

# Repositories and Preservation Programme Meeting

Aston Business School, Birmingham  
6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> May 2009

## Summary post-event reflections

The feedback from the wrap-up meeting of the JISC-funded Repositories and Preservation Programme was almost unanimously positive and there appears to be a general feeling that the meeting was successful in meeting its objectives.

The following text merges together some post-event reflections made by JISC programme managers with some of the comments made by delegates on the feedback form. The purpose of this document is to establish a shared understanding of: the value of the meeting; the opinions of delegates; the quality of the programme; the impact of the projects; and strategic ways forward.

The ideas/issues can be categorised into six sections:

1. Meeting Planning
2. Programme Design
3. Dissemination Issues
4. Knowledge
5. Strategic Ideas
6. Potential Areas of Work

## 1. Meeting Planning

- i. The 'Ideas Room' and 'Forum' components were viable and useful parts of the meeting and should be considered at future programme meetings.
- ii. The 'Ideas Room' would be enhanced by making it more explicit to the meeting why and how people can contribute, and by feeding back the ideas into a plenary session to provoke discussion and invite validation.
- iii. Projects need to have more effective ways of showcasing themselves at the meeting, possibly by using a variety of mechanisms such as 'minute madness', project in a slide, hustings, etc ...
- iv. More plenary discussion time was required. JISC project teams always actively and positively engage in discussions and more (rather than less) time should always be allowed to focus on this input and draw value from it.
- v. Actively facilitating people to contribute to the ideas room worked well.
- vi. The themes of knowledge exchange and value that informed the two respective days of the event added clarity and purpose to the meeting.

## 2. Programme Design

- i. JISC needs to very clearly articulate the anticipated benefits of future programmes from the outset and work on quantifying and communicating them as the programme progresses, thereby supporting senior management buy-in to project activities and their sustainability beyond the programme.
- ii. A hybrid approach that included rapid innovation, start-up and developer-focused activities has enhanced the overall impact and benefit of the programme. The variety of expertise and experience that project personnel bring to the programme is of enormous benefit (in terms of knowledge exchange) and opportunities should be sought to foster and nurture this activity in future programmes
- iii. JISC should consider redesigning the structure of final reports to make them more compatible with feeding into synthesis and evaluation work. Projects may also benefit from being briefed more comprehensively about the potential value of this documentation.
- iv. Having JISC staff from other programmes in attendance at meetings can give fresh and valuable perspectives.

### **3. Dissemination Issues**

- i. Further more focused work on generating synthesis material is required to meet the needs of all levels of the community including senior management.
- ii. There was confirmation of the need for a summary 'glossy' version of the repositories roadmap.
- iii. The summary booklet of all the projects was a useful output and subsequent programmes might consider producing this type of list to enhance dissemination and communications between projects.
- iv. Kevin Ashley's presentation concisely summarising the objectives of the projects was instructive and valuable. JISC should actively solicit similar project overviews for future programmes.
- v. JISC should produce a glossy brochure-style output that serves as an advertisement and a quick overview of the programme, with careful attention to the audience for such a publication.
- vi. A list of the software produced in the course of the programme would be a useful output, so it can be developed further, used, and accounted for in future work.
- vii. The programme has resulted in a number of different types of innovative output and these should be recognised and acknowledged according to the context of the work.
- viii. Video (of people talking) is potentially an important and influential dissemination medium for ideas and discussion, but needs to be carefully handled. The

#### 4. Knowledge

- i. Despite there being a strong original rationale for funding, some major projects (due to changing requirements) discovered good reasons to change course, e.g. The Depot, Repository Search.
- ii. The meeting effectively highlighted the depth and breadth of the projects participating in the programme.
- iii. A more experienced, knowledgeable and motivated repository community can now capture lessons, articulate requirements and progress work that is of interest to an international audience.
- iv. Scale is an important issue when trying to provide solutions and services to people working in different domains. A lone researcher requires very different types of support and guidance to a well resourced research group. However, context is equally important. There are differences across domains but there are also differences within domains and across institutions. It is not possible to make meaningful assumptions across a subject area – the organisational context is also critical.
- v. It was useful to hear Research Council plans to amass an evidence base that will highlight the impact of research outputs. It is possible that this could, in future, affect the type of metadata required by institutional repositories.
- vi. JISC should continue to build on current initiatives such as the application profile work being carried out by UKOLN, and take account of this in a broad context of other metadata approaches.
- vii. The scholarly works application profile (SWAP) needs to be easily implementable and should be supported by intuitive desktop tools that integrate into workflows. There is a tension between the minimal metadata requirements of resource discovery and the richer metadata requirements of funders.
- viii. The message was reinforced that HEI's want their own repositories but that collaborative working is also important. This models supports diversity (in terms of content, workflow and technical platform) but also means that consortiums can more effectively promote their individual activities and optimise their impact. In the longer term, institutional repositories may embrace shared services and cloud options.
- ix. There has been reinforcement over the course of the programme that repositories can and should accommodate a variety of object types.
- x. The exemplar projects showcased at the meeting displayed a serious commitment to user engagement and communications from the outset of the project. This demonstrates confidence in the aims of the project and inspires trust from end users at an early stage.

- xi. Digital preservation/curation is an issue that is implicit in many conversations but does not necessarily surface unless someone present is motivated to prioritise it or has been given a mandate or instruction to do so.
- xii. Repositories for teaching and learning materials have been around as long, or longer, than e-prints repositories, though early references may have been to VLE's. However, there are differences in the respective levels of development in areas of metadata, standards, managing and sharing content, and dissemination. Care is needed to accurately describe the relative strengths and weaknesses and 'maturity' of these types of repository.
- xiii. The value of keeping interfaces and presentation layers simple cannot be over-emphasised. The complex technology and technical knowledge required to create effective systems needs to be invisible to the general user.

## 5. Strategic Ideas

- i. A small working group might be convened around the subject of 'research information management'.
- ii. Some further work is required to secure the sustainability of software outputs, where those outputs are designed to be more substantial offerings to the community than simply trials or demonstrators.
- iii. Corporate business requirements (rather than research and learning imperatives) can also drive the success of a repository. They can help clarify the aims of repository work by showcasing implementations, workflows and the amassing of content. There are a number of drivers acting upon institutional repositories and this diversity should be supported.
- iv. There will be an increased requirement to link research outputs with data and this will need collaboration between JISC, Research Councils and HEI's.
- v. The top 3 issues discussed in the ideas room, in order of popularity were:
  - how do we increase the content in repositories?
  - what does a successful repository look like?
  - what features are missing from repositories?Delegates ideas to address these issues were captured in writing and on video and represent important input for JISC in scoping further work.
- vi. Discussion of the preservation and curation of learning materials largely hinges around roles and responsibilities. The drivers to preserve in this area are precautionary rather than for the purposes of active re-use. Preservation specialists may profit from directing their attention to those with administrative rather than teaching responsibilities.
- vii. Text-mining is potentially a powerful core tool for repositories.

- viii. Further exploration is required around the business models and benefits of individual and shared model repositories using cloud based strategies.
- ix. Further development may be needed for repository solutions that support rich local requirements and further integration with the Web.
- x. Some raised awareness of the issues around quality assessment of repository content may be valuable. National data centres do not accept everything they are offered but institutional repositories operate within a diversity of contexts. It may be sensible for some IR's to accept all deposits whilst others may be selective. Assessing the quality of research outputs is a complex problem.

## **6. Potential Areas of Work**

- i. Demonstrating the value of embedding the repository into the workflow of research and learning is very important, rather than simply relying on a consensus opinion that it makes sense to do so.
- ii. The startup and enhancement element of the programme has, in some cases, had a demonstrable impact on the status of staff within institutions (i.e. project staff have been made permanent). It may be useful to try and find out how participation in the programme has affected the career and professional prospects of those involved; this is also an issue that could be explored more generally across programmes.
- iii. The repository roadmap is an important document that will support further phases of strategic input; the issue of meaningful measures and metrics regarding proportion, quality, use and other impact is a particular challenge that needs to be further addressed.
- iv. More work needs to be commissioned to help institutions set up internal systems for managing learning materials.