

Digital Preservation at Oxford and Cambridge

A collaborative research project to evaluate and provide sustainable recommendations for our digital preservation programmes

IDCC 2017 – data champions among us

Posted on [27 February, 2017](#) by [Sarah](#)

Outreach and Training Fellow, Sarah, provides some insight into some of the themes from the recent IDCC conference in Edinburgh on the 21 – 22 February. The DPOC team also presented their first poster, "Parallel Auditing of the University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford's Institutional Repositories," which is available on the 'Resource' page.

[Storm Doris](#) waited to hit until after the main International Digital Curation Conference (IDCC) had ended, allowing for two days of great speakers. The conference focused on research data management (RDM) and sharing data. In Kevin Ashley's wrap-up, he touched on data champions and the possibilities of data sharing as two of the many emerging themes from IDCC.

Getting researchers to commit to good data practice and then publish data for reuse is not easy. Many talks focused around training and engagement of researchers to improve their data management practice. Marta Teperek and Rosie Higman from Cambridge University Library (CUL) gave excellent talks on engaging their research community in RDM. Teperek found value in going to the community in a bottom-up, research led approach. It was time-intensive, but allowed the RDM team at CUL to understand the problems Cambridge researchers faced and

address them. A top-down, policy driven approach was also used, but it has been a combination of the two that has been the most effective for CUL.

Higman went on to speak about the data champions initiative. Data champions were recruited from students, post-doctoral researchers, administrators and lecturers. What they had in common was their willingness to advocate for good RDM practices. Each of the 41 data champions was responsible for at least one training session year. While the data champions did not always do what the team expected, their advocacy for good RDM practice has been invaluable. Researchers need strong advocates to see the value in publishing their data – it is not just about complying with policy.

On day two, I heard from researcher and data champion Dr. Niamh Moore from University of Edinburgh. Moore finds that many researchers either think archiving their data is either a waste of time or are concerned about the future use of their data. As a data champion, she believes that research data is worth sharing and thinks other researchers should be asking, 'how can I make my data flourish?'. Moore uses Omeka to share her research data from her mid-90s project at the Clayoquot Sound peace camp called [Clayoquot Lives](#). For Moore, benefits to sharing research data include:

- using it as a teaching resource for undergraduates (getting them to play with data, which many do not have a chance to do);
- public engagement impact (for Moore it was an opportunity to engage with the people previously interviewed at Clayoquot); and
- new articles: creating new relationships and new research where she can reuse her own data in new ways or other academics can as well.

Opening up data and archiving leads to new possibilities. The closing keynote on day one discussed the possibilities of using data to improve the visitor experience for people at the British Museum. Data Scientist, Alice Daish, spoke of data as the unloved superhero. It can rescue organisations from questions and problems by providing answers, helping organisations make decisions, take actions and even provide more questions. For example, Daish has been able to wrangle and utilise data at the British Museum to learn about the most popular collection items on display (the Rosetta Stone came first!).

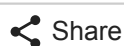
And Daish, like Teperek and Higman, touched on outreach as the only way to advocate for data – creating good data, sharing it, and using it to its fullest potential. And for the DPOC team, we welcome this advocacy; and we'd like to add to it and see that steps are also made to preserve this data.

Also, it was a great to talk about the work we have been doing and the next steps for the project—thanks to everyone who stopped by our poster!



- Oxford Fellows (From left: Sarah, Edith, James) holding the DPOC poster out front of the appropriately named “Fellows Entrance” at the Royal College of Surgeons.

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