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Digital futures and JISC collections. By Catherine Grout

The session started with some background information about Catherine and her interest in digital art. She started working in the early days of the digital literacy concept, before technology made this an easier area to work in. Now she manages two different strands in JISC, the Strategic Content Alliance and the digitisation programme.

There are some areas of her job and the digital futures concept that haven't changed much since Catherine's early work with digital literacy, areas such as IPR and professional role definitions have remained important. However Catherine also acknowledges that some areas have changed vastly, such as currently there is so much information available online that it becomes problematic to curate where as previously there was too little and therefore much of her work centred on trying to find ways of creating online content. Many creators of digital content are concerned with others taking their content however Catherine thinks there needs to be consideration of whether the digital content is likely to be used and wanted, this is something JISC need to try and make sure of when evaluating project applications in terms of value for money.

Catherine used the analogy that boutique websites are lovely and may give you as content provider more control but are often out of the way shopping malls on the other hand are perhaps not as nice but people use them and they are convenient. Essentially we cannot rely on building our own content all of the time, we will need to team up with larger organisations to make sure our content provides value for money. Collaborating with organisations however requires practice, policy to be in place and the infrastructure to ensure that the content is created and used. Catherine mentioned two specific areas that need to be considered firstly, search engine optimisation if you want content to be found you need to ensure it is findable and secondly, ensuring that your content is licensed appropriately so that everyone knows what is permissible usage.

Catherine then spoke briefly about the Strategic Content Alliance which is a working group trying to make sure of access to content, of which the ERA licence is one mechanism. Catherine believes that educational organisations and researchers need to have access to the resources and her role in JISC means she gets to oversee research into what the problem areas in accessing information are and run projects into improving access for all. Things that JISC are currently looking into are internet business models, web optimisation, licensing and IPR. For more information about JISC projects Catherine recommends using the JISC portal which lists all the free and subscription packages.