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Versions in the lifecycle of academic papers - user requirements and guidelines for digital repositories

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An academic research paper evolves through various stages during its lifecycle, for example from early conference presentation through working paper to final published refereed journal article. Different versions can co-exist in publicly available electronic form. Finding out researchers'attitudes towards storing, labelling and making accessible these different versions, both of their own and of their peers' work is at the heart of the VERSIONS Project, funded by the JISC under the Digital Repositories Programme.

The project addresses the issues and uncertainties relating to versions of academic papers in digital repositories. By including a user requirements study, the project will clarify the needs of researchers and other stakeholders for deposit, storage and accessibility of different versions in the lifecycle of a digital resource. In addition to looking at user needs, the project will analyse researchers'current practice in terms of retention of author copies of their own material. This investigation into current practice will reveal the extent of available suitable versions for deposit in digital repositories.

The user requirements study and the investigation into current practice will feed into a third strand of project activity which will develop a toolkit of guidelines and will propose standards on versions. This activity will be carried out in coordination with the JISC and working with relevant metadata standards, publishing and OAI communities.

The project has a focus on eprints in the subject discipline of economics and takes a comparative view by drawing on established partnerships and experience with European libraries specialising in economics.

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