University of Oxford
Research Data Management Support

Friday 9th May, 2014

Dr James A J Wilson
James.wilson@it.ox.ac.uk
What is Research Data Management (RDM)?

May cover a wide range of activities…

- Structuring
- Storing
- Depositing
- Organising
- Discovering data
- Planning
- Versioning
- Preserving over the long-term
- Linking
- Citing
- Sharing
- Permitting access
- Choosing technology
- Recording analysis
- Migrating formats
- Citing
- Backing up
- Documenting

Dr James A J Wilson, University of Oxford IT Services
RDM Support Services, 9th May, 2014
Situation in Oxford at end of 2012

Important -- My research benefits from the time spent managing data

Helpful up to a point -- Time spent managing research data can make life easier further down the line, but it's not a very significant aspect of research

Not important -- Devoting time to managing research data would be a distraction from the real work of research

• Fewer than a quarter of researchers had received any information about RDM from the University

• A majority of scientists had received no formal training in:
  – Data management planning
  – Organising or structuring data
  – Version control
  – Secure data storage & back up
  – Data sharing
  – Documenting data
  – Preparing data for long-term preservation
  – Intellectual property issues relating to data
Where do researchers turn for help?

“Do you know where you would go for help if you needed help writing a data management plan?”
(results of 2012 survey)
Existing expertise does exist

- Many people within the University have expertise in aspects of research data management, although none are experts in every aspect of research data management.

**IT Services staff** know about: software, storage, infrastructure, back-up, databases, XML, etc.

**Libraries staff** know about: metadata standards, repositories, data discovery, long-term preservation and curation, specialist software, etc.

**Research Services staff** know about: research administration, proposals, grants, funder mandates, legal requirements, etc.

**Academic staff** know about: community practices and expectations, research processes, data analysis and visualization, and, of course, the problems they face.
Coordination

• Website – www.researchdata.ox.ac.uk

• Single point of contact for researchers – researchdata@ox.ac.uk

• Awareness of who are the ‘experts’, via a ‘directory of expertise’
  – We’re using a list in a shared Google Doc consisting of: name, email address, department, area(s) of expertise

• Staff mailing list for discussing issues

• RT queue for handling enquiries, visible to everyone in the support group
  – Tickets taken by the person best positioned to help (or available)
What do researchers ask?

- What is the best way to share research data with collaborators? Is DropBox ok?
- How can I back up and archive my data?
- How can I make my data searchable/minable?
- How do I deposit my data in repository x?
- How should I structure/store the data I’m gathering?
- What technologies are available and what does the faculty support?
- Where can I keep my data for x years?
- Is the network file store compliant with x?
- Where can I lodge my data - my journal wants to know before accepting for publication?
- Why is your data store so expensive when I can buy a 1Tb drive for £60?
- Questions relating to storage capacity
- Does the University provide tools for sharing large datasets?
- Can you help us set up a data sharing contract?
- How should we go about setting up a data management infrastructure for our research group?
- How can we improve and secure a research database we have built in-house?
- I need to submit my application for a 5-year European research project tomorrow. How much should I budget for IT and data management?
Issues faced

• Finding an appropriate tool for cross-departmental collaboration
• Many researchers just want ‘general’ advice
  – Requires a few people who are prepared to take the initiative and just put themselves on the spot
  – Need to share wisdom for future reference
• Some enquiries are very technical
  – Need to be able to call on people not generally part of research data management support team
• Not always clear where responsibilities of academic departments ends and central services begins
• Whom to include in the support team?
Questions?