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UK Research Data Service Feasibility Study: a Briefing

Keynote Item

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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
HEIs
Researchers

New data mgmt research
Training and tools
Accession rules
Data management planning support

Persistent citation links

Funders

Infrastructure Investment
Data Management Plan
Templates and general policy

Venture Capitalists

Commercial Users &
generators of Data

(Conditional) Data set
Access

Range of storage
facilities
Long/short term
Access controlled etc.

Service Providers
Storage, access, preservation

(Conditional) Data set
Access

Infrastructure Investment

International

Librarians
Archivists
IT Directors
Other Experts

Additional accession and
access procedures

Training development,
Tools and process
development

Public sector
Users &
generators of data

UKRDS

Training and tools
Accession rules
Data management planning support

UKRDS

Journals and
Publications

Persistent citation links

Infrastructure Investment

UKRDS

Communities of
interest
Activities / processes provided

The UK research data
service feasibility study

UKRDS
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