

Research Notebooks Workshop

Durham University
18 November 2019

Welcome, Introductions – Valerie McCutcheon and Christopher Brown

#researchnotebooks

The workshop was a meetup to discuss practical steps for institutions wishing to providing central support for research notebook tools.

There are many tools available. Some disciplines have specific requirements that are not satisfied with generic tool without substantial add on.

Jisc are using the workshops to hear about requirements.

The Jisc Procurement Framework Agreement will support a range of research tools.

There was a request from the audience to ensure Jisc look at a long timeframe - we need to start planning now for what will be needed in 10 years.

Case Study - University of Glasgow

Overview – Valerie McCutcheon

Trialling RSpace. Working with OneNote and Teams.

As well as researchers there is interest from Teaching Groups.

Slow start but clear interest and positive feedback.

Producing a case study, internal recommendations report and updating the 'pre-requirements' (possible requirements) document.

Very keen to have a sustained community, shared tools, and shared generic requirements reference documents.

Student experience – Roza Dimogkioka

Paperless - trialling RSpace and OneNote

Use of ELNs helps to improve digital skills. Potential to make researchers more confidence in pursuing STEM careers.

Limitations - lack of support and training (could Jisc help here?).

Can be difficult for busy teachers. Must not be a burden.

RSpace -

Liked - assignation of roles, gallery, protocols

Disliked – felt it had a steeper learning curve than OneNote, no offline function, no autosave

OneNote-

Liked - flexible, user friendly, people know Microsoft, offline feature very popular, connect with Teams (which was a bit like Facebook) used assignments for pre-lab preparation - knowledge for preparing to work in lab, can link to apps such as chem doodle. OneNote has substantial storage.

Disliked - lack of locking features

Regardless of which package used there were issues with sharing information between MAC and PC.

General - electronic tools meant students took more notes because it was easy.

Had to get used to removing protective gloves.

For all the tests at Glasgow we recognised that some of the perceived issues might be solved by more training, activation of features, or workarounds.

Demo - Mestrelab - Patrick Steel

Durham specific version of a package written for industry but set up to reflect academic structure.

Integrates with all their services. A module in a package they were already using so in that respect barrier was low.

All web based. Stored in EU. University is moving to cloud.

Each experiment requires a signed safety protocol and being able to do this in Metrelab is one of the key attractions. COSHH risk assessment sign off via a form that the group created. The risks for specific chemicals are auto download from the data sheets.

Once a chemical is mentioned in notes the tool automatically adds details of the solution from lookup.

Described as a glorified version of OneNote but the chemistry specialist safety sign-off is valuable and saves admin time to set up these functions.

Discussion led by Al Downie

No one tool that suits all disciplines.

Could we aim to have a standard that a generic tool could deliver with specialist extensions being developed by specialists? Possibly Jisc could help?

Would a mix of tools work in the same group? Possibly if the extract e.g. pdf could be shared in an accessible file structure despite being created on different platforms.

Most comments reinforce biggest challenge - although benefits proven, variety of interests and preference pulling in different directions.

What features are essential for *everyone*?

Action: We discussed a range of possible requirements and agreed to bring together the list from today with the previous collection from these workshops. The list can be shared with the researchnotebooks@jiscmail.ac.uk list with a view to identifying any gaps in key requirements and allowing anyone who is working on research notebooks tools to have a reference.

Paralysis of choice... there are so many... different issue to e.g. research info systems where there is a more finite number of choices.

Action: Try a shared document that organisations could voluntarily contribute short updates on where they are with research notebooks.