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REF and internal research management – getting the right balance

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Stuart Bolton

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Background

- The RAE to be replaced by the Research Excellence Framework (REF)
- Proposal that bibliometrics to be introduced as part of REF
- HEFCE bibliometrics pilot summer 2008
- JISC project to assess ICT impact


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The project

- Inform HEFCE of the impact of the data requirements being imposed on HEIs by the REF
- To support institutions in their preparation for the REF and inform those institutions not part of the pilot of the ITC implications of the REF

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 **The process**


- Survey of all the pilot institutions
- Select 5 institutions to be case studies
- Visit each case study institution to develop detailed understanding of the processes and systems used in the pilot (including a degree of reflective analysis by the institution)
- Produce Report for HEFCE
- Produce case study material for institutions




 **Case Study Institutions**

- Bangor
- Birmingham
- Bournemouth
- Queen's Belfast
- Plymouth



 **Institutional Approaches to Information Gathering**

- Case study institutions had a variety of approaches to completing the return:
 - mainly manual
 - basic database
 - Publications DB/institutional repository
 - Complex data warehouses



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Return Structure

```
graph LR; Staff[Staff] --- Link[Output/staff (Link)]; Link --- output[output]
```

- A full definition of the data dictionary is contained in the infoNet web site and at: www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/resources/#bib (bibliometrics pilot briefing 9 July 2008)
- Useful resources on the HEFCE web site: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/>

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Staff Record

- All institutions have an HR system which can provide most of the required data.
- Similar to a subset of the HESA staff return
- Problematic additional fields:
 - Previous institution
 - Destination Institution
 - Early career researcher
- Need to put in place mechanisms to capture these if they are part of the final REF definition


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Outputs table


- Two realistic approaches:
 - Harvest outputs from a variety of local and remote sources:
 - Academics
 - Departmental sources
 - WoS, Scopus etc
 - Maintain an institutional catalogue:
 - Publications Database
 - Institutional Repository

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 **Outputs table (cont)**


- Issues with both approaches
 - Harvesting:
 - Resource intensive
 - Error prone (especially duplicates)
 - 'snap shot'
 - Catalogue:
 - Defining ownership
 - Ensuring it is maintained
 - Defining Content




 **Link Table**


- Without an outputs catalogue constructing a link table has to be a manual exercise (very time consuming and error prone)
- Even with a catalogue can be challenging
- The easiest way is to have an automated data warehouses that bring together information from:
 - The HR system
 - A catalogue
 - Other RIM systems




 **Case Study Conclusions**


- Those institutions with a high degree of automation and integration found it easiest to meet the requirements of the pilot.
- HR systems (with minor amendments) will be sufficient
- In the medium term most institutions will deploy some form of outputs catalogue.
- The strategy of populating any form of catalogue needs to be carefully developed.




 **Case Study conclusions (cont)**


- Institutions need to make a cost benefit analysis to decide the degree to which they wish to automate their processes.
 - Elements of the link tables can be built into new implementations of publication DBs or IRs but there are drawbacks.
 - Data warehouses combining HR, publications data and other RM information are extremely useful but require significant resource to develop.
 - The ease of meeting REF needs to be balanced against the resource required to develop these systems
 - It is unlikely that the REF will be the only factor to be considered. Local needs need to be factored in.




 **Macro level Conclusions**


- In most institutions Research Information Management (RIM) systems have grown organically with very little regard to the whole picture.
- Management of the various elements of a RIM is spread across various functional areas.
- Coherent developments tend to be driven by statutory reporting requirements
- Internal Management Information is often piecemeal and difficult to understand




 **Macro level Conclusions (cont)**


- The burden of accountability may well increase in the medium term
- The REF presents a rare opportunity to address RIM needs and structure
- Irrespective of the REF institutions need to consider their approach to Research Information Management



 **Current Developments**

- Final REF specification out to consultation, role of bibliometrics restricted.
- JISC launch several initiatives on RIM
 - Call for small scale projects
 - Development of a RIM infokit



 **Resources**

- The JISC final report is available at:
<http://ie-repository.jisc.ac.uk/338/>
- JISC infoNet web site can be found at:
<http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/research/ref>
- Stuart@stuartbolton.com

