

eResearch training for research higher degree students

Leon Sterling¹, Jennifer Warburton²

¹University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia, leonss@unimelb.edu.au

¹University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia, jrwarb@unimelb.edu.au

Extended Abstract

The research environment is experiencing significant change driven by advances in technology. At the University of Melbourne we have recognized that our research higher degree (RHD) students should be able to use a range of information and communication technology (ICT) and have an understanding of key issues related to these technologies to enable them to embrace new research methodologies

The *eResearch Workshop Seminar Series* evolved from efforts to introduce mandatory training for all research students. While there was support from the eResearch Committee at the university, there was a lack of understanding of what was common across faculties. While the *OAK Law Report No.1 Creating a legal framework for copyright management of open access within the Australian academic and research sectors* [1] was proposed as a model, it was not politically possible to bring in the mandatory training. The library and the eResearch office, through the two authors, combined to design an optional seminar series for graduate students.

Key university stakeholders from the eResearch Office, the Melbourne School of Graduate Research, the Library, and Information Technology Services have collaborated to deliver a stimulating eResearch training program that aims to familiarize graduate researchers with methodologies, tools and key issues to enable them to participate effectively in the eResearch environment. As not everyone is familiar with eResearch, the University of Melbourne program has been designed to hold appeal for students in the humanities and the sciences, both the novice and the technically-savvy.

The *eResearch Workshop Seminar Series* delivered via the Melbourne School of Graduate Research's *UpSkills Graduate Research Program* [2] and run twice a year, has comprised interactive sessions on research data management, web 2.0 & social media collaboration tools, legal agreements, web surveys, copyright and open access publishing. The authors will highlight a number of notable sessions.

The *Legal Frameworks for Your Thesis* session which demystified IP agreements, non-disclosure agreements, licensing and the issues that students may face in eResearch projects with sharing information on the Web, was presented by the Director of eResearch and the Director of Legal Services. As for all sessions participants were asked to rate the session and reflect on their learning. Feedback from students was extremely positive, with comments such as the following: "If only I had known this at the start" and "This should be compulsory training for students."

The separate *Research Data Management Planning for Your Research* sessions for the *Science* and the *Arts and Humanities* cohorts, introduced students to data management policies and principles, and the use of data management plans and templates. Staff from the eScholarship Research Centre [3] led interactive activities which encouraged participants to discuss and reflect on the issues concerning collection, storage, access protection and retention of their own research data and records. Participants were given a data management template. Feedback elicited responses such as: "I didn't know my faculty had a research data management plan!"

The *Copyright for your Thesis and Future Publications* session was designed to assist research students in managing copyright issues which they may encounter when writing up their research. The Manager of the University's Copyright Office provided a broad overview of copyright law and presented various scenarios involving researchers' obligations in using third-party copyright material.

The *Your Thesis and the University's Digital Repository* sessions introduced research students to the concept of and rationale for open access publishing. Copyright and intellectual property issues and the implications of electronic publishing were explored in the context of mandatory digital thesis submission - a new requirement for RHD completion at the University.

Sessions outlining the use of web-based tools have proved popular. The *Web 2.0 & Social Media for Research Students: Wikis, Blogs and Beyond* session was conducted by one of the university's PhD candidates who enthusiastically shared her experiences. The basics of setting up wikis, blogs and social bookmarking sites were covered, whilst talking through the context of these collaborative tools. Issues surrounding privacy, sustainability, purpose and value were explored with the participants. *Using the Web for Surveys* provided an overview of the benefits and challenges of using web-based surveys. In this practical session the presenter discussed the importance of good survey design and shared his experiences.

Now being run for the fourth time, the *eResearch Workshop Series* has hit a chord with the RHD student community with all sessions fully subscribed demonstrating perceived relevance. Aggregated data from program evaluations has provided evidence of student satisfaction: that courses are meeting their expectations and that course content is relevant. The longer paper would present tables summarising the RHD response.

The authors believe that factors contributing to the success of the training program have included providing a range of relevant topics critical to the needs of research students and selecting key academics and experts from across the university to provide high quality interactive sessions with content.

Experience learnt from providing eResearch training to our research student cohort is now helping to shape the planning throughout the University of Melbourne. There is a current initiative to investigate how eResearch skills can be embedded in capstone experiences in the final year of the new Melbourne Model. the capstone subjects are being run for the first time in 2010. The eResearch series has also influenced thinking about graduate attributes for the new professional graduate degree programs being introduced.

References

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