Lancaster University

Background

Lancaster University is a multi-disciplinary university with research spread across four faculties: Arts and Social Sciences; Health and Medicine; Science and Technology and the Management School. It also has a strong reputation for interdisciplinary research with Institutes for Data Science; Materials Science; Social Futures and Security.

Lancaster hired its first Research Data Manager in 2013, with the Research Data Management (RDM) Policy [1] being approved by Senate in the same year. Right from its inception, the RDM service [2] has been funded centrally from the Library staff personnel budget. In addition to the staffing arrangement indicated in the box on the right, the service benefits from support from the other University staff as necessary (in-house developers, Research Services Systems Administrator and the Assistant Director (Digital Innovation and Research Services)).

Expectations for Research Data

Lancaster University does not explicitly require a data management plan or data archiving for research where there are no external funder requirements, but there is an expectation that all researchers (staff or students) will comply with the RDM policy which states:

> *"the primary responsibility for research data management lies with individual researchers, and it is these staff who need to consider each individual project, whether it is appropriate to archive data and exactly what data should be stored."*

While it is not yet usual for Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs) to deposit data in the institutional data repository, any data which directly underpins their thesis is required to be presented either within the body of the thesis, or as an appendix to the thesis. As the theses are made available online (unless subject to embargo), this makes the data available by default.

Research Data Management Support

The RDM service at Lancaster provide the following services to research staff and PGR students:

STAFFING LEVELS

Total research-active staff = 1300 (approximate)

RDM staff = 2.2 FTE

Ratio of staff to RDM support = 590 : 1

MAJOR FUNDING SOURCES

- UKRI (RCUK)
- European Commission
- NIRH
- Royal Society
- Innovate UK
- GCQH
- Wellcome Trust
- Leverhulme Trust

RDM SUPPORT

- Research Data Manager (1 FTE)
- Digital Archivist (1 FTE)
- Research and Scholarly Communications Manager (0.2 FTE)

- An enquiries service (by email, phone and face-to-face).
    - data management plans
    - funder policy guidance
    - data storage, security, publishing and archiving
    - use of Pure as the institutional data repository
    - licensing
    - data access statements
    - personal or special category data
    - technical support (mostly signposting to other specialist colleagues)

- Training sessions
    - An overview of Research Data Management
    - How to write a data management plan
    - Research data management for quantitative research
    - Research data management for qualitative research
    - Focussed sessions for departments or faculties

- DOI minting service
- Dataset validation and publishing in the Lancaster University Repository [3] (via Pure). This currently involves checking that the data files can be opened (if the RDM service have access to the correct software), ensuring that the associated metadata are consistent, and an appropriate licence has been applied to the dataset.

Engaging Researchers

In addition to the RDM services listed above, Lancaster runs an innovative program to engage researchers with data management topics, the Lancaster Data Conversations [4]. The aim of these two-hour lunchtime sessions is to:

"bring data practitioners together to discuss how researchers create, collect, use and share data"

Recent themes for Data Conversations have included:

- Sharing
- Security and Confidentiality
- Software as data
- Open data
- Field work
- Data preservation

These data conversations have been generating a significant amount of interest from data librarians and RDM staff at other institutions, and are now being trialled at universities in Germany and Luxembourg. The original Data Conversations at Lancaster are now attracting participants from other institutions.

Service sustainability and costing RDM activities

Thanks to the long-term funding of RDM staff from the Library personnel budget and the local storage provided for archiving of datasets (the data is stored in resilient storage infrastructure in the

Lancaster University Data Centre, funded from the university's capital expenditure programme), funding and sustainability has not been a problem for the RDM team at Lancaster.

However, despite not being reliant on grant funding to maintain their current levels of service provision, the team are interested in potential models of cost recovery from research grants. The Lancaster University RDM team are not aware of RDM activities being routinely costed into funding applications, but this topic is being revisited with their central Research Service Office, to determine if this should become a regular activity.

Interestingly, the Information Systems Services division at Lancaster operates a 'show-back' model for the costs of research data storage, demonstrating to researchers the value of the service which they currently receive from the university. Should there be a need to change the cost recovery model in the future, researchers would already be aware of the potential costs of data storage, and therefore better equipped to include it in funding applications.

Acknowledgements

Links

[1] Lancaster University Research Data Policy http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/library/rdm/policy

[2] Lancaster University Research Data Management Service http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/library/rdm/

[3] Lancaster University Research Data Repository http://www.research.lancs.ac.uk/portal/en/datasets/search.html

[4] Lancaster Data Conversations http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/library/rdm/data-conversations/