



Engaging Researchers with Data Management The Cookbook

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4.1. ‘Dealing with Data’ Conference at the University of Edinburgh

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Contributor: Kerry Miller

University of Edinburgh staff organise an annual conference and create internal forums for researchers to talk about research data.

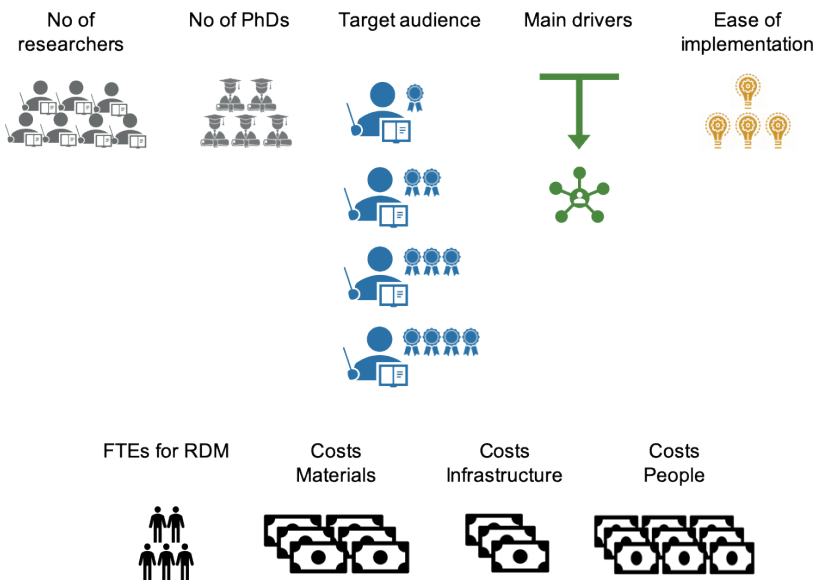


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Fig. 4.1 A collage from the 'Dealing with Data' conference 2018 by Robin Rice. © University of Edinburgh 2018, CC BY 4.0.

Inviting Researchers to Explain How *They* Deal with Data

It is indisputable that in order to successfully engage with researchers, you need to understand what is important to them, and be able to 'speak their language'. So what better way to gain this understanding than putting them in the spotlight and giving them the microphone? That's exactly what the University of Edinburgh Library¹ did: they established an annual conference to give researchers an opportunity to share their own data experiences both with their peers and with library staff.

"Dealing with Data" is our annual showcase event. It gives researchers a valuable opportunity to discuss their research data challenges and solutions, while also improving the visibility of the services we provide and allowing us to make new contacts within our

1 University of Edinburgh Library website, <https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/library-museum-gallery>

research communities,’ says Kerry Miller, the Research Data Support Officer, Library & University Collections, The University of Edinburgh.

Hunting for a Good Theme

Every year the library looks for a theme for the data conference, based on international, European and/or national developments. The aim is to find a theme that will ensure inspiring presentations and therefore lead to engagement and discussions.² This year’s theme is ‘collaboration and solutions about sharing and re-using data’.

Once the theme is selected, the library reaches out to faculties to identify researchers who have experience related to that theme, and who would either like to be a keynote speaker or to make a statement on specific aspects of the theme. Having selected main contributors and put a preliminary programme in place, an official call for contributions is sent through the library’s communication channels.

Manoeuvring to Broaden the Audience

There are, however, still research groups that don’t engage with Research Data Management (RDM). ‘On the one hand we have some researchers who are enthusiastic about data and want to talk more about what they are doing and how they are doing it, and on the other, we see a lack of interest from some researchers,’ admits Kerry.

The library tries to find alternative ways to engage with uninterested researchers and to encourage them to come to the conference, reaching out through their contacts within the schools. Approaching researchers through their peers, rather than via Information Services, helps to persuade them of the relevance of the subject.

Usually though, just giving researchers the opportunity to present their own work is enough to attract their participation, and to attract the attention of their peers. The popularity of the event demonstrates its success: 100–150 participants each time and still growing.

2 To get a better idea of the structure around the theme, you may consult past Dealing with Data programmes for 2018 and 2017 at the University of Edinburgh Media Hopper Create space, ‘Dealing with Data Conferences’, <https://media.ed.ac.uk/channel/Dealing+With+Data+2017+Conference/82256222>

