

Conclusions

The research reported here produced two major contributions to the larger project goal of improving access to electronic information repositories. First, it provided a field-based description of a wide range of exemplary practices that have been undertaken to pursue that goal. Combined with review of the literature, this description provided a broad knowledge base of the problems repositories are facing and how they are responding to them. That provided one part of the answer to the improvement problem: namely an idea of **what can be done**. The opportunity to contrast what was being done in a variety of organizations helped supply material for the other part of the answer: namely **what should be done**. That is, this research combined with the material gathered from other sources in the project made it clear that not all access issues and problems called for the same response. What is shown in this research, and illustrated in the figure above, is that one size does not fit all.

Recognizing these patterns of complexity in access to electronic information was an important part of the discovery process. It led the research team to consider how to represent the diversity of situations and responses that planners and analysts should take into account. This in turn led to the identification of distinct dimensions that represent the important kinds of variability that should be taken into account in designing electronic access programs. Those dimensions form the central framework for the overall project report that grew from this study and the other activities of the project. They are a synthesis of the large volume of information gathered along the way, much input from the professional community, and considerable effort in analysis and synthesis. The combination is hopefully an important contribution to the improvement of electronic information access.
