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Building eResearch Services, Capabilities and Capacity

Martin Borchert[1], Joseph Young[2]
[1]Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia, m.borchert@qut.edu.au
[2]Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia, j.young@qut.edu.au

INTRODUCTION

The Queensland University of Technology (QUT) is known for several flagship eResearch centres. It also has a number of mature, centralised research support services that address a number of areas of eResearch. The university has openly stated its aspiration to be an institution with a strongly embedded eResearch capability and to this end it has expressed the desire to establish a university-wide eResearch support service. However, articulating this desire is much easier than realising it.

During 2008 QUT undertook a major review that made recommendations on the development of university-wide eResearch support service and the building of eResearch capabilities and capacity throughout the university. The results of this review were reported last year at this conference [1].

THE QUT ERESEARCH SUPPORT SERVICE PROJECT 2008

The primary objective of the 2008 eResearch project and investigation was to scope a service model to support QUT researchers as their research becomes increasingly data dependent and in many instances reliant on high levels of computation and analysis using advanced IT tools and resources that may be located around the globe. The ensuing report proposed and costed a service model for a university-wide eResearch support service. This is depicted in Figure 1.
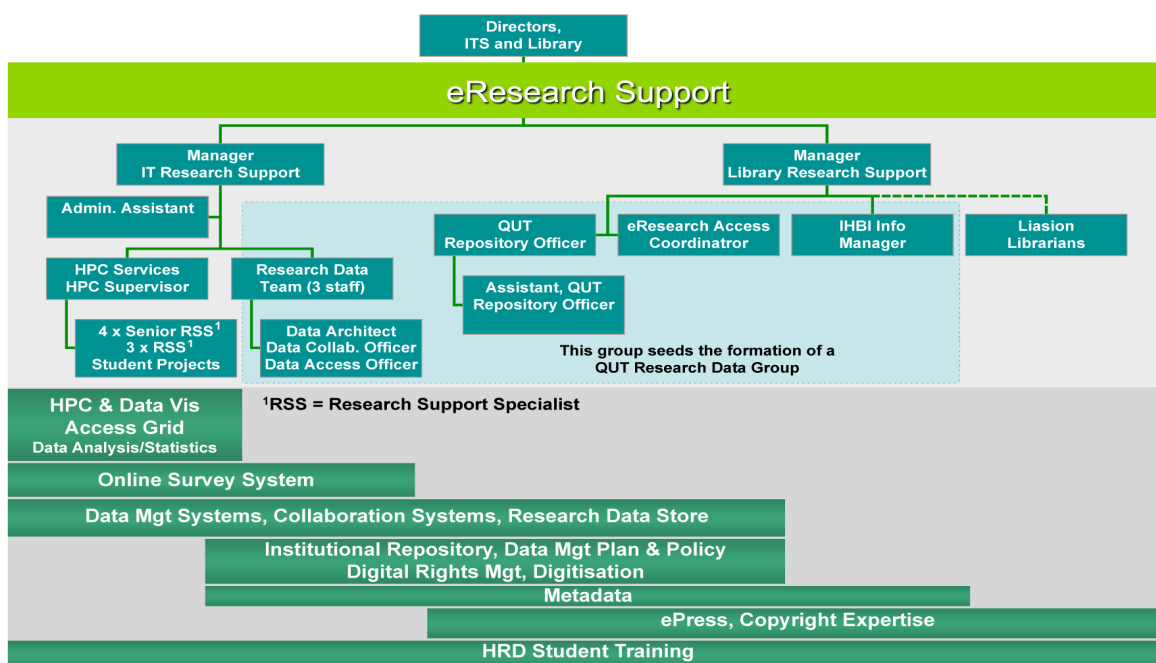

Figure 1: Proposed Model for a University-Wide eResearch Support Service

The report recommended that the eResearch support service be established within the Division of Teaching, Information and Learning Support (TILS) and that it include staff from the Library and Information Technology Services (e.g., High Performance Computing staff). New positions in research data management and repository services were recommended. It was also recommended that the service be funded on a sustainable basis, preferably with funds top sliced from within the University.

THE QUT ERESEARCH JOURNEY – ONE YEAR ON

During the latter half of 2008, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor – Technology, Information and Learning Support (DVC-TILS) presented the report to the university research committee and subsequently to

the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee. Strong support was received from both executive committees. The matter of sustainable funding is still being persued by the DVC-TILS.

BUILDING ERESEARCH SUPPORT CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY

The completion of the 2008 project has paved the way for a subsequent project to contine building eResearch support capability at QUT. The key objectives are the development of a Research Data Management Team and the building of capabilities for eResearch support and developing eResearch skills within the research community. Table 1 summarises the objectives and expected outcomes of 2009 eResearch project.

Table 1: Summary of Objects and Outcomes, Building eResearch Capacity and Capability

Objective	Outcome
Research Data Management Support team implemented within HPC	Extend range of eResearch support services thus improving QUT's research capability
An audit of eResearch skills for support staff	Informed about staff capability and skills gaps
An eResearch skills development program, and resources, for support staff	Support staff are better skilled and informed to provide eResearch support
An audit of eResearch skills for researchers	Researcher capability and skills gaps identified
An eResearch skills development program	Improved eResearch capability
Research data management policy developed	Improved practices from policy framework
Research data management procedure and plan	Research benefits from best practice guidelines
Central data management infrastructure and service operationalised (including ANDS collaboration)	Research data is managed and appropriately available
A small number of discipline specific research data management infrastructure solutions will be operationalised	Specialised research data is also managed and appropriately available
Descriptions of the University's research datasets will be made available	Increased access to research data sets
The University's web sites providing research support will be evaluated and integrated.	Researchers will have access to a more seamless eResearch support service
Partner and collaborate with key stakeholders and experts including ARCS , ANDS and other universities	Shared work, improved ROI, and better decision making

The QUT Building eResearch Support Capacity and Capability Project is an ambitious one designed to put in place a central eResearch Support Services and to continue building capability within its support base and research community. The purpose of this paper is to give an update on QUT's journey, one year on from its first major report into eResearch. It will outline how the university is approaching this challenge, the current work being carried out and the strategies being employed. It will also discuss the lessons learnt.

REFERENCES

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