Draft content for questions we are asked

A page to capture questions we are asked about Samvera and/or repositories in general.

Charlotte's notes/responses
Karen's responses
Richard's suggestions
Chris's suggestions (and notes/suggestions)
Ryan's pedantic responses
Alicia's rewrite
Steph's responses, including trying to find a colour you guys hadn't already used that could be read easily

INTEGRATE THESE EXISTING FAQs: http://samvera.org/samvera-community-sourced-software/faq/

General

• What is Samvera?

Samvera is an open source digital repository framework that is community driven. The software technology stack utilizes four major components: Fedora repository software, Solr indexes, Blacklight and Samvera gems. A Samvera repository provides functionality for a flexible and extensible digital repository solution. From the beginning, Samvera has been envisioned as a collaborative effort sustained by a vibrant community of developers, repository managers, metadata experts and users working together to develop a repository solution. The name Samvera is an Icelandic term meaning "togetherness."

Note: There are a lot of definitions to What is Samvera? out there. Look at Samvera.org; Samvera in wikipedia and Richard's trifold idea. We should settle on one.

Note/suggestion: Possibly reverse the sentences on community and technology to put the community first. Highlight combination of widely used and community-specific components (making Samvera more than the sum of its parts). Thorny query - how much do we emphasise Fedora in this, given the development of Valkyrie. We have to mention it, but we also now need to highlight the flexibility - maybe mention the intention of technology sustainability through the ability to switch out components?

The name Samvera is an Icelandic term meaning "togetherness." From the beginning, Samvera has been envisioned as a collaborative effort sustained by a vibrant community of developers, repository managers, metadata experts and users working together to develop a repository solution. Samvera is an open source digital repository framework that is community driven, utilizing best of breed technologies to provides a flexible and extensible digital repository solution.

• What is Samvera being used for?

Samvera is being used to support a variety of needs at educational and cultural institutions including developing digital repositories for access copies of faculty publications and content of Archives and Special Collections; as a platform for scholarly communication through projects like DPLA, Fulcrum and Ubiquity Press; for the management and access of media collections; and for managing and preserving research data.

Note - include geo-referenced data? I know there has been activity on this, but I'm not aware of an active service using it currently.

Note - maybe give a link to the examples on the website too so people can go and see for themselves how Samvera is being used and what it looks like?

• What is Samvera going to cost us?

There is a cost in terms of investing in developers, digital repository and metadata librarian, and contributing to the Samvera Community. It is also important to consider that joining the open-source community is an investment in the future of collecting, managing, preserving and providing long-term access to your digital content. Community members do work with vendor partners/contributors who can help in getting an institution up and running, or developing new functionality.

NOTE: This is from the Samver FAQ page:

How much does Samvera cost?

The Samvera software does not cost anything. It is free and open source, available under an Apache 2 license. Of course, this is free in the same way that stray puppies come free: you will have your own ongoing support and maintenance costs.

Could we maybe list the cost areas? E.g. -
In-house - developers, infrastructure, repository management staff (but you'd have this with any repository), community contributions (staff time, travel costs etc)

Outsource - cost of development work, hosting, support, could also include community contributions, but this might be optional, depending on the organisation (i.e. some customers of outsourcing are involved in the community, others prefer that the team /organisation they engage for the job also looks after the community side of things

- How much work will it take us to implement Samvera?

Need help rewriting this one

(-How do we want to break down this question? I have a handy "roadmap" from our consultation with DCE that details how to build a Samvera-based repository according to phases in a certain order. Do we want to get this granular? Or do we want to offer a general answer about how much designated staff time in what timeframe is necessary to get up, running, maintaining, and growing? I would say give a low range and high range and qualify. Say for a quick implementation with no customization it could take a knowledgeable Rails developer X amount of time. But depending on how complex a system you need and how much customization, it could also take months/years. I agree, but again emphasizing the investment being made. Might also be worth adding something about where to get further information on this topic - e.g. attend a Samvera event with a link to the relevant page on the website?

Content management

- Why don't we just put the content on a shared drive/webpage/SharePoint, etc.?

I would remove this question. I think the community understands the value of organized information and the need for metadata for preservation and access. To answer this question requires going into why libraries organize information and the need for managing, preserving and providing longterm access to the scholarly record.

- Content can be stored and/or presented through alternative systems and interfaces, but without the organisation that a repository provides the content will lose its context and value over time and require additional work to maintain it, increasing the total cost of managing the content. Many systems offer the ability to deposit, manage, deliver or preserve content, but only repositories like Samvera look to provide all of these in a single package.

-Something about structured, facetable metadata-accessibility, discoverability, navigability? Is this a question about the very use/value/function of searchable repositories?

-Management and curation by library professionals with an eye toward permanence, assurances of best practices and pathways towards preservation

Probably also a question of volume. With large collections of items, to effectively find anything it needs to be managed better than throwing in a bucket.

- What does Samvera give us that DSpace/EPrints/ContentDM/Islandora, etc. doesn’t?

I need help crafting an answer to this question - it’s not either or.

-Samvera operates on the most updated versions of Fedora, Apache, etc.; other solutions operate on outdated dependencies. (I don't actually know if this is technically true-it's just something I've heard! Do others know?) Samvera gives you an open solution and a community to work with to improve the code.

-Manageable flexibility in looking after different types of digital material

Samvera provides the ability to curate and provide exhibits from a single database (to simplify Fedora), provide content specific finding tools (GeoBlacklight, etc...). And would really double down on the shared community development aspect - everyone says it, but we actually do it

Flexibility to start small and plan to grow, in stages that you can manage in line with your needs and your budget

- I've heard people talk about Hyku, Hyrax, Sufia and more. What are they? What's the difference?

Hyrax is a relatively new Samvera component that combines the best parts of two previous Ruby gems, Sufia and Curation Concerns. It provides most of the "back-end" functionality that is needed to build a Samvera application. Hyrax utilizes the Samvera framework to provide users with a base-level institutional repository (IR) solution that can be customized, allowing for easier upgrades and better sustainability as the users are not working with an entirely home-grown DAMS or IR.

Hyrax is the product release from the Hydra-in-a-Box (HyBox) project and it is built using Hyrax as its basis. Hyku is an easily installed "solution bundle" which provides a basic repository system. Hyku can be installed locally or provided as a cloud service; it can be configured for single or multi-tenant use. Here’s an example: A vendor could use Hyku to run a single instance which would be home to multiple customers utilizing the same Fedora, Valkyrie and core components but display entirely locally with local control for customers.
Sufia is a predecessor of Hyrax - and while it continues to exist at some institutions, Hyrax is a combination of Sufia, Curation Concerns and original development work from the Samvera community.

- How do we measure Samvera against other (not OS) systems?
  
  I can't compile an answer for this one

  - Community operation and participation / ability to modify the code / ability to integrate other tools

  - I think we double down on Community ownership and management here. From a technology perspective, it's a matter of taste in many ways - but we do run on Ruby, and it's maybe easier to recruit Ruby devs than, say, Java devs if DSpace is any indication (Java devs can make $$$$ in the real world)

- Is there an exit strategy for me when I need to move on?
  
  We know that nothing lasts for ever and that some of our community will probably wish to move on to other, non-Samvera solutions in time. Samvera is developing bulk import and export capability - the second of which will allow the contents of a Samvera repository to be exported in a way that might be consumed by other platforms.

  Just to note that as a service provider, we are being asked this a lot, and people are very happy with the answer above, and the idea that OS means you can move on. They see it as a trust and sustainability positive thing

Community

- Where are you off to this time (and why)? - in relation to travelling to events/meetings

  The value of participation in a community in terms of adding to the local resource through shared knowledge and practice. The value of face-to-face communication to support this. The equivalence with attending system user groups for commercial systems (in terms of costs equivalence). The value of growing the community. See the letter that Mark Bussey pointed us at re: Agile2008 - see https://www.agilealliance.org/convince

  Rather than going it alone, we consider this shared work to greatly benefit us as for every bit we give, there are 30-odd other universities similarly giving of their time and enhancing Samvera. While we could create a stand-alone system, we'd be doing it ourselves, and the expense of maintaining something custom, over the longrun, would outstrip the occasional costs of Samvera participation. The 90's taught us all a lot of bad habits for localized software development rather than working with others to ensure multiple hands were in play to keep a system going and improving.

  Being part of the community means my organisation gets my own efforts, multiplied by the efforts, experience and expertise of many, many other people who are incredibly knowledgeable in their fields. Face-to-face community events are staff development, training, sharing of our own experiences and professional networking all rolled into one. An organisation is able to invest in staff and know they are being supported in learning skills and gathering experiences directly relevant to their work when they participate in the community. We really do go further together.

- Why does the community give away for free all the work they put in to building the system?

  If we give we also gain from what others are giving. Giving takes on many forms and types - code, metadata development, time. Giving is a form of investment that acknowledge the return we expect from others in the community.

  Contributions to the community are not one way. We don't just put time and resources in, we also take out the combined work of all of us that has gone into the systems we use in our own organisations. It is a balance and an investment over time in people, technology and sustainability.

- How do we know it will be around in 5 or 10 years?

  - Discuss the investments (time, money, and staff-time) that leading partner institutions have made? Is this also where we get into the value of open sources repo technology for the future of accessible, open-access scholarly communications? Yes Also compare all that is said here with the commercial model - could be gone overnight?

- What do you mean when you say you are part of a community? How does that work? (with regard to trying to explain OS and Samvera and other communities we belong to as a team)

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  (I copied Ryan's response from under Where are you off to this time?)

- What are the stakeholder categories of the Community (Partner/ Adopter/ etc...)
I suppose we should get clarity from the Governance Model WG before drafting a response to this. This will more likely come from the Contribution Model WG: at present it goes Partner/Member of the Community (adopter, kicking the tires etc)/Supporter (likely an adopter who contributes cash but does little else for the Community)

Samvera has multiple open interest and Working Groups contributing at different levels of the technology stack. Work is managed in concert with other users to ensure a "one size fits all" approach. Likewise, the Samvera Community has working groups that manage the community itself.

- What is expected of a community member? in terms of time? resources?
- Active, participatory membership in a WG? The Contribution Model WG is developing a recommendation that will be explicit about what the Community expects of Partners (and, conversely, what Partners get in return). For Community members who are not (yet?) Partners we expect them to justify the term "Community member" by contributing back something.

Difference between Open Source and a Commercial product

-I appreciated this link Chris shared way back at the founding of the Marketing WG: https://www.linuxfoundation.org/blog/marketing-open-source-project/. Perhaps we could paraphrase a few points from this piece, especially with regard to the value of the community as the identity of the software. Agree

Communication

- How can I connect with the Samvera community and stay up to date on developments?
  There are a few ways to stay connected. For newcomers to the community there is the Samvera Community Google Group and Slack #general. For Partners there is the Samvera Partners Google Group and Slack #partners. For Developers there is Slack #dev. For attendees at Samvera Connect, Slack #connect.

Technical

- Where can I try/download Samvera?
  All the software is available through the community's github site at https://github.com/samvera. Documentation is available at http://samvera.github.io. A test instance of Hyrax is made available by Data Curation Experts (DCE) at https://nurax.curationexperts.com/

- My institution/organisation is moving more and more stuff into the cloud. Can I have Samvera in the cloud?
  Hyku was created specifically to work in the cloud as a multi-tenant solution for delivering repository solutions. There is a Hyku Interest Group that is taking forward the development of Hyku for use in this context.

  Several Samvera repositories are deployed or partially deployed via AWS. AMI’s, docker storage and other cloud-friendly technologies are being used to support Samvera deployment and Samvera solution bundles (example: Avalon is fully deployable in AWS and uses AWS transcoding to create multiple bitrate versions of uploaded media content)

  Do we have a list of examples we could point to online? As this is a growing area with a lot of interest, something online could capture new stuff and people could see the latest information

- Does Samvera meet good standards of accessibility/security/etc.?
  The Hyrax gem, which is the basis of most Samvera systems at the moment, has undergone an external accessibility audit. A few minor issues were found which are currently being addressed.

- How stable is the code?
  The code is being actively developed on an ongoing basis, but is also being released in managed ways. Hyrax has a roadmap that highlights ongoing development and likely release schedule; individual gems have component owners who announce new releases periodically.

- Who else is using Samvera, and how are they using it?
  There is a list of sites using Samvera at https://samvera.org/samvera-partners/ (this needs updating with more links)

Legal

- Who owns the IPR? (internal question)
  Samvera code is released under an Apache 2 open source license. All contributors to the code, and their institutions, have signed a Contributor License Agreement granting Samvera the right to distribute the contributions they have made.

  Samvera documentation is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License except where specifically noted.

  Who owns the license again?
  I’d love to see a resource like ‘A guide to OS for your legal time’ that could be referred to here (but probably out of scope)