

UKCoRR meeting, Kingston University, 14th August 2009

It's been a long day. On the road since 6.45 this morning, I've left the provinces, crossed the big smoke, navigated (with help) from Kingston railway station to the university (does Kingston not use road names?) - all to attend a meeting of the snappily named "UK Council of Research Repositories" (UKCoRR). Was it worth the effort? Yes, absolutely.

UKCoRR has been around for a while - it's not quite a Secret Society, but you do have to be a practising repository manager to join. We don't want sales reps or evangelists, nor people with a theoretical interest in repositories, just folk that have the honour and privilege of running their own institutional repository. There are quite a lot of us out there, and we're a passionate lot - passionately committed to open access and collectively responsible for exposing an increasing amount of the UK's research output to a global audience.

Today's event was organised by the newly elected UKCoRR committee - Jenny Delasalle (Chair), Mary Robinson (Secretary) and Dominic Tate (Web and Publicity officer) - ably assisted by local hostess Susan Miles from Kingston University. From being met at the front door by a three person reception committee, to being plied with refreshments all day, Kingston did us proud. Thank you to them.

The day kicked off with a keynote presentation from Bill Hubbard of the Centre for Research Communications at the University of Nottingham. Congratulations, by the way, to Bill and his team for persuading Nottingham to create the university's first ever research centre within a service department (the university library) - a well deserved achievement which build on several years of excellent work by the SHERPA team. Bill reminded us of the UKCoRR vision - for repository management to be a professionally recognised and supported role within UK research institutions - and articulated the present and future role of repositories in the UK and the international research landscape. Bill's statistics showed that UK already punches above its weight in terms of number and scope of repositories - "we can lead the world" he says!

But we face challenges. There's not a university in the land that isn't carefully watching its balance sheet just now. Is it sensible to economise on the repository? We think not. Repositories are the public research face of their institutions: point 5 of an FTE alone won't really get you the expertise and support that is needed. Message number one from UKCoRR: take the repository seriously and resource it appropriately.

Next up, we met the committee. Although only in place for a few months, Jenny, Mary and Dominic have already made their mark. Bearing in mind that UKCoRR is currently unsupported financially speaking (not even the proverbial shoestring to be called upon), the committee have devoted their own free time (and probably some of their employers') to meeting up, running a survey of

members, updating the UKCoRR website, writing a Charter for the committee and even producing a draft UKCoRR Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on repository deposit. The MoU contains guidelines on best practice for repository managers and publishers and represents a concerted effort to bring about closer cooperation between repository managers and rights holders. The MoU was welcomed by UKCoRR members and it was suggested that UKCoRR should find sympathetic allies to take it forward.

Theo Andrew of Edinburgh University was next to take the floor. Apologising (needlessly) in advance for his unusual style of presentation (a very slick Flash video created using free 'Prezi software (<http://prezi.com>)), Theo went on to explain the issues surrounding the use of central funds for payment of open access fees. In the discussion that followed, members were surprised at the number of institutions taking tentative steps toward designating funds for open access. Nottingham is a pioneer in this area, but among those present, Edinburgh, Kingston and Brunel had all experimented with open access publication funds and others such as Warwick and Glasgow were investigating their use. Understandably, there was some cynicism among the audience that whilst the 'author pays' model was originally intended as a transitional measure to compensate publishers during the move towards open access, with one or two notable exceptions publishers had shown no sign so far of reducing subscription fees in exchange. Moreover, members noted that the fees charged by publishers had steadily risen as they realised that researchers are mandated by their funders to publish in this way. Repositories provide open access – why not use them?

Wendy White, repository manager at the University of Southampton, and Morag Greig from Glasgow university, gave complementary talks on the integration of repositories with other university systems. Wendy took a more aspirational approach, detailing some of the ways in which repositories could in future impact on their user communities. Viewing the repository as an agent of change in the institution, Wendy described the repository's potential role in developing communities of practice, contributing to institutional policies and developing new services such as new generation semantic tools and visualisation services.

Morag's presentation was rooted firmly in her current experience. Glasgow have recently (June 2008) adopted a new publications policy which mandates deposit of published research in 'Enlighten', the institutional repository. Following extensive liaison with university staff, Morag's team are now training administrators across the university to deposit research outputs in the repository. The strong relationships between repository managers and staff at all levels; systems and processes which join up existing elements of research lifecycle; and careful management and monitoring of the university's publications policy are all important elements in determining a successful outcome.

Three further UKCoRR members gave brief presentations about aspects of their repository work. John Harrington of Cranfield described how a rebranding exercise and marketing campaign was used to raise awareness of an existing repository and noted how researcher attitudes had change with the move from the RAE to the (more) metrics-based REF. Adrian Machiraju offered a candid view of Royal Holloway's adoption of Equella, a commercial repository software product; and Susan Miles took advantage of being on home territory to show how she and her editorial team used 'Sharepoint' to facilitate communication and knowledge sharing within a repository team that was spread across several sites.

The day was rounded off by presentations from Mary Robinson and Dominic Tate on different aspects of repository staffing. Repository staff roles are still relatively new and many have found SHERPA's 'repository staff and skill set' document to be extremely helpful – examples of use include: creating job descriptions, seeking funding, negotiating salaries and job profiles and identifying skills gaps and areas for training. (The 2008 version of the document is available here, but another version is under development: <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/news/staffandskillsrevision.html>).

Having established the required skill set, many repositories have found it extremely difficult to appoint a suitable candidate. This prompted the JISC to fund the development of a repository recruitment toolkit (<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/themes/informationenvironment/recruitment.a.spx>). This comprehensive document and associated templates were welcomed by UKCoRR members, but a heartfelt plea went out to the JISC: please, please give us more time between notification of funding and project commencement! A three month lead time would make a real difference in getting a project off to a flying start with a full complement of staff.

This wrapped up a useful and stimulating day. We learned something, we met up with old repository friends and we had a great day – definitely worth getting up for.

New repository managers may join UKCoRR via the UKCORR-DISCUSSION mailing list on JISCMail (<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/>)

Miggie Pickton

NECTAR Queen Bee

The University of Northampton