

The UCL Data Audit Framework (DAF) pilot implementation project

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Introduction

The outputs of research activity are published records, most commonly in the form of journal articles, books, reports, etc. However, the vast majority of the data that are produced during the research process never reaches publication stage. There is an increasing recognition of the potential benefits of such data both to the wider research community and to society in general.

Developing systems and services for the effective and efficient management of research data, as well as addressing issues around their long term curation, is an area of increasing activity in UK Higher Education. Recent examples of such activity include projects that currently run under the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) [Digital Repositories programme 2007-9](#) such as the Data Audit Framework Development project and a further study for [identifying the benefits](#) of curating and sharing research data, and the joint [RLUK-RUGIT UK Research Data Service Feasibility study](#). Moreover, studies of the complex relations and issues around the generation, management, curation, use and value of research data ([Swan & Sheridan, 2008](#); [Lyon, 2007](#); [NSB, 2005](#); [MacLeod & Childs, 2003](#)) have already started to pave the way for further research in this area.

The UCL Data Audit Framework pilot implementation project (UCL DAF) is part of the activity in this area.

Project Aims

The UCL DAF project aims to test the Data Audit Framework methodology, which has been developed for auditing research assets in Higher Education Institutions. The development of the DAF methodology has been led by the [Humanities Advanced Technology and Information Institute](#) (HATII) in conjunction with the [Digital Curation Centre](#) (DCC) supported with JISC funding. The aims of the UCL DAF project are to contribute to the iterative development of the Data Audit Framework and collate information about the research assets generated, held and managed by academic and research staff at University College London (UCL). In particular, the objectives are:

- a. explore the implementation of the methodology developed by the [Data Audit Framework Development](#) (DAFD) project for auditing research assets at Higher Education Institutes
- b. document, discuss and report issues and lessons learned of the pilot implementation with the members of DAFD and the other pilot implementation projects

- c. collate information about research assets and data management practices at designated departments/centres/institutes at UCL and
- d. share the findings with the academic community and beyond.

Current work

We are currently trialling the [DAF methodology](#) across a range of departments and an interdisciplinary research centre at UCL. The departments and centre that were approached are:

1. Department of Scandinavian Studies (Arts & Humanities)
2. Institute of Archaeology (Social & Historical Sciences)
3. UCL Interaction Centre (Interdepartmental and cross-faculty research)
4. Department of Language and Communication (Life & Medical Sciences)
5. Department of Physics and Astronomy (Mathematical & Physical Sciences)

As part of the trial we are conducting an online questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews with academic and research staff at the designated departments. We are currently in the process of:

- a. analysing data from the online questionnaire survey (response from 57 people, approximately
~ 30% of base = 192) and
- b. conducting follow-up interviews with members of academic and research staff at the designated departments.

The questionnaire and interviews are designed to explore an interlinked set of research questions: Would respondents welcome institutional systems and services to support the managed curation of their research data? To what extent do they already share their data, and would they see any value in widening access to it, ethical considerations permitting? What opportunities might there be for the re-purposing of their data, perhaps in interdisciplinary applications? What criteria might they use for prioritising the importance of the data they have already collected?

The findings from the UCL Audits will be reported in summary form in March 2009.

Further Information

UCL Data Audit Framework pilot implementation is funded by the JISC (the UK Joint Information Systems Committee), and it runs until March 2009. For more information and updates, visit the Project Web site at <<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ls/data-audit>>.

References to projects and reports

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