

RDA Ireland SPOTLIGHT:

ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS IN IRELAND



Interview with

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“At RCSI our students, educators and researchers focus exclusively on health sciences. Our mission is to educate, nurture and discover for the benefit of human health.”



On the importance of good research data management and Open Science

Open science is a key way of sharing RCSI research and achieving our organisational mission. We are still early in the journey towards openness as the default for research outputs, and a part of my role in RCSI Library is helping to spread a wider understanding of the benefits of Open Science and FAIR Data. I'm working with library colleagues to implement Figshare as our new RCSI Repository and advising researchers on publishing options and funder

requirements. And FAIR data is a big current topic of debate as we plan how to meet Health Research Board's new data management planning requirements.

The concepts of maximising benefit from public spending are clear and not difficult to get across. The challenge is in moving the infrastructure, habits and practice towards achieving them.



Putting Open Science and Research Data Management on the organisational agenda

The most important element has been starting conversations and building understanding across the organisation.

We've done that by discussing, drafting and getting approved policies on Open Access and Research Data Management. We are now moving on to creating a single portal for information and support on research data, working across service departments to bring together information on services at different stages of the research lifecycle aimed at the

RCSI researcher.

Technically we are implementing a new institutional repository which will accept all item types from publications to data. And work has been done to improve the file storage capacity for researchers.

The practical issues of policy and technical developments help to frame a discussion and give a reason for engagement but the engagement is the most important thing.

The Challenges



The cultural change is the main challenge – that openness is ok, indeed is beneficial to individual researchers as well as to society more widely. There are still very mixed attitudes to this, according to the experience of the individual. Despite some good examples of the benefits of sharing, there is still some reluctance to engage. In part this can be due to misunderstandings of what is being suggested. Though Open Access Publishing is now well known, how it relates to funder requirements is still sometimes misunderstood.

The sharing of data and results to help to improve treatments and cure diseases is a fundamental part of what researchers are trying to do. Despite this it would still be true to say that there is a reluctance to share from some, and others are rightly concerned about confidentiality issues. The FAIR data acronym helps to get across what good research data management should look like. I emphasise the metadata aspect of sharing as a first step, that everyone should at least be able to share the metadata about the data they have used.

Sharing the lessons learnt



I think it's important to involve people from across the organisation to ensure you have different perspectives when looking at how to tackle these issues. Though we haven't had one persistent group, we have had a number of meetings on different aspects of Open Science with good representation from across the organisation. This has really helped move conversations on, so an academic-led group met regularly to consider publishing issues, a wide group involving Library, IT, Postgraduate office and others considered the general approach to research data, and then a smaller group of Library, Research Office and Data Science Centre have looked at FAIR data.

Though achieving senior buy-in can be a challenge, the meetings have helped ensure the issues have not just landed on one department to resolve.

We have also sought to keep researchers informed and engaged through presentations e.g. during Open Access Week. Here we have found external speakers really help to bring people in and show the universality of the issues involved. We are currently planning a half day internal event with speakers from funders and other institutions to promote awareness and debate about the challenges ahead and how as an organisation we meet them.

Contributing to the open research environment in Ireland and beyond



RCSI have been involved in national Open Science efforts in Ireland for some time. The National Open Research Forum has proved a useful forum for addressing the issues and developing a national approach. We would certainly hope to stay involved as the National Principles are developed into actions.

RCSI works with other HE libraries through CONUL and its various groups, an excellent way to share knowledge and best practice. Being a part of Health Research Board's FAIR Data pilot has also given a useful impetus to our own knowledge and application of FAIR Data approaches and we will continue to develop these as part of this initiative.

Keep in touch!

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