

LYRISIS and DuraSpace Intent to Merge

Comments/Thoughts/Questions from the NDSA Infrastructure Group

May 2016

Please accept the following on behalf of the NDSA Infrastructure Group in response to “LYRISIS and DuraSpace Boards Approve ‘Intent to Merge’ and Seek Your Input”¹. The NDSA Infrastructure group is made up of members of both LYRISIS and DuraSpace. Follow up can be sent to the group at NDSA-INFRASTRUCTURE@lists.clir.org.

Comments below are organized directly around the announcement² from which pieces are taken from and summarized below; comments, thoughts, questions follow.

- *It is stated that “The new organization would focus on supporting current communities with no reduction in the delivery of services offered by LYRISIS and DuraSpace, while engaging a larger and more diverse group of stakeholders.”*
 - How many stakeholders are currently part of both communities? What specific benefits are there to those who are not part of both communities?
 - If memberships will remain the same (meaning you need to be a ‘member’ of either/both) to receive benefits, how does this translate to a larger and more diverse group of stakeholders? What additional benefits will be available to those who may not currently be part of both groups? What benefits will be available to someone who is a ‘member’ or associated with only the new combined group?

- *It is stated that DuraSpace will be able to continue their commitment to steward development of “community-supported software”. There are concerns around this statement.*
 - Lyrisis and DuraSpace steward the development of community-supported software in different ways. There are a lot of concerns about how the community supported software model will function within a combined model. For example, the DSpace user groups are generally open and this has enabled a combined effort to improve and move DSpace forward. However, many ArchivesSpace user groups require a ArchivesSpace membership to participate in possibly limiting the model provided by community supported software.

¹ Lyrisis and DuraSpace Boards Approve “Intent to Merge” and Seek Your Input:
<http://duraspace.org/node/2775>

² *ibid*

- Hosting services may also have an impact on this community environment. For example you must be a part of the LYRASIS membership with a hosted ArchivesSpace instance to participate in some of the user groups. If the DSpace user groups were closed off to only those with hosted instances, much of the community driven work would stop as there are more examples of non-hosted instances.
- *It is stated that “The merger will create a robust offering of technical solutions, enriched training and the creation of a **unified platform** that can meet its members' diverse needs,”...*
 - The words unified platform are concerning. What does this mean? It leads one to think that the end goal might be a unified ‘technical’ platform even though there are currently many with different underlying technologies [(Fedora, DSpace, VIVO, ArchivesSpace, CollectionSpace) and hosted services (ArchivesSpace, CollectionSpace, Islandora, DuraCloud, DSpaceDirect, ArchivesDirect)]. Does a unified platform indicate a greater push towards hosted services? How will the components of this platform interact with members’ other systems and services including commercial products and services such as Preservica and Ex Libris Rosetta?
- *It is stated that the combined organizations “have the opportunity to provide a **full suite of services** that will serve as a **foundational platform** for digital scholarship..”*
 - Over time, will the intent continue to be to support services built on a variety of platforms? Or will the merger lead towards the dissolution of one platform over the other?
- *It is stated that there is the “opportunity to become the home for **community source software**, providing cost effective solutions...” however there are some concerns about what this really means.*
 - We recognize that community source software must have financial support to be sustainable, but if the community is not open to everyone then it is not a very good home for community source software. For example, limited access to ArchivesSpace information is already reducing the community to a specific set of users. Requiring memberships for access to information that is currently freely available will be detrimental to the development of those communities. Will a combined LYRASIS and Duraspace maintain free access to documentation that is already available? Will a combined LYRASIS and Duraspace provide access to new documentation? Requiring memberships for access to information that is

currently freely available to all will be detrimental to the development of the software.

- *It is stated that “Coming together would unite each organization's **open-source technology programs under one roof**, along with Licensing and Partnerships, training and other membership services.”*
 - The open source technologies are built on different platforms. How will a combined LYRASIS and Duraspace unite platforms? Will consolidation happen?

- *It is stated that “Bringing the organizations together will mean 5 CSS programs and 7 hosted services under one roof, with **no changes to the delivery of the services currently offered by each organization.**”*
 - For how long can there be no changes in the delivery of services? If there are no changes, how are there cost savings? Who are these cost savings for? And if there are cost savings, how are these passed along to the community who are already paying for both services? For example, are the cost savings on the two organizations (by sharing such things as payroll, HR...)?

- *It is stated that “No **services currently offered by either organization will be interrupted**”*
 - *With the combining of two organizations with so many individual programs/projects/services themselves, how long is this sustainable for? What is the end goal? Do you expect services to be combined/changed/etc?*

- *It is stated that “LYRASIS and DuraSpace represent strong adjacencies for **each other's core missions, communities of service and suite of products/services.**”*
 - In general the organizations work towards similar goals and services; however, the methods in which they do so may not align. How will a combined LYRASIS and Duraspace address these differences?

- *It is stated that “A combined LYRISIS and DuraSpace organization would pursue a broad mission, including the **continued development of open technologies and services.**”*
 - *As commented before, there is a real concern about limiting access to services through some of the hosted models (as a benefit to those who use the hosted services) vs. keeping everything open for the wider community. If continued development of open technologies is a priority, openness (specifically around how current ArchivesSpace user groups work) will need to be addressed.*

- *It is stated that “the new unified organization could provide significant economies of scale, synergies in developing **open technologies and services, and a strong position for long-term sustainability.**”*
 - There seem to be a level of conflict here... these two organizations combining will bring together multiple open source technologies. Sustainability often comes at the prices of limiting services rather than supporting multiple services, how will this be addressed?

Additional General Comments not specifically related to the Intent to Merge announcement

- What would the name of a new combined organization sound like? Both companies have brand recognition. How would this be affected?
- The DSpace community has a large international presence. LYRISIS is only a US company. How will a combined LYRISIS and Duraspace respect the diversity of community needs?
- Heads of both companies have been in their respective positions for only a year or so. Why this move? Why now? Have they been in their positions long enough to really know their companies and the communities supported by them?
- Having fewer homes for open source projects may not be a good thing. How will a combined LYRISIS and Duraspace treat the independence of established projects? How will a combined LYRISIS and Duraspace encourage the growth of new projects?
- How does the development of ArchivesSpace reflect future projects? ArchivesSpace received over a decade of grant funding and community support through multiple open-

source projects. Once LYRASIS took on the responsibility to host the project, a paywall has been erected between the members and non-members of ArchivesSpace.

- Will a merged environment eventually prove to be a better fit for one project over another?
- How will revenue streams impact the support and development of existing and new projects in a combined LYRASIS and Duraspace? The experience with the ArchivesSpace raises concerns of how money will drive development and support.
- What will a merger do to the other service providers related to products? For example, DSpace has many options to turn to for 'service providers' across the world. Will these other providers become competitors for LYRASIS? How will this affect the overall community? Most of the service providers who work with the projects contribute directly back to the community. The community does not want to lose this contribution.
- How will a combined LYRASIS and Duraspace impact the development practices for each community? Will the methods for development change? Who will be responsible for the softwares underlying core code in a merged environment? Will it remain completely open, or available to only those with 'memberships' or other affiliation?