Second ScholarWorks Position

If we hired a second position for ScholarWorks, I would recommend hiring another one similar to the current position. That position has broad responsibility for a wide array of project management and technology tasks, and there is more than enough work for the foreseeable future to essentially divide the work in half between the two positions.

# The current job summary

The Digital Repository Services Manager is primarily responsible for the design, development, implementation, maintenance, and expansion of systemwide institutional repository and digital asset management services in support of campus-led digital library initiatives. The Manager will work closely with campus libraries and academic technology departments to define needs, set out best practices, and develop and maintain systems and tools to support institutional repository projects. The Manager will additionally work with other Systemwide Digital Library Services (SDLS) staff in support of discovery projects and other initiatives.

# Some additional thoughts on the position today

The Samvera platform includes six underlying applications, all of which are fairly complex, including Fedora, which performs a lot of the basic storage and preservation tasks for the repository. There is a lot to master here in order to properly set-up and troubleshoot any problems that arise in ScholarWorks.

Part of the work also involves management of the Amazon Web Services (AWS) infrastructure (servers, storage, back-up, etc.), which is also complex. Currently, this is done entirely by Kevin. Over time, Chancellor’s Office IT may be able to take on some of these tasks, or some of this work could be outsourced to an AWS support vendor.

The current migration and implementation comes with some pretty hefty communication and project management overhead. It’s a lot for one person to do while also handling the complex and involved technical work mentioned above. David has now taken over most of these project management tasks, freeing up Kevin to work on technical issues. David is also handling the user interface design work for the new system.

Once we’ve completed the initial migration and implementation of ScholarWorks to Samvera, however, these project management and UI tasks will drop off significantly. The day-to-day support of the applications and server infrastructure will also decrease. Much of the future work will involve developing customizations or new features and managing upgrades to new versions. However, see below on additional systems.

# Pros and cons of hiring another position

The pros of hiring a second ScholarWorks position are:

* **Continuity**. Right now the CO only has one full-time programmer devoted to ScholarWorks. If Kevin were to leave for any reason, we’d have to rehire and retrain a new person before significant work could resume on the project. That would essentially leave ScholarWorks stalled for upwards of 12 months. This has already happened twice in the 12-year history of the project, and it will happen again, eventually.
* **Capacity.** In addition to ScholarWorks itself, the CO supports an instance of Open Journal Systems (OJS), and there is great demand for a second centrally-hosted Samvera instance to support digital archives, as well as a system for faculty profiles. Four large, complex systems is too much for a single developer to support at anything other than a minimal level. Two developers would allow the CO to better support these applications.

The cons of hiring a second ScholarWorks position:

* **Challenges hiring**. It’s not easy for the CSU to attract and retain programmers with the skillset and experience necessary to support Samvera and the attending AWS infrastructure, even at the salary range the CO typically offers for these kinds of positions ($70-$80k). In the past, SDLS could recruit widely across the state, allowing new hires to be housed at a nearby campus. But the current administration will require future hires to relocate to Long Beach, limiting the potential candidate pool.
* **Investment in training**. Hiring candidates at a lower salary with less experience will require longer training times, meaning new hires won’t become truly proficient for 9-12 months after they are hired. Hiring at a higher salary (at least six figures) could attract more senior programmers.
* **That money cannot be reallocated to other tasks**, even as the day-to-day support needs decrease after the initial migration and implementation. This would limit our ability to, e.g., contract for development work from a vendor, or even cover the expanding storage costs of the repository as more content is submitted.

Alternatives to hiring a second position:

* **David can serve as a bridge between hires**, especially if he continues to devote more and more of his time to ScholarWorks, essentially taking on this ‘second position’ role. This would negatively impact ULMS, especially Primo, where he would otherwise be focused.
* **Campuses could devote local programmer time to the project**, or that time could be bought out from a central fund. Not many CSU libraries have staff with the requisite skillset, let alone experience, but this could be cultivated over time. Long-term commitments would be needed to make this effective.
* **Contract with a vendor for support**. The CO does this now with DSpace, using a vendor called Atmire as second-tier support for the current DSpace ScholarWorks. SDLS is looking to do this regardless for the new Samvera ScholarWorks. But such a contract could potentially be expanded to cover an even broader array of tasks. This could prove to be fairly expensive, however, depending on how much we want the vendor to do. The vendor ecosystem around Samvera is not nearly as robust or mature as the one for DSpace, but it is growing.