

Delivering Value: Engaging Researchers in Publication and Profile Management

Kate Byrne's presentation notes from the Research Profiles Conference at University of Melbourne, February 2016

Slide One:

UNSW is a large and diverse university like many in the Australian academic community. We have over 53,000 students including over 4000 HDR students, over 9000 staff and research affiliates and over 525 million dollars in research income.

At UNSW responsibility for managing research publications lives with my unit in the Library. We manage and maintain Symplectic Elements, coordinate the annual HERDC collection, coordinate data cleaning with support from our Electronic resources unit, coordinate communications about the system and any related activities in conjunction with the Outreach Librarians. In addition we work closely with our Division of Research to ensure policy and practice stay closely connected wherever possible.

Slide Two:

As a part of managing Symplectic Elements, my unit works with stakeholders across the university to pursue integration opportunities with tools like ORCID and Altmetric but also other University systems.

- Briefly explain how systems connect.

At UNSW, each of our researchers is responsible for maintaining their own publications and profiles. Within our instance of Element, they are asked to claim any publications located for them the automated data feeds and manually add any that are not included in the feeds. They need to manage their Elements profile and can contact the library for support if they find it is not covering all of their research. They are required to meet the open access mandates associated with any funding they may have by using Elements to attach their grants to their publications, check any copyright issues and upload their publications to our repository. They also maintain their own web profiles which include feeds of publications from Elements.

Slide three:

I mentioned earlier that UNSW is a very diverse university and I would like to a moment to spell out some of that diversity.

- 9 Faculties, 47 schools, 132 research centres and institutes including 10 ARC centres of excellence and 7 NHMRC centres of excellence.
- Research Strengths in a broad range of areas including Biomedical Sciences, Environment and Sustainability, Law, Business and Social Policy, ICT, Robotics, Contemporary Humanities and Creative Arts as well as Defence and Security

What this means is that our academic and research community does not act as one body. As I am sure is the case at many if not all of your institutions, our researchers identify strongly with their research area, probably with their school or centre, maybe with their faculty – but they don't always have a strong sense of being a 'UNSW Researcher'.

They practice a wide variety of approaches to scholarly publishing evoking the diverse norms of their disciplines. And it is utterly impossible for us to have a one size fits all approach to engaging them in publication and profile management and that's ok – we don't need to.

Slide four:

I cannot stand here and honestly say there is a magical way to engage all of your researchers in publication and profile management and really what we are talking about is managing a spectrum of engagement from your research community. You will have a mix of researchers who willingly engage because they see a valued return on time invested, researchers who engage because they university says they have to, you will have some groups within your university who will probably insist on doing things differently – I find it helpful sometimes to think of university not as a single organisation but as a small city filled with organisations with different business models – and you will have some parts of your university who simply will not comply.

Slide five:

What I want to show you today is a range of strategies that for us have tipped the balance to having most of the community positively engaging with publications and profile management – and some tips for how to deal with the rest of the spectrum as well.

This is a completely made up graph because this stuff is really difficult to track and is in constant flux. What I am always aiming for is to have a majority of engagement to be willing engagement – and to have alternatives in place to manage people that we haven't yet figure out how to make the system valuable enough to engage them.

Slide Six:

You will need a range of strategies to engage your researchers in publication and profile management and you will probably find that different combinations of strategies will work best with different parts of your audience.

We each operate in a different environment with different organisational cultures, structures and priorities. So each of you will probably employ a different combination of strategies to engage your researchers. Whatever strategies you employ, you need to ensure they provide meaningful motivation to your clients.

Slide Seven:

The single most important thing you can do is make your systems useful to the researchers. You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear – and if your systems are not offer value to your researchers, you don't be able to convince them otherwise. Build in as many features as possible that help your researchers. Elements for example offers a range of impact measures including citation counts downloaded from Scopus, Web of Science and Europe PMC, Altmetric donuts and it calculates their h-index. It offers researchers and easy way to manage their publications and has export options so they can pull out publication lists when needed. At UNSW, we've linked the data to other systems so Elements also controls whether publications are displayed on their University web profiles, and it allows them to push publications to our repository to meet their responsibilities to their funding bodies.

Slide Eight:

A close second to usefulness, the system must be easy for your researchers to use – preferably the easiest option for completing the task to hand. Researchers are very busy and they know it. They are also asked by Universities to use a plethora of systems, so any system you want researchers to actually use has to make it as easy as possible for them to get in, get the task done and get out. When we first implemented Elements at UNSW, we had an incredibly enthusiastic response from our academic community – in large part because the system was so much more usable than our previous system.

The system Elements replaced made tasks so fiddly and slow and Elements was a vast improvement on that – offering an attractive and easy to use interface to manage their publications. It made Elements a much easier sell, because for most researchers, they just had to log in and they could immediately see what they needed to do.

Slide Nine:

Avoid at all costs asking your researchers to enter the same information over and over again into multiple systems. Invest in ensuring your systems are as interoperable as possible, connecting systems and reusing data.

At UNSW, we have identified a number of systems as the ‘source of truth’ for certain kinds of information and then attempt to use that data to feed any other system that requires it. Elements is the source of truth for information about publications produced at UNSW, it is also the source of truth for ORCID at UNSW. It feeds information about staff or students from the HR system and information about Grants from InfoEd. By investing in interoperability you are saving your researchers time and saving everyone frustration.

Slide Ten:

I am not delusional enough to believe that the intrinsic reward of having well managed publications is reward enough for our academic community, so it is important that we build in additional rewards for using the system. Find ways to build use of the system into university processes that will reward the researchers for using the system. There are many areas you can build it in to – offer promotion of their research, make it a requirement that any publications to be considered as evidence for a promotion must be in Elements, use the Elements data to calculate funding allocations. However, as a word of warning – ensure you don’t set the bar at an unrealistically high level of action in exchange for reward. This won’t be viewed then as a reward, instead as a barrier for compliance and can introduce resentment to completing the task.

Slide Eleven:

Ensure support is available to your researchers when they need it. Create high quality self-help documentation, but accept that not everyone will use it. Based on our experiences at UNSW, many researchers value the opportunity to call a real person when they need assistance, especially one they already know. For this reason, all of our Elements support for our academic community is provided by our Outreach Librarians – who are the key contacts for each faculty on all library related matters. It makes the support model simple as

they only have to remember one contact point – and seems very effective with researchers building trusting relationships with their Outreach Librarians over time.

Slide Twelve:

It's important to continually refine our systems to eliminate effort wherever we can. In the last few years there has been a lot of development in research identifiers like ORCID and Scopus Author ID and by integrating them into our systems we can auto-populate more and more information.

At UNSW, we can add verified Scopus Author IDs and we have recently integrated Elements with ORCID. We have adjusted our search setting strategies and are using strategic investment in adding Identifiers to the system for groups like Medical Conjointists that we know are most challenging to engage with our system on a regular basis. We are also promoting these identifiers to all of our research community so they can invest in using them too. It takes a little bit of time to verify and set each one up, but then publications automatically download into the system with zero effort from the researchers, they don't even have to claim them. It's early days but the results so far are promising and this should save us all time and result in better quality data in the long-term.

Slide Thirteen:

To succeed in this arena, it is vital you have consistent backing and buy-in from senior research staff. Realistically, from time to time you may need to enforce compliance to resolve situations where researchers or administrators aren't meeting the base level of engagement you require or aren't meeting the required standards. Ensure you have a clear compliance enforcement pathway, just in case you ever need to use it.

Slide Fourteen:

You probably won't win everyone over – universities are complex places and chances are, some groups will want to do it their way. And quite frankly if they are funding it, and it's getting results let them do it. At the end of the day, the outcome is more important than the journey - focus on the endgame, which means that getting results that can be enough.

Cultures change with time and some groups will embrace the change faster than others. And just because you chose not to force them to change doesn't mean you have to wave the white flag straight away – we've found that over time, some groups that didn't want to change their approaches have softened

over time due to value of a bit of healthy competition and seeing the results other groups have achieved.

Slide Fifteen:

Find ways to measure your progress. As I mentioned earlier, tracking cultural change is really hard – but collect whatever information you can so you can regularly check your progress.

At UNSW:

- we collect and analyse a range of usage statistics,
- we analyse the kind of data we're getting into our systems and where it comes from,
- We track the support we provide – both the interactions with our Outreach Librarians but also web statistics from our online help guide and what that support is about.
- We also try and track 'audience sentiment' – keeping an eye on what our community seems to be feeling about the system to pick up any warning signs.

This data allows us to monitor when and in what ways our clients are using our systems. It allows us to monitor our environment to assess when we might need to make adjustments to the system or our support model or both. It also gives us a more in depth understanding of our systems and the data collections they house so we can make data-driven decisions about to how continue to refine our practices.

Slide Sixteen:

It's important to remind yourself from time to time that this is a cultural change and will not just happen overnight. Be patient, keep making small incremental improvements and it will add up overtime. We launched Elements two and half years ago and it really feels like it has just been the last 6 months where our model has really started to mature. And still we continue to tweak and try and improve.

Slide Seventeen:

Sounds like a bunch of hard work? Why would you bother?

I truly believe that investing in engaging your researchers in publication and profile management is an investment for the future. For institution, the argument is on the surface a pragmatic one about future proofing budgets.

Year on year, funding for universities gets squeezed and most institutions just can't afford to pay for the kind of administrative support they used to provide. Whilst having a group of administrators responsible for adding publications can feel more efficient, Researchers know their research better than anyone else and are often better placed to ensure that all their publications have been recorded and once confident in a system can do it faster than administrators can.

But this investment can deliver so much more than that. Engaging researchers in this space builds their knowledge and confidence in how to best manage their research – which can actually improve their publishing strategies. It's been amazing watching researchers have that light bulb moment when their search settings aren't finding all their research and they learn about how tools like ORCID can make their research more findable for other researchers and thus more citable.

Slide Eighteen:

Our researchers are all incredibly bright; gifted in their fields. But they are also time poor people trying to juggle conflicting priorities. Committing some of that precious time to managing their publications and profiles can naturally feel like a very low priority. Yet there is value to investing that time, value to understanding their own publication patterns and managing their own profile - value for both the researchers and the institution. And if you want to engage your researchers in this space, you will need to bring your expertise to the table, invest in showing them that value and support them to make that transition.

It isn't always easy, but it is rewarding when you get it right.

This is a bit of feedback one of our outreach librarians recently received from one of her schools – which reminded all of my colleagues at UNSW why we do this.

Thank you.