



FINDINGS OF THE SCOPING STUDY INTERVIEWS AND THE RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

SCOPING DIGITAL REPOSITORY SERVICES FOR RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT

A Project of the Office of the Director of IT
www.ict.ox.ac.uk/odit/projects/digitalrepository/

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The project Scoping Digital Repository Services for Research Data Management is a joint effort in between the Office of the Director of IT, the Oxford University Computing Services, the Oxford University Library Services and the Oxford e-Research Centre. The project reports to the Oxford Digital Repositories Steering Group and aims to scope requirements, including underlying infrastructure and interoperability, for services to manage research data generated by Oxford researchers. One of the main activities of the project is the scoping study interviews, a requirement gathering exercise to learn about current data management practices and identify top requirements from researchers for services to help them manage their data more effectively. To complement the findings of the interviews, as well as to raise awareness and encourage discussion, a workshop was organized in June to hear about examples of good and interesting practice with respect to the use of digital repository services at various points in the research life cycle and from the perspective of different disciplines. Findings from the project and the workshop also form the basis for the Oxford case study for the UK Research Data Service (UKRDS) feasibility study for a shared national data service. This document presents the findings of the interviews undertaken during May and June 2008 and the complementary workshop.

Findings and Top Requirements for Services

A total of 37 researchers took part on the scoping study interviews and 46 people attended the workshop in June. This good response from researchers reveals the interest on research data management and it allowed to document current practices and to capture requirements for services across disciplines in Oxford.

The management of research data in the University of Oxford is exercised to variable degrees of maturity across the institution. There are departments and individuals with an extensive experience in handling the data they collect and big projects with a focus on data activities which produce, document and share data to a very high standard. On the other hand, there are many other departments and small-scale projects in which the data management depends entirely on individual researchers skills and this is sometimes driven by individual short-term convenience.

Overall, the vast majority of researchers interviewed thought that there are potential services that could help them manage their data more effectively.

The top requirements from Oxford researchers for services to help with their data management activities gathered from the interviews and the workshop are:

Advice on practical issues related to managing data across their life cycle. This help would range from assistance in producing a data management/sharing plan; advice on best formats for data creation and options for storing and sharing data securely; to guidance on publishing and preserving these research data.

A secure and user-friendly solution that allows storage of large volume of data and sharing of these in a controlled fashion way allowing fine grain access control mechanisms.

A sustainable infrastructure that allows publication and long-term preservation of research data for those disciplines not currently served by domain specific services such as the UK Data Archive, NERC Data Centres, European Bioinformatics Institute and others.

Funding that could help address some of the departmental challenges to manage the research data that are being produced.