enrolment of over 3,900 students from 20 countries.

ATSU is renowned for its pre-eminence as a multidisciplinary healthcare educator and has a rich history of leadership in both healthcare education and correlated research.



Scopus

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