
October 28, 2015

Burnaby – British Columbians now have anytime, anywhere public access to research created at BC post-secondary institutions via Arca, a province-wide network of digital repositories. Arca is the outcome of a partnership between the British Columbia Electronic Library Network (BC ELN) and Charlottetown, PEI-based software firm discoverygarden, supported by a grant from the Ministry of Advanced Education. The name Arca, Latin for “treasure chest,” and the project tagline “Discover BC’s Digital Treasures” invites the public to discover digital gems at BC’s post-secondary institutions. Explore Arca at <http://arcabc.ca>.

Arca provides access to post-secondary institutional digital assets and research output via a cross-repository search layer, and showcases BC as a hub for knowledge creation across Canada and around the world. Participating institutions share a single repository, with individual customized website interfaces providing portals to their own content. Arca houses a broad variety of institutional knowledge, including scholarly material and digital assets such as administrative documents, newsletters, images, multimedia, and audiovisual materials.

Arca is built on Islandora, a Canadian-developed open-source platform currently in use at over 100 public and private institutions worldwide. This shared platform provides post-secondary institutions with open-access repositories for research, theses, and any other digital assets they wish to make available to the wider community. discoverygarden has been contracted to support implementation and to manage Canadian hosting. This partnership allows the Arca sites to take advantage of a robust open-source platform, without the deep technical resources normally required by open-source adopters.

Seven early adopter sites have installed the beta version of Arca. An array of digital assets from College of the Rockies, Douglas College, Emily Carr University of Art + Design (ECUAD), Justice Institute of BC, Thompson Rivers University (TRU), University of the Fraser Valley, and University of Northern BC can now be discovered through Arca. For instance, publications by TRU professor and ecologist Dr. Lauchlan Fraser are available from the University’s TRUSpace repository. ECUAD’s repository includes the Wosk Masterworks Print Collection of over 500 digitized prints of works by artists such as Cézanne, Renoir, Picasso, and Warhol alongside the Graduate Theses collection that showcases student theses, both written and visual. Later this fall BC ELN will be issuing a call-out for other BC post-secondary institutions interested in participating.

“It is exciting to be at the forefront of the launch of Arca,” says Debbie Schachter, Director of Learning Resources at Douglas College in New Westminster, and Chair of the Arca Advisory Committee. “Without this collaboration, an institutional repository would be out of reach for many of our BC post-secondary institutions. Arca enables institutions like Douglas College to share our collections and research with the public through our own customized Douglas Open Repository (DOOR), and within the broader context of the BC post-secondary community, on a robust and user-friendly platform.”

Phase Two of the Arca project is the development of a discovery layer to enable cross-repository searching of BC post-secondary digital repositories, including those using repository platforms other than Islandora. The Arca Discovery Layer Task Group was formed recently and will be commencing work in the coming weeks.

Arca is made possible by a grant from the Ministry of Advanced Education, which provided \$50,000 in 2014 to coordinate development of Arca, with a portion to support early adopters. Support from the Ministry of Advanced Education will ensure that BC continues to boast a world-class post-secondary system that makes the most of technology to create efficiencies, while delivering high-quality education now and in the future.

About Arca

Arca is a collaborative initiative to support the development and implementation of digital repositories at BC post-secondary institutions. Foundational to the creation of the proposed Provincial Digital Library, Arca is a province-wide network of institutional repositories, providing access to faculty and student research output across all post-secondary institutions, supporting the management of institutional digital assets, and showcasing BC as a hub for knowledge creation across Canada and around the world. Learn more about Arca at <http://arcabc.ca/>

About BC ELN

The British Columbia Electronic Library Network (BC ELN) is a partnership between the Province of British Columbia and its post-secondary libraries. BC ELN develops, promotes, and maintains system-wide mechanisms that allow post-secondary libraries to meet the expanding information needs of the province's learners, educators, and researchers at the lowest possible cost. Learn more about BC ELN at: <http://www.eln.bc.ca>.

About Islandora

Islandora is an open-source software framework designed to help institutions and organizations and their audiences collaboratively manage and discover digital assets using a best-practices framework. Islandora was originally developed by the University of Prince Edward Island's Robertson Library, but is now implemented and contributed to by an ever-growing international community.

About discoverygarden

discoverygarden helps all manner of organizations manage and preserve important digital assets with the Open Source Islandora framework. Their team of librarians, developers and systems engineers understand the complexities of building digital repositories, and use this experience to provide clients with installation assistance, content migration, customized development, metadata mapping, training, support and hosting.