

## Facilitating at Flinders: eResearch@Flinders after two years

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### INTRODUCTION

eResearch@Flinders was launched in June 2012 with a number of service areas including eResearch engagement (internal and external), research data management, open scholarship and statistical consulting.

This presentation will review the progress of eResearch@Flinders in internal eResearch engagement and data management over this time, take a look at the barriers (and how to dodge them) and explore the impact this model has had on eResearch within Flinders University.

### ACTIVITIES OF ERESEARCH@FLINDERS

eResearch@Flinders is a service operating from within the Flinders University Library. It is staffed by three librarians, the University's statistical consultant and a technical officer. The Library sits within the Information Services portfolio of the University.

### ERESEARCH ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT FOR RESEARCHERS

Since its inception, eResearch@Flinders staff have undertaken considerable outreach to Flinders researchers to raise the profile of the eResearch agenda. This has taken the form of approaches to individual researchers, presentations to research groups and a program of lunchtime seminars covering relevant topics.

### DATA MANAGEMENT

As part of the outreach effort, eResearch@Flinders staff have provided advice to researchers on data management including data storage options, collaboration tools and data reuse.

### BARRIERS

eResearch@Flinders works to both market eResearch services to Flinders researchers, as well as create a culture change that embeds eResearch into projects across the University.

To do this, staff have come up against a number of barriers:

- Getting on the agenda – researchers have multiple demands and it can be hard to get traction
- Time – if researchers are interested, it can be difficult to find time for action
- Introducing new ideas – in some cases, the concepts around eResearch are new to researchers and need to be reinforced in different ways and from different sources
- Introducing new ways of doing things – eResearch presents new tools and methods all of which need to be evaluated and prove to be as good as if not better than their existing practice
- Introducing alternatives that are not quite mature – sometimes researcher enthusiasm was there, but the tools weren't ready

The approach to dealing with these barriers has been to ensure that any interaction with researchers about these tools is framed from the user point of view and is sustained over time. This generally means that:

- eResearch@Flinders staff meet with researchers to learn broadly about their research practices and suggest different eResearch tools or data management practices
- a follow up email provides more information
- more relevant emails will be sent according to the interests of the researcher and may include updates on the availability of eResearch tools and services or the successful uptake of tools in other parts of the University

## IMPACT

Although difficult to quantify, it is clear that the investment in eResearch@Flinders has had a number of positive impacts in the development of the eResearch agenda at Flinders. Importantly, it has provided Flinders with a point of operational engagement for eResearch, dealing closely with both researchers and service providers.

In terms of measurable impact, eResearch@Flinders has:

- engaged with more than 70 researchers/research groups on general eResearch matters
- had approaches from researchers that have heard from colleagues about our services
- brokered access to eResearch services provided by eResearch SA including RDSI, NeCTAR virtual machines as well as eResearch tools such as Quadrant
- established a “cradle to grave” data management service

More broadly, this has meant that:

- Knowledge about eResearch uptake is reasonably localized within the institution therefore it is possible to assess the benefits of investments in eResearch services for the institution as a whole
- There is a dedicated area in the institution that reaches out to researchers about tools available in a very targeted way
- There is an increased knowledge and uptake of eResearch services with minimal impact on researcher’s time due to the efforts of eResearch@Flinders staff to broker access

## CONCLUSION

eResearch@Flinders presents a model for facilitating eResearch within an institution that uses existing skills, experience and communication networks to deal with researchers, institutional support providers and eResearch service providers. After two years of operation, there have been valuable lessons learned in the value of persistence in marketing eResearch services, the importance of building relationships with researchers and eResearch service providers and the value of “word of mouth”.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR(S)

Amanda Nixon is the Manager of eResearch@Flinders. A large part of her role is outreach to Flinders researchers, across all disciplines, about eResearch tools and services. She is a current member of the AeRO Research Support Expert Group, has worked on the Quadrant Research Functionality Advisory Committee and has enjoyed working with eResearch SA on processes to support RDSI and NeCTAR take up. She brings to her role a strong commitment to the service ethic, a non-technical perspective on eResearch, an enthusiasm for listening to researchers and a sense of humour.