

How Research Data Outreach roles drove high adoption of an electronic research notebook system

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INTRODUCTION

From 2017 to 2019, the University of Adelaide funded a Research Data (ReDa) Project, which was designed to identify and solve pressing researcher problems related to research data. The project was managed by the Information Technology and Digital Services branch, and the Library contributed a business owner and subject matter experts.

The project delivered the following outcomes

- Research data repository [figshare](#) – launched July 2017
- Managing your Research Data internal online course – launched March 2018
- Electronic Research Notebooks [LabArchives](#) – launched June 2018
- Online [Research Data Planner](#) (based on DMP Roadmap) – launched February 2019

During the environmental scan phase of the Electronic Research Notebooks work, the project team were fortunate to talk about uptake challenges with Gareth Denyer, the Research Data Steward at the University of Sydney. He highlighted the risks of implementing an Electronic Research Notebook solution without having dedicated staff to drive uptake. As a result, the ReDa project manager decided to employ two part-time Research Data Outreach Officers for six months (later extended to eight months).

In this presentation, the authors will describe the role of the Research Data Outreach Officers, the factors leading to their success, and some lessons learned during the process.

IMPLEMENTATION

Two late stage PhD students were employed at 0.5 full time equivalent each for eight months, to roll out LabArchives progressively across the 5 faculties of the University of Adelaide. The presentation will address key aspects of the Research Data Outreach Officers' work including:

- The selection of the staff
- The approach taken to the rollout
- Administrative techniques employed to assist the process
- The success of the approach reflected in adoption rates
- Some choices we'd make differently next time.

CONCLUSION

The Research Data Outreach Officers played a vital role in the successful introduction of LabArchives to the University of Adelaide research community. Vendor comments indicate that uptake over the eight months that they were employed exceeded most, if not all, initial uptakes at other institutions. Conversely once their employment ceased, total user numbers plateaued and the activity count per month is dropping (see Figure 1: LabArchives user numbers and activity count).

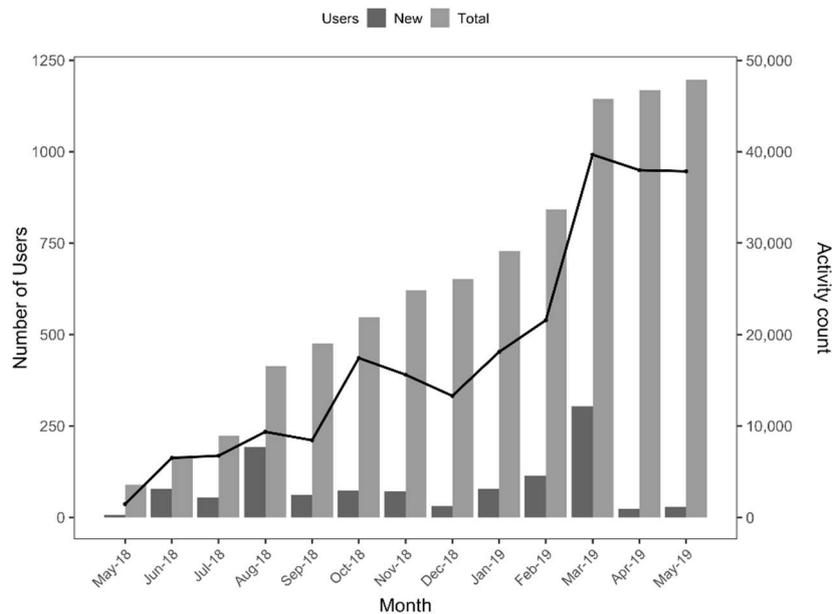


Figure 1: LabArchives user numbers and activity count

Researcher feedback indicates strong support of this role. Researchers really valued and appreciated personal support from a credible person at the researcher’s workplace and at a suitable time. The benefits of tailored and ongoing support were key to the project’s success.

As one high level researcher said:

“Thanks very much for the excellent session yesterday! You were very clear, lively and enthusiastic and the students got all the info they needed. My ARC partners and I have also been adding to our new notebook today and are very impressed with it.”

The University acknowledges that this kind of role is key, and is looking at ways to fund such a role in an ongoing capacity.