

The International Journal of Digital Curation

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Editorial

Liz Lyon and Chris Rusbridge,
UK Digital Curation Centre

Data are increasingly important today, for science and scholarship. There can be little research worldwide that does not involve in part the gathering of data on computers. Often these data will be private to individuals, laboratories or small groups, but increasingly they are important in a wider and longer context. The management, or curation, of these data for current and future use is no longer a simple side activity, but a significant element of research in its own right. The issues involved in data as evidence, and data as sharable resource, are significant and wide-ranging.

The importance of Digital Curation is today emerging as a substantive topic of intellectual challenge and community engagement for a wide range of people including research scientists, computer and information scientists, librarians, archivists, policy makers and research funders. This interest has been enhanced by the emergence of e-Science (or Cyber-infrastructure) as a metaphor for data-driven, data-centric domain-led research activity, supported by a high-performance distributed computing infrastructure, which is radically changing the way science is being conceived, executed and understood.

The data life-cycle from creation, through management, storage, discovery, transformation and re-use is a highly complex process that is very closely associated with workflow and research practice, which itself varies greatly across disciplines and sectors. The potential of well-curated data for development and growth of research that transcends traditional disciplinary borders is considerable. This is because access to the outputs of earlier research, which have been well-structured, maintained and curated for current and future generations of researchers, allows new associations to be made, and new conclusions to be drawn. This dual aim of enabling data access and use today, together with continuing access in the longer term (for unspecified years into the future), encapsulates the core tenets of digital curation and preservation, and provides the rich context for this new journal.

The funding of the UK Digital Curation Centre by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), is an indicator of the importance attached to these aims, and the commitment of UK government to informed and proactive stewardship of the scientific record for the next generation of researchers.

The *International Journal of Digital Curation* (IJDC) has arisen directly from this initiative, but is positioned to be of relevance to the wider community both within education and in other sectors, where the curation and preservation of digital assets is a key issue. The journal fills a critical “niche gap” and thereby provides valuable insight into the research challenges, service developments, best practice and policy approaches associated with this field. It is truly international in coverage and has drawn on an eminent international Editorial Board to inform and guide its inception. The journal contains a core of peer-reviewed full-length research papers, together with shorter articles, reports, reviews and notices, and readers are invited to submit material to any of these categories.

This inaugural issue of the IJDC contains three substantive peer-reviewed papers and four shorter items which together cover a wide spectrum of curation topics. As perhaps befits the first issue, a “potted” history of digital curation is presented together with definitions and contextual background to the subject, which lays the foundations for the other papers. The importance of bridging different communities through an appropriate technical and semantic framework is presented in a second paper. The breadth of scope of the journal is effectively illustrated by the contrasting theme of the third full article, which explores intellectual property issues associated with academic research and datasets. Short articles on a strategically important European initiative, together with description of a major project in the engineering domain are available while there are two further reports of international workshops which have received much community interest in part because of their trans-national (US/UK) linkages, and in part because of the criticality of the topic (curating emails).

Many thanks are due to many people at this point in time. The Editorial Board and Reviewers have given of their time and expertise freely and willingly, and this effort is much appreciated. As with any new product, it has been some time in the making and we view its continued development and growth with some excitement.

Finally, we welcome your views, suggestions of topics to cover and comments, and look forward to receiving your article and publishing it, in a future issue of the new *International Journal of Digital Curation*.