
eResearch: the institutional repository experience at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh



Helen Muir
*Research Support Librarian,
Queen Margaret University,
Edinburgh*
Tel: 0131 474 0000
E-mail: hmuir@qmu.ac.uk

On 10 October 2004, the Scottish Declaration on Open Access was adopted by 22 Scottish higher education institutions, including Queen Margaret University.¹ The main implication of this was that research output could be made accessible to all, and not just to those who can afford to subscribe to academic journal publications. The primary argument supporting this shift is that whilst a lot of public money funds research, the results of the research are not then usually made freely available. Indeed, some research-funding bodies, including JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) and the Wellcome Trust, are now also mandating open access when awarding research funding. In response to the signing of the declaration, information and library services staff at QMU began to look at the implementation of a research repository that could openly display the research output of QMU digitally. As a result ePrints repository software, which was developed at the University of Southampton, was installed first in 2005, and since January 2007 more than 450 articles have been added to the repository. The repository was given the name 'eResearch'.

However, the existence of the repository has not been sufficient in itself to promote it internally to academic and research staff and to encourage them to deposit their work within it. The advocacy of eResearch within QMU has effectively been under way since January 2007, and increasingly so since a mandate was passed by the university's research committee in February

2008 that all research output should be deposited in eResearch. The purposes of this article are to discuss the policies adopted for the materials included in the repository itself, to explore the approaches taken to promote the repository, both internally and externally – outside Queen Margaret University – and to attempt to evaluate just how successful these have been.

eResearch exists primarily to keep the research output of Queen Margaret University in one central repository and to make it accessible to all. It is available externally of the institution, with access via QMU's own webpages (<http://www.qmu.ac.uk>), through OpenDOAR (<http://www.opendoar.org/>), OAIster (<http://www.oaister.org/>) and Intute (<http://www.intute.ac.uk/irs/>), and searching Google will also bring up results from eResearch. The policy for what should be deposited in eResearch is an all-inclusive one, and covers both peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed work. The policy was designed using the OpenDOAR policies tool² and is available from the eResearch website at <http://eresearch.qmu.ac.uk/policies.html>.

The ideal situation would be for all articles to be fully open access, with the author's final pre-publication (also known as post-print) draft accessible to all. However, with the current publishing system, which is mainly subscription-based, copyright restrictions often mean that open-access deposit is not possible in institutional repositories. In response to this, some universities have decided only to deposit articles where they can include the full-text document. However, we have taken a different approach at Queen Margaret University, where the decision was taken to include all research output. This has meant that, due to many publishers' copyright restrictions and also to the fact that many authors have not kept their postprint once their work has been published, it has often not been possible to display full papers in eResearch. In such cases, we have only been able to put in a metadata entry for the work, with a link to the author's e-mail and to the relevant journal, to lead the user to the work. However, a 'request e-print' button, which has been developed as part of the EPrints 3.1 software, has recently been added. This allows the user to request a copy of the work directly from the author, where the work is not open-access. Authors can then decide whether or not they wish to send on the article. The SHERPA/RoMEO site is particularly useful for establishing publishers' copyright policies,³ but where the site does not have a listing we then have to contact the pub-

lisher directly with a record of the response stored. Journal articles form the bulk of the content of the repository, but book chapters, grey literature, posters and conference presentations are also included. The material included is not always peer-reviewed, although again other institutional repositories have taken this route.

The first advocacy of eResearch was that done by the director of information services at QMU, Fraser Muir. As well as instigating the implementation of a repository, he then set about promoting it to academic staff that he had contact with, and regularly put it as an agenda item at research committee meetings. Through the research committee, a mandate for all QMU researchers to deposit their work in eResearch was passed in February 2008. However, although the mandate was publicised internally at the time of its inception, its profile is still somewhat low, with staff either having missed the message or, more likely, simply ignoring it! There are of course arguments that having a mandate can also increase negative feeling towards repositories, for example it may be resented as yet another addition to academics' already busy workload.

Some staff have immediately seen the benefits of having a repository, whilst others have been confused or downright negative. Within library services, eResearch has come under the remit of the technical services team, with a systems/server administrator from the educational resource centre also looking after the systems requirements of the site. A post of research support librarian was created in 2007, with the advocacy of eResearch included in the job description. The post was taken up in September 2008 by myself, and since that point there have been further attempts to increase the profile of the repository within QMU. The advocacy of the repository is an ongoing, 'drip-feed' process with regular updates being posted in intranet bulletins to all staff. A lunch-time training session on the repository was also recently given to all library, IT and educational resource centre staff, and it helped to broaden understanding of what the repository is for within the whole of information services. Librarians who regularly liaise with researchers and academics are also responsible for highlighting the benefits of depositing the results of their research within the repository. Meetings with individual members of staff have brought mixed results in terms of collecting material for depositing in eResearch, but have highlighted the common reasons for resistance. These include:

- 1 the perceived time and inconvenience that depositing their work would involve
- 2 concerns regarding publishers' copyright issues
- 3 the perception that eResearch will not be looked at externally
- 4 suspicion of open access – what are the implications for publishing their work?

Our advocacy policy counters these arguments with the following:

Why should I use eResearch?

There are advantages to researchers in depositing material in eResearch:

- increased visibility of their research output, leading to increased citations and better communication between researchers
- secure, long-term storage
- outward linking to other sites, for example the author's personal home page, links to cited references
- the facilitation of the creation of bibliographies or publication lists for CVs.

The institution also benefits from the collection of all research material in one site, as eResearch will become a showcase for research at QMU. It makes the discovery of research material easier by making it readily visible to prospective business collaborators, academics or students.

At Queen Margaret University, we have also taken the decision to deposit our researchers' work for them, rather than asking them to do this themselves. It was felt that removing this extra workload and handing over the work to library staff would both encourage our researchers to deposit their work more readily and also ensure that the correct metadata fields were being completed, to maintain consistency in the repository. The option does still exist for authors to deposit their own work, but we have only had a few researchers who have preferred to do this themselves. In such cases, library staff have checked the entries to ensure that the metadata is accurate and consistent with the rest of the repository.

Other strategies to elevate the profile of the repository have included my attending events aimed at increasing research activity within the university, such as a 'writing for publication' workshop organised by QMU's centre for academic practice. This has provided the opportunity to meet with

researchers who are preparing to publish, to raise their awareness of eResearch and of how to negotiate with publishers over copyright to enable us to put the final draft pre-print into the repository. We have a form that we ask researchers to send to publishers with their paper that requests this – researchers simply have to access the form from the QMU staff intranet, sign it and submit it with their work. Obviously we cannot expect researchers to stop publication of their work if the publisher refuses!

There is still a lot of work to be done with our researchers in terms of increasing their awareness of open-access publishing. As an institution, we also need to start building into funding plans provisions for our research to be made open access. A report on this very topic has recently been published by the Research Information Network and Universities UK⁴ and this has been passed on to senior research staff at QMU in an attempt to bring open access higher up on the university's research agenda.

Currently we are also trying to encourage as many departments as possible to put links to eResearch in their webpages, in the hope that this will again raise the profile of eResearch internally and externally. Following the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) results, we are now also discussing with researchers how the repository may have an impact on the new Research Excellence Framework (REF) assessment exercise when it comes in. So far we know that a pilot study has already been undertaken involving 22 UK higher education institutions, and that bibliometrics extracted from institutional repositories were used in the pilot.

To further publicise eResearch, the front page has also recently been re-designed, with links to external sites including OpenDOAR, OAIster and SHERPA/RoMEO (see Fig. 1). A lunch was held to demonstrate the new design and to gauge reaction from staff. Unfortunately not as many staff attended as we would have liked, but those who did appear to be positive about the site, and surprised at how little time it would take to simply send us a list of their work. Finally, the best result was that a good number of those who did attend then sent their citation lists and encouraged colleagues within their departments to do the same.



Fig. 1: The eResearch Website

The idea of an institutional repository has not instantly captured the imaginations and hearts of the majority of the research staff at Queen Margaret University, although it should be said that a small but significant number have supported the concept from the outset and have been very positive and supportive throughout. The main barriers seem to be a lack of understanding about what a repository is for and how it can be of any benefit to the researchers themselves, a perception that a lot of work is involved and concerns regarding publishers' copyright and the move to open access. It appears that the most effective method to keep raising the profile of eResearch will be to continue talking to as many researchers as possible, repetitively where necessary, until the message permeates throughout the university! One way in which we have recently started to further improve this is to publicise more statistics, which we are generating through Google Analytics; these can be used to demonstrate information such as just how often the website is being accessed internationally, and which papers are especially popular.

In addition to eResearch, Queen Margaret University also has a further two repositories: eTheses and eData. eTheses is a collection of PhD theses and selected MSc dissertations, and is fully open access. We have obtained copyright permissions from students where we have contact details, and are operating a take-down policy for instances where we have not been able to locate former students, should they later object to the inclusion of their work in eTheses. eData is a repository for research data, where researchers can keep large amounts of data safely in one place and share data with other researchers. It is still very much in its

piloting stage, and policies regarding the accessibility of deposited data are still under discussion.

CONCLUSIONS

Outwith QMU, it is important that people working within the open-access and repositories communities continue to communicate, sharing and comparing practices. There is no 'one size fits all' model for repositories that can be fitted to all institutions, which makes hearing about the practices of other establishments all the more interesting. The JISC repositories mailing list is particularly useful for keeping up to date with the latest developments, and more events for people working with repositories are coming to the fore. The Repositories Support Project⁵ has recently held a number of events around the country.

Within Queen Margaret University, and elsewhere, the movement towards open-access publishing, and the need for repositories from which that stems, is slowly gathering momentum and awareness. Certainly at QMU, with eResearch the two main tasks would appear to be to continue:

- 1 raising the profile of open-access publishing within the institution, so that we are compliant with the Scottish Declaration on Open Access
- 2 entrenching the depositing of work in eResearch as part of the route-to-publication process for researchers.

Our progress may be slow and steady, but we now have a backlog of papers waiting to be deposited in eResearch. Obviously this now raises questions of staff development within library services, but it is also a positive indication that our researchers are beginning to get the repository message.

REFERENCES

- 1 See <http://scurl.ac.uk/WG/OATS/declaration.htm>.
- 2 See <http://www.opendoar.org/tools/en/policies.php>.
- 3 See <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/>.
- 4 See http://www.rin.ac.uk/files/Paying_open_access_charges_March_2009.pdf.
- 5 See <http://www.rsp.ac.uk/>.