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UK Research Data Service Feasibility Study: a Briefing

Keynote Item

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UK Research Data Service Feasibility Study: a Briefing

Presented by Jean Sykes

3 October 2008

1994 Group REPG



What's the problem?

- Research data – an untapped resource
- Often unstructured and inaccessible
- Lack of coherent policies and standards
- Many formats and disciplines
- HE Library and IT services under pressure to help (mainly storage) - unsustainable



What's the problem?

- Whole data lifecycle, not just storage
- Creation, selection, ingest, storage, metadata, retrieval, review, preservation
- Access/analyse/synthesise others' data
- It's the *management* of the data that needs a UK-wide approach



Aims of the project

- Develop an understanding of the UK's current and future research data service needs
- Test the feasibility of a UK-wide shared service for the management of research data
- Develop a detailed business plan
- Avoid reinventing the wheel in any proposed solution



The approach

- SERCO appointed as consultants
- Governance from Steering Committee and Project Management Board
- Over 40 Stakeholder institutions identified and representatives interviewed
- Iterative process to achieve maximum understanding



The approach

- Four case study universities: Bristol, Leeds, Leicester, Oxford
- Questionnaires and focus groups at first three
- Complementary internal project at Oxford dovetailing with UKRDS
- Total number of individuals consulted: 700



What have we learned?

- Over 360% growth in data volume expected over the next 3 years
- c50% of data estimated to have a useful life of up to 10 years; 26% seen as having indefinite retention value
- Most research is currently held locally

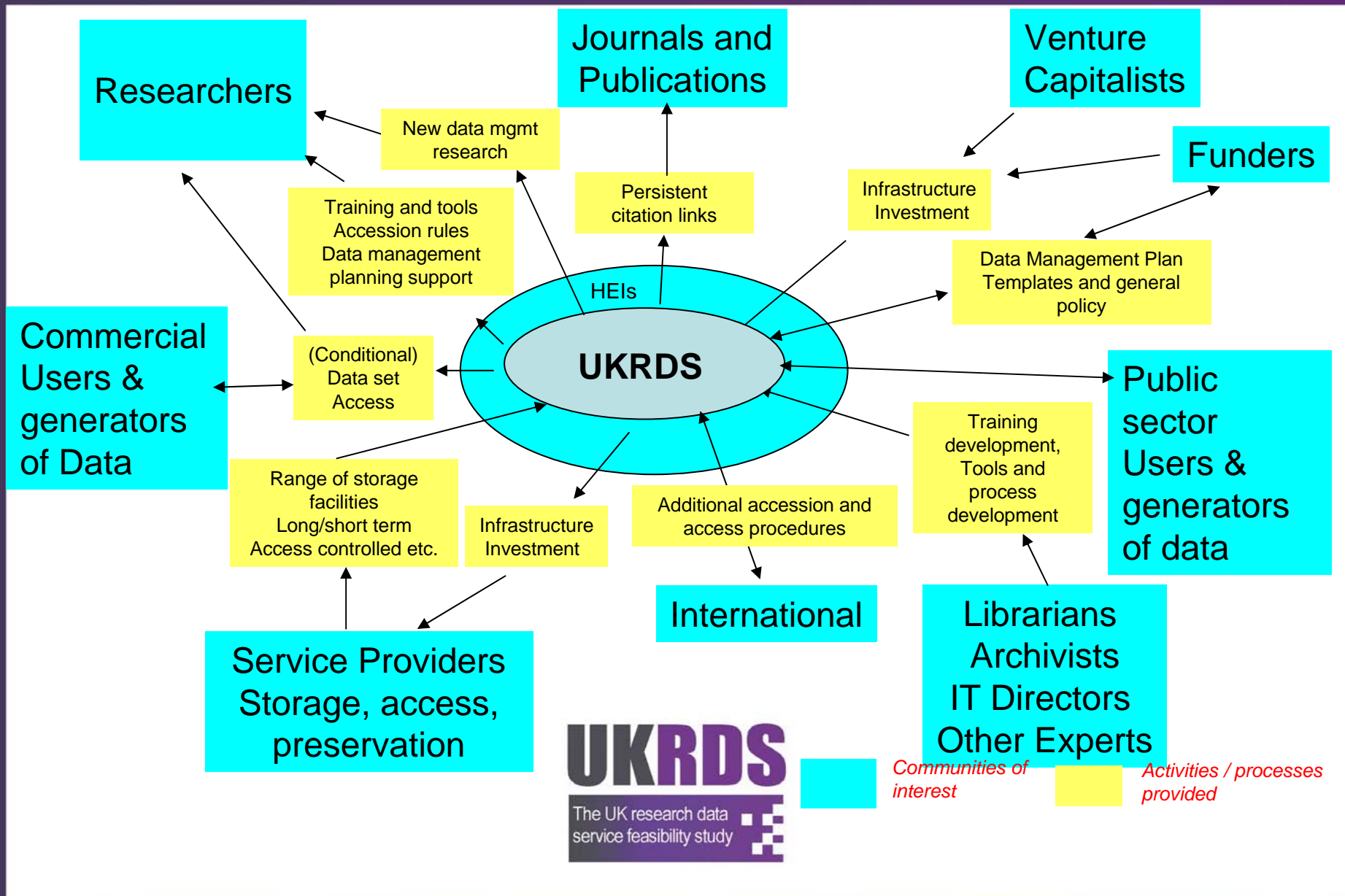
What have we learned?

- 21% use a national or international facility
- Most share data within research teams (12% do not); 18% share via a data centre
- 43% would like access to others' data
- Those with no access to a national facility are particularly keen on a UKRDS



What have we learned?

- Much work is going on in this area in Europe (particularly Germany), USA, and Australia
- A service is probably feasible that brings:
 - coherence to current fragmented and incomplete provision
 - a framework for future development
- A large centralised service is unlikely to work



The next steps

- Design a service portfolio, organisation and legal structure and find it a home, ideally in an existing entity which may be JANET
- Write business case and funding proposition
- Engage stakeholders in the detailed proposals
- Produce final report for HEFCE December 2008



The next steps

- Seek interim funding in 2009 for a start-up service in co-operation with case study institutions and some existing providers
- Hold an international conference in February 2009 to promote the proposed service and highlight developments in the UK and abroad



Key messages

- The study is looking for the optimum business case to address the sustainability of what researchers need
- It's not just about storage
- It's about the management of the whole data lifecycle
- It will not reinvent wheels



Key messages

- Many building blocks are already in place
- A UKRDS would embrace rather than replace existing facilities
- There are also significant gaps to be filled
- It's about the leverage of more research value and a higher global research reputation for the UK



Conclusion

- A UKRDS is likely to be feasible
- Need to work out a practical business case and organisation to make it happen
- Need support of funders, HEIs and other stakeholders to get it established and stable for the long term

