

UWI St Augustine Campus Libraries and RDM efforts at the UWI, St Augustine Campus

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7.1. WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

The University of the West Indies (UWI) is unique, in that it is a multi-campus institution located in different countries in the English-speaking Caribbean. After 60 years of existence, it presently has over 45,000 students. Researchers—academic staff and postgraduate students—are actively engaged in many research initiatives at the various faculties, centres and units. However, the notion of research data management (RDM) is still in its infancy. Moreover, universities in the Caribbean have been outpaced by their counterparts in the developed nations with regards to RDM. The key issues that face the UWI, at this time, are:

- Lack of awareness
- Coordination of efforts
- Training
- Costs of implementation of RDM across the campuses of the region.

The LERU Roadmap for Research Data¹ describes six high level sets of issues in introducing research data management at an institutional level:

- Policy and Leadership
- Advocacy
- Selection and Collection, Curation, Description, Citation, Legal Issues
- Research Data Infrastructure
- Costs
- Roles, Responsibilities and Skills.

In terms of placing the UWI in this matrix, the institution is at the earliest stage i.e. policy and leadership.

7.2. AWARENESS

At the UWI St. Augustine (STA) Campus located in Trinidad and Tobago, In September 2015, the UWI STA Campus Libraries participated in a two-day Annual Research Expo which highlighted the research conducted on the campus and the assistance provided for this. One of the objectives of the STA Campus Libraries on this occasion was to show the ways in which the Libraries provide valuable support throughout the entire research cycle from the formulation of the idea, preparation of the literature review and the actual study, gathering data, documentation, publications and archiving data.

¹ LERU: http://www.leru.org/files/publications/AP14_LERU_Roadmap_for_Research_data_final.pdf; last accessed 7 February 2017.

The Campus Libraries were becoming increasingly concerned about how researchers managed data after it was collected and analysed, as well as its availability for further study. As a result, a survey was designed and administered to researchers—both faculty and postgraduate students—to determine their awareness of data management practices; the size of the data they generally managed; how they stored and archived their data; and how they perceived the Libraries having a role in assisting them managing their data during and at the end of their research cycle, if at all.

Based on the survey results, it was clear that researchers were generally not fully aware of what RDM involved or the four key components of RDM:

- create data and plan for its use
- organise, structure and describe data
- store and preserve data
- search for and share it.

Some of those interviewed felt that emailing their data to their personal email account was a form of archiving their research. Furthermore, when they were asked how they saw the Library helping them with managing data, they were unable to say. These responses were indicative of the fact that the notion and elements of RDM were unfamiliar to the group of respondents at the UWI STA Campus. Also, of interest, was that most people handled small amounts of data < 50 MB and not the large data sets the Libraries had expected.

7.3. COORDINATION OF RDM EFFORTS

Another major issue is that there are multiple departments and initiatives at UWI STA that provide support to researchers, but there is little communication at the moment among them.

One project, the Research Information Management System (RIMS), is an online tool used to identify researchers at UWI with specific knowledge and skills. RIMS allocates each researcher a profile in the database where they can update personal information; learn about current research activities on the campus; access internal funding sources; and locate information on and apply for internal and external grants. Through RIMS, researchers can access training and assistance with the development of research proposals (UWI. ORDKT, 2016²).

Another venture is the Trinidad and Tobago Research and Development Impact (RDI) Fund. This Fund, provided by the Trinidad and Tobago Government but managed by the Office of the Principal of the St. Augustine Campus, offers a maximum of US\$ 300,000 to researchers to develop projects in priority areas such as agriculture, crime, violence and citizen security, public health, climate change and related environmental issues, finance and entrepreneurship, technology and society, and economic diversification and sector competitiveness. Since the establishment of the Fund in 2012, eighty-five (85) concept notes have been received and thirty-one (31) grants totalling over US\$ 2,000,000 have been approved and awarded. Despite these successes, RDM has not been an integral requirement for researchers accessing these funds.

Due to the structure of UWI, coordination of RDM would be a challenge to implement. The UWI comprises three physical campuses located at St. Augustine in Trinidad and Tobago; Cave Hill in Barbados; and Mona in Jamaica and a fourth campus, the Open Campus which is both a virtual campus and also consists of seventeen (17) centres located on various islands throughout the English-speaking Caribbean. Each territory has its own governmental policies to which it adheres as well as a distinct cultural landscape. The geographical and administrative issues provide major challenges to setting policies and implementing RDM across the UWI campuses. Furthermore, the question of which department will take the lead in developing the necessary infrastructure across the four campuses is a prime concern. Currently, the institutional repository (IR) called UWISpace is managed at the UWI STA Campus Libraries. Recently, the staff at the Alma Jordan Library based at the St Augustine Campus visited Harvard University in order to gain insight into how *Dataverse*—software used for data management—functions with the view to testing and deploying it across the UWI Campuses.

7.4. TRAINING

For RDM to be successfully implemented, staff must be properly trained to provide support to researchers to assist them during the RDM cycle. Academic libraries have carved out a niche in this area in North American countries. At present, the expertise among the UWI librarians is not at the level to provide the necessary RDM support. Although the technical information technology (IT) expertise may exist, testing and implementing software is just one aspect of implementing RDM.

7.5. COST

At this time, all the UWI campuses are undergoing severe budget cuts due to economic setbacks experienced by the contributing UWI territories. In Trinidad and Tobago, the UWI STA Campus overall budget was cut by more than 14% over the last year and departments on the Campus have had to make sometimes drastic adjustments to cope with the diminished allocations. Implementing RDM across the campuses would involve considerable costs associated with the necessary storage and infrastructure and equipping staff with the appropriate skills.

7.6. CONCLUSION

For the UWI, the key issues are identifying those ready and willing to take charge and to drive RDM at the various Campuses. The STA Campus Libraries have shown initiative by deploying an RDM awareness pilot survey among researchers on the campus and sending staff to acquire knowledge of *Dataverse* software. Libraries would have a critical role to play in the RDM implementation process. Nevertheless at UWI, RDM cannot be realised without the collaboration of all relevant departments.



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² University of the West Indies (UWI). Office of Research, Development and Knowledge Transfer (ORDKT) (2016) Research and Information Management System. Available at: <https://sta.uwi.edu/ordkt/rims.asp> (accessed 15 May 2016).