VIVO as an institutional repository: a radical reconceptualization

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BACKGROUND

In 2012, the University of Idaho began implementing a VIVO instance, both as a database to describe, visualize, and report university research activity as well as a discovery layer for its fledgling institutional repository (IR). Although VIVO was not initially chosen to serve as an IR, the open source tool has proved to be a far more useful interface than other programs considered for the project.

A new position for the University of Idaho Library, a Scholarly Communications Librarian, was hired in 2013 in order to work on VIVO among other tasks. Since then, the library has pushed to create as many profiles as possible for university faculty, added over 8,000 research articles and nearly 2,000 grants, and moved all new electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) into the new interface.
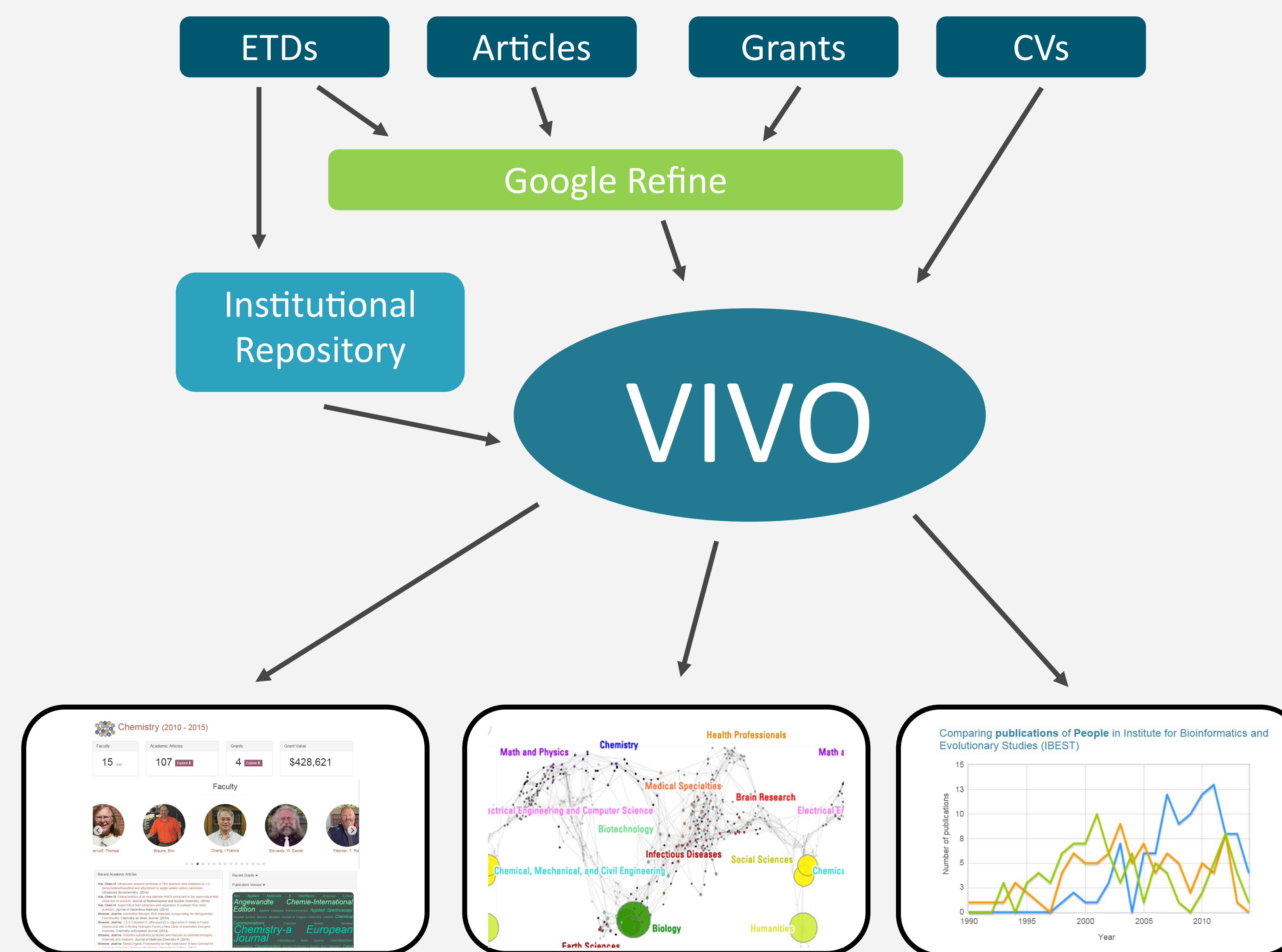
PROBLEM

The University of Idaho is underrepresented among land-grant research universities. Using VIVO as an institutional repository serves as a revolutionary way to expand access to and knowledge of UI research and scholarship.

GOALS

- Use VIVO to maximize exposure for University of Idaho research
- Create and implement an easy-to-use interface to access UI research and scholarship
- Showcase the institution
- Manage, measure, and monitor research activity
- Make possible the visualization of interdisciplinary collaboration
- Support student work
- Increase faculty participation and enthusiasm

Figure 1 - VIVO inputs and outputs, including new and future projects

VIVO EXPLORER

By repurposing VIVO data into dynamic, interactive websites, the VIVO Explorer (still in development) is one way we hope to bring the reporting capabilities of VIVO as an IR into the hands of university administrators and staff.

Expanding the re-use of VIVO data onto the main university website is a long-term goal for this project.

INTERDISCIPLINARY REPORTING

Our installation of VIVO at the University of Idaho came out of a request from several research organizations on campus. Specifically, they were looking for ways to accurately display the interdisciplinary nature of their work. The built-in visualizations in VIVO make this task easy.

Research centers are also excited to 'tag' scholarship to their organization in VIVO, in order to accurately describe their work.

MANAGING AND MEASURING

Administrators are particularly interested in VIVOs ability to keep statistics on their departments, colleges, and research organizations. Increasing the ease of creating reports from VIVO queries has been a priority for us.

Incorporating the university-required reports into a custom page – as well as a custom page for a university specific CV – is a future goal.

CHALLENGES

- **File hosting**

Since VIVO cannot host digital files itself, we have used contentDM as the back-end of the institutional repository. This work-around is effective, although it adds additional time to the process of adding items to VIVO, and contentDM records do not have predictable, uniquely identified links.

- **Search Engine Optimization (SEO)**

A lack of quality search engine results became apparent to the team as the project continued. One simple change, switching the way names are presented from "last name, first name" to "first name last name" tripled our hits, but our web traffic remains low.

We plan to further increase web traffic by getting the university webmasters to add links to VIVO to drive up SEO. Additionally, the arrival of a new digital librarian will help further improve the metadata in VIVO and our hope is that this will also improve our SEO significantly.

CONCLUSIONS

By transforming the traditional implementation of VIVO into a discovery layer for an institutional repository, we have made a more accessible, more interactive, and more complete representation of research and scholarship at the University of Idaho than a traditional IR could.

- VIVO obviates the need for faculty participation in an institutional repository
- VIVO significantly extends the University of Idaho's influence in a way that fulfills its land-grant mission
- Now that a significant amount of work on VIVO has been completed, faculty are beginning to see the usefulness of the platform