Training and skill building in eResearch: bringing the community together

Alexis Tindall[1], Ann Backhaus[2]

[1] Australian Research Data Commons, Canberra, ACT, Australia, alexis.tindall@ardc.edu.au

Ann Backhaus, Pawsey Supercomputing Centre, Perth, WA, Australia Ann.Backhaus@csiro.au

DESCRIPTION

The eResearch community, represented here by selected Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC) supported virtual laboratories (VLs) and Digital Data and eResearch Platforms (DDeRP) partners, delivers training and skill building opportunities for researchers and the associated support workforce in numerous and varied ways.

This Birds of Feathers (BoF) brings together trainers, educators and other skill building practitioners from this environment to discuss key barriers and challenges, their learnings and the future opportunities in this environment.

While there may be disciplinary and tool differences in the work of these practitioners, they have a shared working and resource environment, and similar target audiences. This BoF is part of an informal series of knowledge sharing opportunities aimed at increasing collaboration across this community. It is an opportunity for those in the broader eResearch support community, including data stewards, ITS staff, data librarians and others, to contribute to discussions about challenges and barriers to learning as well as effective teaching and learning models/strategies, and new opportunities and collaborations.

This interactive BoF will open with a series of lightning talks from practitioners responding to three common prompts, to be determined by that group. We have commitments from ARDC, Pawsey Supercomputing Centre, AARNet, Australian Biocommons Pathfinder, the Characterisation Virtual Laboratory, EcoEd and the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Data Enhanced Virtual Laboratory to present and facilitate conversations.

Through the first section of the BoF audience members will be invited to express their support for proposed topics, or invited to nominate their own. After a series of lightning talks and brief period for questions to presenters, facilitators will lead cafe-style conversations around topics prioritised by the group, giving participants the opportunity to dive deeply into areas of interest. BoF participants will have an opportunity to propose and facilitate their own conversations. Drawing on the Open Space 'rule of two feet, mobility will be encouraged, with participants welcome to move to a different conversation if they find they are not learning or contributing.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Training for digitally-focused researchers and those using Australia's national research infrastructure is delivered in myriad ways, and the community of educators faces diverse challenges. Workshops at C3DIS, a new online community of practice and the Australian eResearch Skilled Workforce Summit demonstrate emerging interest in collaboration and sharing best practice.

This BoF will bring together training practitioners in project-based, organisational and other environments to share experiences and contribute to efforts to improve impact, efficiency and sustainability of our training programs.

Known examples of information sharing across projects have been dependent on individual relationships and opportunistic collaborations. Examples of this include the adoption of the Champions model of peer education from EcoEd to the HASS DEVL and Characterisation VL, and new implementations of the hybrid training model developed by EMBL ABR.

The format of the BoF will draw on elements of the 'Open Space' model [1], allowing participants to prioritise discussion, maximising the value of this gathering by discussing what is most important in their work. Facilitating organisers have identified a number of topics of interest that may be discussed on the day, listed below.

Topics to be offered for consideration:
- Reaching your learning community
- Fundamental skills for researchers (using national research infrastructure)
- Strategic partnerships (for collective approach to raising community capacity)
- Overcoming limited resources/ sharing resources
- Leveraging the strengths of one-off/ short course/ burst training
- Considering iterative training (i.e. re-connecting, thinking beyond on-off events)
- Connecting with campus resources (e.g., HDR training, peer training, etc.)
- Measuring impact
- Exploring MOOCs and other modalities
- Being part of an ongoing practitioners' Community of Practice

This BoF will provide an opportunity to strengthen this community of practice, formalise channels of collaboration, and invite eResearch Australasia attendees to join this discussion. Benefits may include improved professional practice, informed critique of existing methods, broadening the reach of innovative ideas and improving efficiency and sustainability of training programs in this environment.

Facilitators will be encouraged to document the conversation, particularly focussing on items for post-event action. Participants will be encouraged to join the online community of practice, presently powered by a slack channel.

REFERENCES

1. Open Space Technology, available from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Space_Technology, accessed 6 June 2019.

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