

# *Researching the Information Commons (RIC)*

a research network initiative of  
Information Studies @ Curtin University of  
Technology

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## What is an information commons?

- collaborative.
- offers shared spaces, real and virtual, where communities with common interests and concerns gather
- interactive
- many are free or low cost
- governance is shared
- incorporate democratic values
- free expression and intellectual freedom prevail

## Examples in libraries:

- ***Building an Information Commons at the National Institute of Standards and Technology Library: A Case Study***

Nancy Allmang, Reference Librarian, Rosa Liu, Research Library and Information Group Leader, Susan Sanders, former Deputy Chief, Information Services Division

[http://libres.curtin.edu.au/libres15n1/Allmang\\_Liu\\_2005\\_01\\_31.htm](http://libres.curtin.edu.au/libres15n1/Allmang_Liu_2005_01_31.htm)

## UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

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### Scotiabank Information Commons

<http://www.utoronto.ca/ic>

## Examples in libraries:

- **Information Commons**
- The Information Commons, Hardin Library's state-of-the-art educational technology facility, offers high-end [multimedia development workstations](#), two networked [electronic classrooms](#), a [case-based learning/conference room](#), and [general use computers](#) for database searching, e-mail and word processing.
- [Computers](#)
- [Location/HoursContact UsWhat's New?](#)
- [Computer Based Learning Resources](#)  
Instructional software, educational multimedia titles and websites.
- [Personal Digital Assistants \(PDAs\) for the Health Sciences](#)
- [Virtual Tour](#)  
Take a virtual trip through our facility.
- [Staff Site](#)  
Login required
- [iLecture: Simple Online Lecture Tool:](#)  
iLecture is a free application developed by our Production Services team to quickly and easily get your narrated lectures online.
- [Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources](#) from the University of Iowa Operations Manual.
- Copyright © 1996-present. [The University of Iowa](#). All rights reserved.
- Hardin Library for the Health Sciences - [The University of Iowa Libraries](#)  
600 Newton Rd, [The University of Iowa](#), Iowa City, IA 52242-1098 Phone: 319/335-9151

## Another example

Can everyone in the world share a single database?

- <http://www.maya.com/infocommons/index.html>
- **The Magic Behind the Information Commons**
- Want to peek behind the curtain? Take a look at how MAYA's distributed database technology is transforming the way government agencies, non-profit organizations and research institutions access, manage and publish information. Learn more about the magic behind the Information Commons and how naturally it integrates with your organization's legacy systems

# Representations of the information commons

include:

- Information in the public domain
  - Open access movement/Scholarly publishing in electronic repositories
  - Information rights in the digital age
  - Fair use under copyright legislation
  - Freedom of expression
  - Equitable access to information
  - Government information
  - Information as property
    - The challenges of copyright
      - Protection of copyright in the digital environment
      - Creative Commons
      - Open access
    - Publisher control

## Representations of the information commons (2)

- Information re-use
- Enabling access to public information using
  - Finding tools
    - Data management –e.g. <http://www.ecai.org>
    - Records management
    - Archival practices
- The Internet
- Social informatics

## Challenges to the information commons

- Measures encouraging deregulation and privatization
- Media ownership
- Freedom of Information Acts
- Information as property
  - The challenges to copyright
    - Protection of copyright in the digital environment
      - Creative Commons
  - Publisher control

## Where to from here?

### **Vision**

- openness and feedback;
- shared decision making;
- diversity within the commons
- honouring social and legal equity amongst its members;
- fostering sociability within the commons (from Bollier, 2004,. p. 275).

### **Objectives** include:

- Stimulate research and debate within scholarly and wider circles on matters.

## Where to from here? (2)

### Functions and activities

- Research programs and collaborations
- Research student supervision
- Seminars and conferences – internal and external
- Publications:
  - Research journals e.g. LIBRES: <http://libres.curtin.edu.au> ;
  - Books;
  - Refereed journal articles
- Contributing to finding aids: e.g. The Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative (ECAI): <http://www.ecai.org/>
- Practicing the nexus between teaching and research