To: Paul Kobulnicky, Chair, OhioLINK Library Advisory Council and Inter-
University Council Library Directors

CC: Tom Sanville, Executive Director, OhioLINK

From: The Digital Resource Management Committee

Date: 11 January 2010

Subject: Status of the OhioLINK Digital Resource Commons

The members of the OhioLINK Digital Resources Management Committee are writing to express our acute concern with the status of the Digital Resource Commons (DRC) following the creation of the Educational Technology Division and the ensuing organizational changes. After the reorganization in November, a number of contributing institutions to the DRC were forced to suspend, slow, or halt digital projects of varying magnitudes at their institutions because DRC staff have been reassigned to other projects and have had their DRC password authorizations suspended.

The operations of the OhioLINK DRC are uniquely and publicly entwined with the contributing institutions. Unlike OhioLINK’s Central Catalog, Electronic Journal Center, or Electronic Book Center, each instance of the DRC is branded and individually identified as a local repository belonging to a particular institution or organization. Our patrons and public thus perceive interruptions of service and lags in development as deficiencies on the part of each institution, not on the part of OhioLINK.

It is now January, and the contributing members, liaisons, and OhioLINK DRC staff are still not able to resume working in the DRC. The development of the DRC in the past year has shown that a stable and successful large-scale multi-institutional repository was finally within OhioLINK’s grasp. OhioLINK has not been able to address our needs with respect to DRC development and routine support because of the recent reorganization, and that inability is putting our nascent success at grave risk.

These are some of the critical problems that remain unresolved because of the Educational Technology Division’s abrupt reassignment of OhioLINK staff and subsequent interruption of routine support and planned development in the latter months of 2009:

- Large scale, federally funded grant supported digitization projects are at risk because bulk uploading and DRC customization and development work are at a standstill, and because necessary, long-planned disk expansion has not been completed.
• Digitization units have had their timelines and workflows disrupted, which has an immediate and deleterious impact on planning and budgeting at the affected institutions.

• DRC liaisons and DRC staff are in the dark as to when normal operations will resume, making documentation, outreach, and training activities problematic at best.

• DRC liaisons are now queuing up long lists of requests for routine changes to DRC profiles, html branding, input forms, indexing, etc. We hope that beyond the resumption of normal maintenance activities, OhioLINK DRC staff will be allowed to act soon on long-standing requests for authorizations for DRC liaisons to execute some of these tasks and to establish a central FTP server to facilitate institutional uploads. These mundane arrangements are necessary for OhioLINK to be able to live up to the long-standing commitment it made that each DRC instance will function as the local institution’s home repository system.

• Two developers assigned to the DRC project have left OhioLINK this year and in Fall 2009 two senior developer positions were advertised, which the Committee was told would be assigned to the DRC project. It now appears that these two positions are on hold and when filled may not dedicated to the DRC project.

• There is now a long queue of institutions that have been waiting some time for their local repositories to be created. The committee was told that the new hardware and licenses that we needed were to be installed in November 2009. This has now apparently been delayed indefinitely because of the reorganization, even though the DRC staff and liaisons have been waiting for this expansion since November 2008 – more than a year ago.

• The members of the committee, as well as the DRC staff, have been promoting the DRC as a trusted institutional repository and digital platform both within their libraries and in wider venues on campus. The DRC liaisons are now in the position of having to tell those that are ready to contribute collections that they must wait.

In addition, a high profile, national opportunity has now irrevocably passed. The DRC was committed to participate as a test bed and co-developer of DSpace 2.0. OhioLINK could have driven the development of one of the most widely used open source digital library platforms, and instead DRC staff has been forced to notify the DSpace project developers that we are unable to participate. Instead of OhioLINK taking a leadership role in open source technology projects, the DRC has been abruptly sidelined.
With these concerns in mind, we ask that the Library Advisory Council and the Inter-University Council Library Directors forward our request to the leadership of the Educational Technology Division to address the status of the Digital Resource Commons and the resumption of normal services to the participating institutions that have committed time, money, staff, and their digital resources to the promised trusted statewide repository. Specifically,

- When will the DRC staff be able to bulk upload on behalf of the DRC communities?
- When will normal technical support resume for the DRC communities who are currently uploading materials one by one?
- When will the promised hardware and licenses be purchased to expand the DRC beyond its existing capacity and begin adding new instances to accommodate the institutions that are waiting for space?

We understand that this period of reorganization in the Educational Technology Division was meant to bring changes that will eventually benefit OhioLINK services and staff and the institutions that comprise OhioLINK. However, the DRC has been at an absolute standstill for two months, and the efforts that DRC liaisons have made to garner support and participation in the DRC are in jeopardy across Ohio. Libraries and other institutions are starting to wonder whether they will have to develop their own individual repositories at an enormous cost in duplicated efforts and resources, not to mention critical loss of time.

The DRC holds enormous potential and serves a fundamental need, as the repository for library special collections, cultural institutional collections, faculty research, learning objects, and digital records. It is not acceptable to risk losing the progress that has been made. The loss of trust and degradation of brand if service is not quickly restored will not only be between contributing institutions and OhioLINK, but between patrons and users on the one hand, and the individual institutions and organizations that have committed their reputations to OhioLINK and the Educational Technology Division on the other.

We are asking for the support of the Library Advisory Council and the IUC Library Directors in urging those who are in charge of the Educational Technology Division to commit to restoring DRC service as a priority.