The benefits of more effective research data management in UK Universities

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I2S2 Project Overview

• Show how effective cross-institutional research data management can increase efficiency and improve the quality of research
• Understand and identify requirements for a data-driven research infrastructure in the Structural Sciences (physical science experiments)
  – Examine localised data management practices
  – Investigate data management infrastructure in large centralised facilities
• Scale and complexity: small laboratory to institutional installation to large scale facilities e.g. Diamond Light Source & ISIS, STFC
• Interdisciplinary issues: research across domain boundaries
• Data lifecycle: data flows and data transformations over time
Generalised Issues

• Basic requirement for data storage and backup facilities to sophisticated needs such as structuring and linking together of data
• Management of intermediate, derived and results data a major issue
• Contextual information is not routinely captured
• Processing pipeline is dependent on a suite of software
• The actual workflow or processing pipeline is not routinely recorded
• Need for adequate metadata and contextual information to support:
  – Maintenance and management; Linking together of all data associated with an experiment; Referencing and citation; Authenticity; Integrity; Provenance; Discovery, search and retrieval; Curation and preservation; IPR, embargo and access management; Interoperability and data exchange
• Simplification of inter-organisational communications and tracking, referencing and citation of datasets
  – Unique persistent identifiers
  – Standardised Experiment Risk Assessment forms
• Solutions should be as non-intrusive as possible
An Integrated Service Approach

- Considerable variation in data management requirements across differing scales of science
- Individual researcher, group, department, institution, facilities all working within their own frameworks
- Merit in adopting an integrated framework which caters for all scales of science:
  - Aggregation and/or cross-searching of related datasets
  - Efficient exchange, reuse and repurposing of data across disciplinary boundaries
  - Data mining to identify patterns or trends
- I2S2 Integrated information model aims to:
  - Support the scientific research activity lifecycle model
  - Capture processes and provenance information
  - Streamline flow of metadata, administrative information and experiment data across organisations
  - Interoperate with and complement existing models and frameworks
Benefits - Background

• Based on two use cases:
  – Prof Martin Dove, Earth Sciences, University of Cambridge – researcher perspective
  – Dr Simon Coles, National Crystallography Service, Southampton – service perspective

• Methods developed/enhanced and used:
  – I2S2 Research Activity Lifecycle Model and KRDS Benefits Taxonomy
  – Charles Beagrie Ltd. Value Chain and Impact Analysis Tool
  – Value and Impact elaborated for each perspective by Neil Beagrie working jointly with Martin and Simon
Key Benefits Identified

• Impact and value for researcher (qualitative):
  – research effectiveness – reduced time latency for accessing data sets (24hrs+ down to 5-10mins)
  – disseminating research methods – documented datasets accessible for remote training and learning by (many) new users
  – enhanced research tools – more quality datasets for developers testing and improving tools (software, algorithms, methodologies etc.)

• Impact and value for central service (quantitative):
  – research and facility efficiency – time savings aggregated over many samples /experiments /researchers at facility
  – visibility and security of datasets – increased citation and effectiveness of research in the long-term
  – less likelihood of errors – in data exchange chain between researchers and various facilities (e.g. safety and administrative information)
Benefits Conclusions

• Researcher and Service perceptions of benefits can be and often are different but complementary
• For I2S2, both are positive on benefits that would accrue from implementation
• Impact cannot always be measured within timeframe of project – where appropriate we have established benchmarks against which future progress can be measured
• Finally a similarity to measuring impact in Research Excellence Framework (REF) – a valuable experience for partners given future landscape of research assessment
Project Team

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