

Playing in the Same Sandbox: Collaborations on Data Management, Research Technologies, and Research Computing

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter highlights the long-standing collaboration between a library-based research data services team and an office of research-based research technology and computing team. Understanding that both teams wanted to engage the research community on campus, they developed a strong working relationship. Each team supported the other team's growth through sponsorship, networking, and cross-promotion of the other team's services and expertise. Together the teams secured grants, developed educational trainings, and sponsored large campus-wide data-focused programming. The collaboration helped expand the research support services offered and helped each team find their niche in the research support ecosystem.

INTRODUCTION

The University of Cincinnati (UC) Libraries Research and Data Services (RDS) unit and the Office of Research Strategic Initiatives & Signature Programs, Research Computing and Data team (RCD) have built a strong working partnership which led to collaborations on research support projects and services, successful internal grants, and a network of strong professional relationships. Though there were staff and librarians working on research data management strategy prior, the original iterations of the RDS

and RCD teams formed in 2014 and had fewer members and different reporting structures from their current iterations.

Each team had their own charge from leadership to fill existing gaps in data management and research computing support, respectively. The two teams determined that establishing a new research support service required a strong vision of the proposed work, qualified staff members to support the service, an outreach strategy for adoption, and most importantly, acceptance of the service by its intended users. To adopt new services, researchers require trust in the expertise of the provider (Ibraheem et al., 2022) and to find it easy to work with the service providers. The relationships should be authentic, mutually beneficial, and focused on the outcome of the work. It can take time to establish trust and tap into the right networks.

Strategic collaborations between service providers can accelerate service acceptance because one trusted team can vet the new team for researchers and help build necessary trust. A significant challenge in any research institution is the multitude of groups vying for researcher attention. In conversations with the UC RDS team, researchers often mentioned the daily email overload. By taking a collaborative approach, teams can align and cross promote the expertise and services each offers, streamline communication channels using more unified language, and conduct engagement in a more efficient, less redundant, and productive way. Recognizing the limited nature of resources, this approach helps extend the outreach beyond what one team alone could do. This collaboration between the RDS and RCD teams made it evident that research support teams and researchers are all playing in the same sandbox and as this chapter will reveal, learning to navigate that shared space has its rewards and challenges. Recognizing that there is room for diverse and unique expertise in the research support network helps a research support team understand how to best contribute and participate in a research culture of excellence (The Royal Society, 2018).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic Libraries and Information Technology (IT) collaborations are not new, but the terrain continues to evolve like shifting sands, especially as advanced research tools and expertise expand. Since the beginning of technology, libraries experienced transformational changes, which presented them with opportunities to develop new services and models to assist their users in accessing information and preserving and creating content. Importantly, digital changes also reveal how the role of libraries and campus IT departments is increasingly blurred (Lowman, 2012). An entire 2012 issue of the *Journal of Library Administration* focuses on the theme of collaboration between libraries and information technology divisions, eliciting the beneficial, complicated, and no one-size-fits-all nature of these organizational arrangements and partnerships.

Similarly, the number of researchers who require advanced tools and support for computation and data to carry out their research has grown dramatically. Research computing is undertaken in support of, or related to, the research activities of faculty members and is as extensive and diverse as the interests of the faculty (McMullen, 1997). Research computing requires technologies with powerful computational capabilities and specialized expertise, which are not often part of the typical IT infrastructure yet share many of the data workflow components with [the] library research support. This emerging space for libraries, IT, and research computing centers to collaborate has become a primary topic of discussion in the national research computing community (Broude Geva et al., 2020; Maimone et al., 2020).

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