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University of Exeter research data management and open access training for Staff

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University of Exeter Research Data Management and Open Access Training for Staff

Introduction

As part of the Jisc Managing Research Data Programme (Jisc, 2014) the University of Exeter received funding for the 18-month Open Exeter project starting in October 2011 (UoE, 2014). Building on an internal project, Open Exeter's aim was to create an environment in which Exeter was equipped to 'act open' with its research data in order to facilitate collaboration and increase the global impact of research. The project brought together Library, IT and Research Office staff. We have continued to build on the work of the project since it ended in 2013.

Although infrastructure capability is an important element of any research data management (RDM) service, equally, if not more, important is increasing the knowledge and understanding of the institution's staff. Crucially, it was not only academic staff with whom the project team needed to engage: Professional Services (PS) staff (Research Office, Library, IT Services and Academic College Research Support teams) were also important target audiences.

Throughout the lifetime of the project the Open Exeter team conducted a variety of training sessions aimed at the different categories of staff. This article will briefly outline the different types of training offered at Exeter for RDM and open access.

Identifying Training Needs and Formats

With a finite budget and resources, both financial and staffing, it is important to identify where training efforts should be focussed. One of the early successes of the Open Exeter Project was our, adapted, Data Asset Framework (DAF) survey (DCC, 2009). The full results are available to download from Open Research Exeter (ORE), Exeter's Institutional Repository (UoE, 2012). We made a decision that we would not run a full DAF survey but focus on using it for our requirements analysis. The final section of the survey asked questions on "Research Data Management Training and Requirements". Only 11% of our respondents (31 out of 284) had received any such training. We also asked two further follow up questions "Would you like to receive data management training in the following areas?" (Q31) and "What format would you like data management training to take?" (Q32). The results influenced our future direction.

The results of Q31 are in Table one below - respondents could select more than one option. At the time of running the survey, sessions on Bibliographic Software were the only training offered by Exeter.

Table 1: RDM areas in which Exeter researchers would like to receive training (2012)

Training Area	Number
How to Develop a Data Management Plan	144
Organising Research Material	123
File and Document Management	112
Legal and Ethical Issues	115

Bibliographic Software	83
Institutional Repositories and Open Access	121

Sessions on any of these topics could be taught by suitably trained information professionals. However, at a survey conducted at the DARTS3 conference in June 2012, it was clear that the librarians present would not feel comfortable teaching a number of the topics. We shared these results in blog posts (UoE, 2012 (2, 3)). Our findings support those of the RLUK Re-Skilling for Research report (Auckland, 2012 p.43). These results are now two years old and it would be interesting to run a similar survey today to see if the results have changed much.

The survey results also showed that when asked whether they preferred Online Training Materials, Presentations and Talks, Training Workshops, or 1:1 training (Q32) researchers overwhelmingly favoured Training Workshops and Online Training Materials.

Although a small number of PS staff completed the DAF survey, most of our requirements analysis for this category was conducted in meetings and informal discussions .We discovered it is easier to meet with PS staff who have distinct roles, for example Subject Librarians, than it is to meet with a representative selection of "Researchers".

Our analysis of the DAF survey and our meetings with PS staff meant that we developed a broad range of training and guidance materials.

Training and Guidance for Library Staff (see also Guy, 2013)

As the Open Exeter project was funded for only 18 months, we needed to develop the skills of fellow PS staff in order to continue to provide an effective service to researchers. In addition, as the Open Exeter project developed, open access to publications became increasingly important and so we needed to develop Library colleagues in this area as well.

We have written elsewhere about our "23(+1) things for RDM" (Lloyd-Jones, 2013) but this was an important element in developing the skills of our Subject Librarian team so should be highlighted again. 23(+1) also demonstrates one of the key aspects of our training programmes: guided self-learning.

There are two members of the Library dedicated to open access and data curation at Exeter. Both of these are based at the University of Exeter's main campus in Exeter. The University also has libraries based at a second campus in Exeter, St Luke's and at our Cornwall Campus in Penryn. As such, although we are usually available to offer advice and answer questions we are not always able to be available in person. We have provided as much information as possible in guides (available internally for Library staff, for example, a "Quick Guide to Cataloguing in ORE" which provides a brief guide on what is required for each metadata field) and on our websites in the form of FAQs and dedicated open access and RDM web pages. These materials are supplemented by regular meetings between the Subject Librarians and open access and data curation staff where updates can be discussed.

As the Subject Librarians each support specific subjects they have become expert in the requirements for their disciplines. A major advantage of self-guided learning is that staff can develop at their own pace and in ways which advantage them rather than in a set format, at a pace set by a presenter.

In addition to specific training and guidance for fellow Library staff we also invite the Subject Librarians to some of the training sessions we provide for researchers. In this way they get an idea of the information we are providing to researchers and are able to increase, or strengthen, their knowledge at the same time.

Training and Guidance for Research Staff

Where possible we try to integrate our sessions with existing training programmes (Guy, 2013 (2)). One of the advantages of this is that researchers do not have to attend additional sessions. For example, we present a short segment on data management and open access in a session for new doctoral supervisors: *Doctoral Supervision: An Exploratory Workshop*. In embedding in existing sessions, we highlight data management and open access as being an integral part of the research environment rather than trying to argue it is an add on to the existing environment.

Integrating with existing programmes or workshops can also help to save time and effort. It means that we do not have to carry out our own marketing or promotional work for the session because this is already done by programme co-ordinators as part of the wider programme.

In addition to regular training sessions, Exeter also holds a number of annual events aimed at researchers. One of these is Research Focus Week. Presenting at high profile events not only enables us to reach a large audience, but also helps to promote the services and assistance we offer.

We have also created dedicated one-stop-shop websites for open access and RDM. These enable researchers and PS staff to answer some of the questions they may have without needing to contact us. These websites include how-to guides, for example, funder specific guides on how to write a data management plan (UoE, 2014 (2)). Again, the aim is to provide as much information as possible so that researchers (in this instance) are able to develop the skills they need to write a successful data management plan.

Training for Research Students

We developed a number of training sessions for the Researcher Development Programme at Exeter (UoE 2014 (3)). These sessions are aimed at postgraduate research (PGR) students and Early Career Researchers. Sessions include: How to Write a Data Management Plan and How to Organise your Files and Folders.

Final Thoughts

RDM is not something to be feared; individuals do not need an in depth knowledge of IT to deliver successful training in RDM – neither of the two core open access and

data curation staff at Exeter have an IT background. Core elements of RDM, for example, organising files, understanding copyright, and archiving, are skills which most information professionals already have. New skills do not have to be learnt, they just have to be delivered in a different context. At Exeter, through a combination of choice and necessity, we have developed a range of materials which enable staff to develop their own skills in addition to providing training sessions.

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