

**JSTOR Paper Repository Meeting**  
**September 4, 2002**  
**Ann Arbor, Michigan**

This memo summarizes the first meeting of JSTOR's Paper Repository Advisory Group held on September 4. Perhaps it is useful here to reiterate the purpose of this group. JSTOR believes it has a responsibility to insure that the development of the JSTOR archive will not result in unintended outcomes that are detrimental to the scholarly community. JSTOR's board has endorsed the notion that it is consistent with JSTOR's mission for us to take an active role in developing an appropriate number of backup paper copies of the journals available in the JSTOR archive. The purpose of this group was to provide JSTOR with advice on the right approach for such an effort, both in terms of scale and scope, as well as to provide JSTOR guidance on the best operational steps.

The meeting was a very successful beginning. We were able to make several significant decisions and sort through some complicated conceptual issues that will allow JSTOR to forge ahead. Details associated with these decisions are provided in the summary that follows below. Overall, discussion during the meeting led to a refinement of the mission for JSTOR's paper repository, which is:

*JSTOR will build a system of failsafe paper repositories designed to protect the complete collections of the journal runs available in the JSTOR digital archive. Our focus in building the first phase of this system will be to collect and house two paper copies of the complete set of JSTOR journals in a secure location that JSTOR can use to redigitize materials in the archive should that become necessary for any reason.*

It is recognized that this initiative operates within a larger environment, and that the specific logistical aspects of pursuing this mission should and must respond to that environment. For example, there presently exist many copies of JSTOR journals on the shelves of academic and research libraries around the world. Consequently, developing a repository accessible to scholars is less important at this time. Should the environment change, or if copies of particular issues are found to be in very short supply, different actions will need to be taken.

**Meeting Summary**

The meeting began with each person discussing why they chose to participate in JSTOR's offer to help plan a paper repository. Several members were eager to see a JSTOR repository serve as a model for future repositories and complement other planning efforts. Some members believed that the development of a successful paper repository might help legitimize digital surrogates. Several others were interested in monitoring behavioral changes in the academic community that this project might bring to light; for example, the use, or lack of use, of paper journals once digital versions become available. A general consensus was that there was much to be learned by JSTOR pressing ahead with this effort.

## **Background**

Kevin began by explaining the history behind why JSTOR is taking steps to build a paper repository. He said that JSTOR planned –from its beginning – to care for the paper versions of the JSTOR collection. Now that the case for digital access has been proven, a bridge has been crossed and, from an access point of view, paper is now the back up. He also suggested that a trusted paper back up would address some of the “free floating anxieties” of some scholars and librarians regarding digital surrogates. In addition, he emphasized that some materials, such as color foldouts, are not always presented best in digital form, so the paper copies should be protected.

There was a significant and lively discussion about the need for doing this project at this point in time. One member asked whether the project was worth pursuing at all. Others suggested that JSTOR think very carefully about how much money is reasonable to invest. Are the costs justified by the potential benefits? Is our approach scalable? We agreed that the reasons for building a repository fall in two primary areas: 1) out of concern about discontinuity with the digital version (i.e. fear that the digital version might become unreliable or unreadable), and 2) because there are some uses where the digital version is not an acceptable surrogate for the paper version (i.e. the artifact itself is important).

The group urged JSTOR to be open and forthcoming about all stages of the project and this sentiment was voiced early and often. It is important that the community be able to evaluate the approach if they are to develop the sense that JSTOR “has got it right.” The group agreed that as JSTOR goes through the phases of building the archive, staff should record the steps taken and the results in order to learn from the project and inform other collection strategies and archive models. JSTOR should be willing to share what it learns, such as best practices and costs, associated with each piece of the project.

The group moved into a discussion about the type of archive JSTOR should create. The options of a dark archive versus a dim archive were mentioned. It was asked whether microfilming was considered; Kevin responded by saying that microfilm preservation was not part of this project’s scope. We are focused on a paper repository.

## **Validation of a Complete Run**

The first item on the agenda – validating a complete run – was brought to the table for discussion. JSTOR’s detailed approach to finding the complete back runs for scanning was presented in background materials for the meeting to help the group assess whether that approach is sufficient and acceptable as a process of validation of the paper archive. In general, the group was very positive about the approach JSTOR takes and its degree of detail and thoroughness. One member did ask about the percentage of covers missing from JSTOR’s copies (a problem highlighted in the preparatory materials) and the group learned that perhaps 50% of the pre-1950 volumes were not in volumes received by JSTOR. It turns out that it was common practice for libraries to remove covers in older journals. This led to a discussion about how much effort would really be economical to try to find copies that have covers, and it was agreed that JSTOR would have to make a judgment once journals began to come in. There is a cost-benefit trade-off here. Once

again, the group urged JSTOR to be open about its approach, once the approach is decided. Kevin noted that, if JSTOR's approach is acceptable, Kevin said that the JSTOR database itself would serve as the roadmap for checking the comprehensiveness of volumes and pages to be included in the repository.

OUTCOMES: JSTOR's method is acceptable for the validation process and offers self-correcting methods through use of the database. The group would like to see the process described and publicized in more detail, suggesting that JSTOR publish a journal article detailing its processes for validating complete runs. The group also felt that recording JSTOR's validation methods would be valuable for others attempting similar projects. This is part of the effort to make JSTOR's work in the project as transparent as possible to the scholarly community.

### **Ownership**

Kevin asked the group if provenance should be considered and it was unanimously agreed that JSTOR should not concern itself with this issue. The group felt that there should be an agreement on the conditions of the deposit and an understanding that JSTOR would take responsibility for the journals and either use them in the archive, relocate them to other institutions, or dispose of them properly. The volumes would not be returned to the libraries once they were donated. The group briefly discussed the general concepts associated with the nature of the relationship that should be developed between JSTOR and donor institutions, including the possibility of having a license agreement or some other kind of formal acknowledgement of the donation. There was concern that some institutions would run into more obstacles if there were formal steps taken during the donation process. Again, all agreed that the process should be transparent, with clear understandings and explanations regarding the use of the journals and the responsibilities of JSTOR and the donating organization.

OUTCOMES: The repository group felt that donations to the paper repository should be irrevocable. How libraries choose to account for this in their records is at their discretion. The group also said that there is no need to record provenance. They did feel it was important for JSTOR to make sure it clear that it was taking a thoughtful and responsible approach to collecting and deciding on the volumes for the repositories.

### **Characteristics of a provider**

This agenda item was discussed throughout the day. Kevin began by saying that JSTOR's working assumption is that the archive would be inaccessible unless all other means of access failed and wanted to look at the parameters and reasonable standards to pursue for a provider. This framework led to further discussion about issues surrounding a dark archive, how it would differ from a light archive, and where tensions could exist in both. Topics discussed were security, how volumes would be processed, climate conditions, retrieval needs, and other services that might be needed. Alternate types of storage facilities, such as commercial firms like Iron Mountain or those hired by government agencies for records management, were briefly discussed. It was mentioned that utilizing commercial firms would be different from working with libraries in important ways. For libraries, the long-term protection of printed materials is central to

their core mission. Commercial facilities, by contrast, are going to be driven exclusively by the contractual arrangement entered into and by financial considerations. This may be appropriate, but consideration will have to be given to the increased risk of problems during uncertain economic conditions. Major research libraries are not likely to go out of business. In commercial arrangements, provisions for transfer would have to be in place. Near the close of the meeting, the group concluded that JSTOR should choose the facility that offers the best balance of cost, risk, security, and climate conditions.

**OUTCOME:** The group suggested that JSTOR should consult with experts on the parameters for security, protection and environmental conditions of a facility provider when the time comes to make this decision.

### **Number of archives and locations**

The discussion about numbers and locations of the repositories was predicated on the definition of the archive to be built. The understanding was that the number would be few, but actual numbers weren't discussed until late in the meeting. Once the group determined that the archive would begin as dark, the consensus was that two sets would offer JSTOR increased flexibility with little additional costs. JSTOR could assess the need and determine if geography were an important factor as the project progressed.

**OUTCOMES:** JSTOR will begin to collect all titles for two complete archives that will act as a failsafe repository should there be a need to regenerate the digital versions. The locations will be determined at a later time. Concerning triggers, JSTOR staff will be the only people with access to the archives for the present time. However, if there is a change in the current accessible system of journals, this decision may need to be revisited.

### **Collecting the titles**

The discussion about collection of titles covered broad and specific issues. Kevin began the discussion by considering the JSTOR Arts and Science I collection as a starting point. With 117 titles and over 1,400 subscribers, there are likely to be institutions willing to donate these volumes. However, the group felt specifying certain titles could limit donations. They felt JSTOR should take all JSTOR volumes that are offered. The group also agreed that JSTOR could create an infrastructure to funnel journals from libraries through its system, making adjustments in the collection and processing decisions as it learns more about who would be donating and how many volumes needed validating and processing. They agreed that JSTOR should determine how to balance the cost of doing these processes itself versus using outside contractors.

The issue of how to get the journals to JSTOR was discussed. JSTOR's experience with collecting journals for scanning has shown that limiting the amount of work to be done on the donation side greatly increases the likelihood that the volumes will be received as promised. Kevin suggested that libraries shouldn't have to do anything more than to box up the volumes and ship them and JSTOR would collate the collections. When asked what libraries would want in order to make the donation, the group felt that paying

shipping costs and providing assurance that the volumes will be treated responsibly would be enough incentive to donate.

Some members felt some colleges are prepared to send volumes right away. Other members felt that there would need to be some momentum in order to get ARL libraries to donate extra copies. Kevin said he would be speaking at an ARL meeting in the fall. The discussion shifted to thinking about a few institutions that might donate a large chunk of journals first, rather than doing an “all call” to every library. If a few large institutions donate nearly complete collections or large pieces of the collection, then JSTOR could quietly fill in the gaps with volumes from other institutions. Kevin said that JSTOR would put together a description of the whole paper repository plan, explaining its intentions, the mission, what it hopes to accomplish. This information pamphlet would be designed as an appeal to libraries to contribute volumes. The group agreed with this idea and encouraged JSTOR to begin this part of the project immediately.

**OUTCOMES:** The group recommended that JSTOR begin the process of creating an informational pamphlet that tells the story behind the repository project. Once this is complete, the group suggested that JSTOR solicit the library community and compile a short list of institutions that would be interested in contributing large numbers of volumes to the archive and acting as a core group of providers for the project. Once JSTOR has a better sense of the volume expected, then they will evaluate costs that will include facilities, personnel and possible storage to determine where the volumes will be collated and stored. The group also agreed that paying for postage and either keeping the volumes or responsibly passing them along would be the only incentives needed for the library community to make a donation.

### **Defining success**

Early in the discussion, Kevin pushed for the goal of setting a completion date. However, the group felt the focus should move from determining when the project should finish, to making the effort to get started and recording successes through libraries contributing to the archive and moving volumes off their shelves. Another form of success could be learning from the experiences derived from the dark archive and applying the information to future access models. Several group members mentioned that tagging records as being archived and listing them in a union catalog would be a means of monitoring progress. They said JSTOR could mark records in the JSTOR database with a letter or symbol that would appear on each volume once it is archived

**OUTCOME:** The group agreed that JSTOR should not be overly concerned with setting a completion date for this project, but focus instead on implementing the steps necessary to build the archive.

### **Defining accessible archives**

Throughout the day, the idea of accessible archives was discussed. Kevin maintained that the current library system is the accessible system and that hundreds of JSTOR journal volumes are currently available around the world. The group agreed that JSTOR

had time to wait as ARL libraries do not plan to discard paper copies in the near future. As libraries consolidate print holdings and work to reduce costs, collection strategies could change. Concerns about future behavior prompted the group to agree that JSTOR should begin tracking patterns of discard policies at libraries and be prepared to take action if libraries begin to deaccession large quantities of JSTOR titles.

**OUTCOMES:** The group agreed that JSTOR could defer planning for an accessible system of archives for the present time. JSTOR should create a system to monitor libraries' deaccessioning activities and begin keeping track of where paper copies are presently retained. If the current system of library archives should begin to deteriorate through changes in collection management policies, JSTOR would take steps to address the situation and assist in designating institutions to retain paper copies of the journals in regional locations.

### **Logistics**

While current costs for storage were discussed briefly, there was no specific discussion about how the archive would be funded. Kevin said that JSTOR would begin addressing cost issues as we learned more about what was needed.

**OUTCOMES:** JSTOR will begin calculating costs and considering what agreements and policies would need to be articulated to make the project transparent to the academic community.