# Developing the Repository Manager Community

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## Abstract

This paper describes activities which have taken place within the UK institutional repository (IR) sector focusing on developing a community of practice through the sharing of experiences and best practice. This includes work done by the UK Council of Research Repositories (UKCoRR) and other bodies, together with informal activities, such as sharing the experience of organising Open Access Week events. The paper also considers future work to be undertaken by UKCoRR to continue developing the community.

## 1. THE UK CONTEXT

There are currently (May 2013) 210 repositories in the United Kingdom listed in OpenDOAR [1], of which 157 are institutional repositories[1] (IRs), reflecting the rapid uptake across the UK Higher Education sector which was, in large part, funded by JISC who also fund the Repositories Support Project[2] (RSP).

Between 2006 and 2008 the number of IRs registered with OpenDOAR more than doubled from 40 to 92, increasing to 128 by 2010 before reaching 156 by the end of 2012 [1]. Moreover, the software underpinning repositories, associated research infrastructure, and the cultural landscape of Open Access is developing apace with UK government policy committed to universal open access to research outputs [2] as well as a related focus on open access to research data [3]. Repositories are typically managed by library services and often, though not always, staffed by qualified librarians. The skill set is extremely broad, comprising librarianship, technical skills and specialised copyright knowledge. Evolving institutional infrastructures also mean synergies across departments – with the University Research Office for example - are increasingly common.

It was against the backdrop of this complex environment that the UK Council of Research Repositories (UKCoRR)[3] was set up in May 2007 [4]. A voluntary organisation with the aim of promoting repository management as a professionally recognised and supported role within UK research institutions, UKCoRR are not funded and membership is on an individual rather than institutional basis with eligibility simply being a professional role in repository management. UKCoRR has well established links with JISC and is actively developing relationships with other relevant organisations like Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA)[4] and Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP)[5].

This paper will describe the activities of UKCoRR to promote a vibrant, supportive community of repository managers across UK HE including liaison with JISC on shared services and the broader community online and at conferences and events.

## 2. NATIONAL APPROACHES

By definition, individuals working in repositories tend to be committed to open practices and UKCoRR has become a focal point for its membership[6] drawn from across the UK higher education sector. The main communication forum is a closed email discussion list and there is an annual meeting where high profile practitioners are invited to speak to the membership. The UKCoRR blog is maintained as the public face of the membership and is used to report on events and activities of the memberships as well as position papers on various topics, as needed. Recently these have included responses to the two UK governmental enquiries[7] around open access.

The activities and priorities of UKCoRR are driven by the membership through a small committee, who serve for a term of two years. The committee surveys the membership annually to produce the members' report which provides a snapshot of issues that are of greatest import to the membership and is used to inform committee activity over the ensuing year. UKCoRR currently has a memorandum of understanding with the Digital Repository Federation (DRF) in Japan, jointly agreed with the Repositories Support Project (RSP). This memorandum is based on the principle of sharing expertise and experience. As part of this, last November a member of the UKCoRR committee was hosted by the DRF to speak at their annual conference [5].

The UK IR community also benefits greatly from the work of the RSP, who have organized training events and residential schools. These schools allowed a concentrated period of sharing between members and included workshops on topics such as measuring performance and demonstrating value, embedding repositories in research workflows and bringing the emphasis back to open

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[1] See http://www.opendoar.org/find.php

[2] http://www.rsp.ac.uk/

[3] http://ukcorr.org/

[4] https://www.arma.ac.uk/

[5] http://www.cilip.org.uk/

[6] Current membership is 257

[7] From the House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee and from the House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills Committee.

access[8]. The RSP also facilitates a 'buddy' program for new Repository Managers Additionally JISC have funded a number of projects in the past and are currently funding UK RepositoryNet + (RepNet)[9] a suite of shared services to benefit all areas of the IR infrastructure in the UK. RɛpNet comprises disparate projects exploring search and aggregation (e.g. IRS[10]), benchmarks and statistics (eg. IRUS-UK[11]), deposit (e.g. SWORD[12] and The Repository Junction Broker[13]) and metadata quality (e.g. ORCID[14]). UKCoRR have liaised closely with RepNet and helped to disseminate a questionnaire to gather feedback on these repository services[15]. At the time of writing there have been over 30 responses to the survey which has revealed interesting information including the fact that a clear majority of repository managers appear to be unfamiliar with SWORD with the question "Is your IR already running a SWORD endpoint? Would you need IT support to make one available?" eliciting 6 respondents who were not sure and 12 who said that their repository was not running a SWORD endpoint in spite of SWORD being a standard interoperability technology available by default in all major repository software. This area shows a clear need for further guidance on best practice to be developed both by RepNet and UKCoRR to make sure all UK repositories are aware of this valuable service and can exploit it effectively for their stakeholders.

Many UK repository staff are active on various social media and happy to share advice and ideas with people in related areas of work. For example, Kelly's work on the area of open metrics [6], search engine optimization (SEO) and open practice[16] is well known and a number of UKCoRR members have contributed to his work over the years. Social media, particularly twitter, is often used by UKCoRR and its members as a means of rapid dissemination of topical information and as a means of getting quick answers to quick questions.

The work done by Open Exeter on their Open Access Week events are presented below as a case study example of some of these more sharing and reuse activities mentioned above.

## 3. CASE STUDY – OPEN EXETER'S OPEN ACCESS WEEK 2012

The aim of the JISC Open Exeter project's[17] Open Access Week programme in October 2012 was primarily to raise awareness of major changes in funder and institutional open access policy to research outputs.[18] However, the Open Exeter team made a decision early on in the planning schedule to use the opportunity also to raise the profile of the project and to share our work with the repository community; the project had funding from the JISC that allowed for a scale of activity and promotion that would be hard to repeat in future years.

For the first time, we made extensive use of social media both during event planning and in the week of activities itself. We started planning early and were able to attract a 'star' line-up of external speakers: Alma Swan of SPARC, Cameron Neylon of PLoS, Mark Hahnel of Figshare to name a few.


**Figure 1: Publicity for Open Exeter Event**

We received some encouraging feedback from the community as we released details of our programme online and on mailing lists:

- *"Wow that's some bill, congrats!"*
- *"This looks like an excellent set of events – I hope they go really well for you!"*
- *"Wow, that's an impressive line up. Kudos to you. Open Exeter seems to be going incredibly well."*

In addition, we received many requests for access to presentations and recordings (as Exeter is in the far south west of the UK, attending events was difficult for a majority of other repository managers). This reaction indicated a real need to share both experiences as they happened and outcomes after the event.

Prior to the week, we promoted the events on our project Facebook page[19], from our Twitter account[20], our blog[21] and our Library web site. There was a noticeable increase in interest in the project during this period. Google Analytics shows a steep rise in visits to the OA Week web site. Of these, 73 were referrals from our Facebook account and over 71% referred in this way were first time visitors – this was an unusual and unexpected result. Visits to our blog increased and we noticed that details of our events were being retweeted and posted on other open

[8] http://www.rsp.ac.uk/events/past/1/

[9] http://www.repositorynet.ac.uk/blog/

[10] http://irs.mimas.ac.uk/demonstrator/

[11] http://www.irus.mimas.ac.uk/

[12] http://swordapp.org/

[13] http://edina.ac.uk/projects/RJB_summary.html

[14] http://about.orcid.org/about

[15] http://ukcorr.org/events/future-events/teesside-university-friday-9th-november-2012/repnet_survey/

[16] See various posts at http://ukwebfocus.wordpress.com/

[17] http://as.exeter.ac.uk/library/resources/openaccess/open exeter/

[18] http://as.exeter.ac.uk/library/resources/openaccess/open exeter/exeterembeds/events/pastevents/

[19] http://www.facebook.com/open.exeter.9

[20] https://twitter.com/OpenExeterRDM

[21] http://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/openexeterrdm/)

access-related web sites. This trend continued during OA Week and for some time after.

During the week itself, we continued to use social media. In particular, we used Twitter during sessions to share key messages and to capture a narrative of the week's events. As well as contributing to the #oaweek stream, we set up our own #oaex hashtag[22]. We know from responses to our tweets, the number of retweets, and feedback received that the high number of tweets did draw attention to Open Exeter's activities. At one point Open Exeter was the second highest #oaweek tweeter[23]. The value of tweeting during events is that output can be revisited and analysed at a future date using analytical tools such as Topsy[24]. An additional benefit has been an increase in the number of people following the project on Twitter.

During OA Week we promoted several of our project outputs that had particular relevance to open access and effective management of research data. In the following weeks our repository statistics showed a big increase in downloads of our materials: nearly 500 downloads of key documents. We know from direct feedback that these are being consulted, reused and adapted by the community.

We disseminated OA Week materials in various ways: a copy of every resource was put in our repository (ORE[25]); video recordings of most sessions were additionally uploaded to YouTube (see [7]) and to the project Video Wall[26]; presentations were uploaded to Slideshare[27]. Slideshare statistics show that the top three Open Exeter presentations have been viewed over 700 times. Analysis of visits to the Open Exeter blog shows an increase in visits of almost 50% from around the time of OA Week. This marked increase in visits has been sustained. Following OA Week, the project has continued to attract attention at an international level by email, by comments on our blog or via LinkedIn.

We are in the process of using Storify[28] to provide a chronological, visual narrative of the project and its activities, including OA Week, utilising tweets, blogs, images, video, training materials, and links to other related topics. This will be an accessible and engaging way to share experiences and resources that will hopefully attract new audiences and encourage others to use social media tools to share with peers.

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[22] http://topsy.com/s?q=%23oaex&type=tweet&window= a (accessed 7 May 2013)

[23] http://topsy.com/trackback?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdocs .google.com%2Fspreadsheet%2Fpub%3Fgid%3D116% 26key%3D0AqGkLMU9sHmLdGVrbHlyNmdFUnhsY 3BIVVdodW9QMWc (accessed 7 May 2013)

[24] http://topsy.com/

[25] https://eric.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/3360

[26] http://as.exeter.ac.uk/library/resources/openaccess/video wall/

[27] http://www.slideshare.net/OpenExeter/

[28] http://storify.com/

## 4. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

The repository community in the UK is now well developed and practiced at the work they do but there is more that UKCoRR wants to do to continue to develop this community. This is particularly important in light of the current context of our work with a growing level of attention being given to open access nationally and repositories in particular.

Discussions have taken place around ways to formalize the recognition of many of the things that repository managers do as part of their continuing professional development. There is a feeling that being a repository manager is a unique role within the Library community and as such some of the more broad based training and education is not able to cover all of the areas that are needed. Repository managers are often working alone or as part of small teams and in some cases undertaking the role as only part of their responsibilities. UKCoRR is committed to supporting their development and increasing the recognition of the valuable work done by our members. As part of this there is a sense that the role we are undertaking interlinks with a number of other existing bodies, such as Research Libraries UK (RLUK)[29] and the Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA) and links are being sought with these bodies currently.

Links with the Digital Repository Federation (DRF) in Japan has brought benefits to both groups and this is another area where we are looking to expand our connections. We would welcome contact from any other national groups of repository managers and are happy to share our experience of setting up a national body for repository staff with any other interested groups who would like to start a similar programme in their country.

Interoperability is often thought of as a technical challenge to be handled between our systems, but often some of the technical challenges can be solved by pooling the knowledge of the wider community. There is a recognition in UKCoRR that we have members who have specialized in one area of repository management over others. A future experiment may be with themed 'hack days' for UKCoRR members to bring these specialists together to help other members with particular areas of concern. UKCoRR are also looking into the practicalities of regionally hosted events, linked by video conferencing, to allow more people the opportunity to attend our events.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

There has been a growing sense of maturity amongst the UK repository community and many of our members are being asked to take on bigger challenges. The UK has some of the oldest institutional repositories and have benefited from excellent training and infrastructure support from organisations such as JISC. These activities along with the growing role of the UKCoRR, in the backdrop of the international context has created an open community comfortable with sharing experiences and learning from the ideas and practice of others.

[29] http://www.rluk.ac.uk/

Future developments will focus on capitalising on this as well as responding confidently to the continually changing environment we are operating it to continue to develop our community through sharing and further interoperability between individuals.

## REFERENCES

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[3] *RCUK Commons Principles on Data Policy*, Research Councils UK, http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/Pages/DataPolicy.aspx (accessed 7 May 2013)

[4] *Launch of UKCoRR*, SHERPA, http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/guidance/UKCORR_Launch.html (accessed 7 May 2013)

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[7] *How I learned to stop worrying and love the RCUK policy*, Cameron Neylon, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJwxYgiYURM (accessed 7 May 2013)