Rebuilding our community networks post-COVID-19

perspectives from the University of St Andrews Open Access team

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Background

Communities of Practice (CoP) aid decision making, knowledge sharing, and collegiate support[1]. Individuals actively involved in CoP can also act as agents for change within an institution[2].
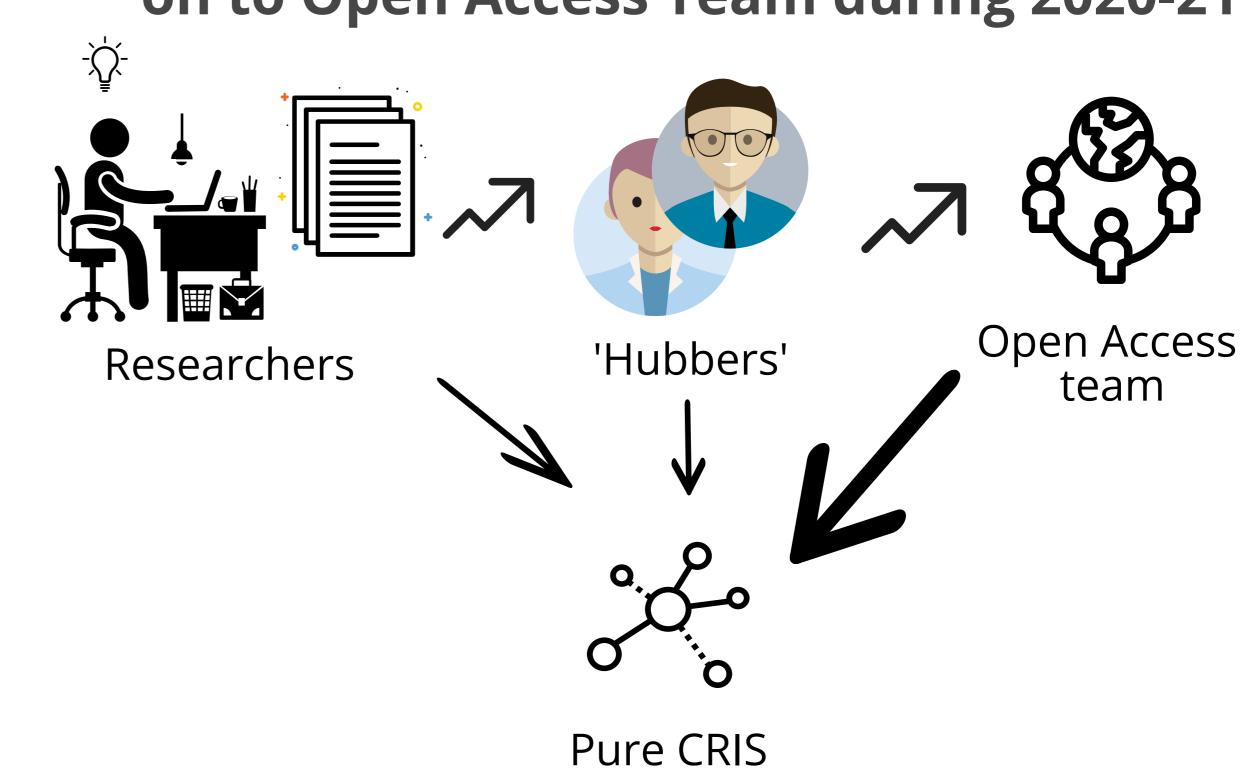
The University of St Andrews Open Access team have developed strong links with many School administrators and established 'deposit hubs', which provide:

- local support from administrators ('hubbers') in creating new research output records in the University's CRIS
- support for uploading open access versions
- valuable input based on specialist local knowledge such as linking research grants.
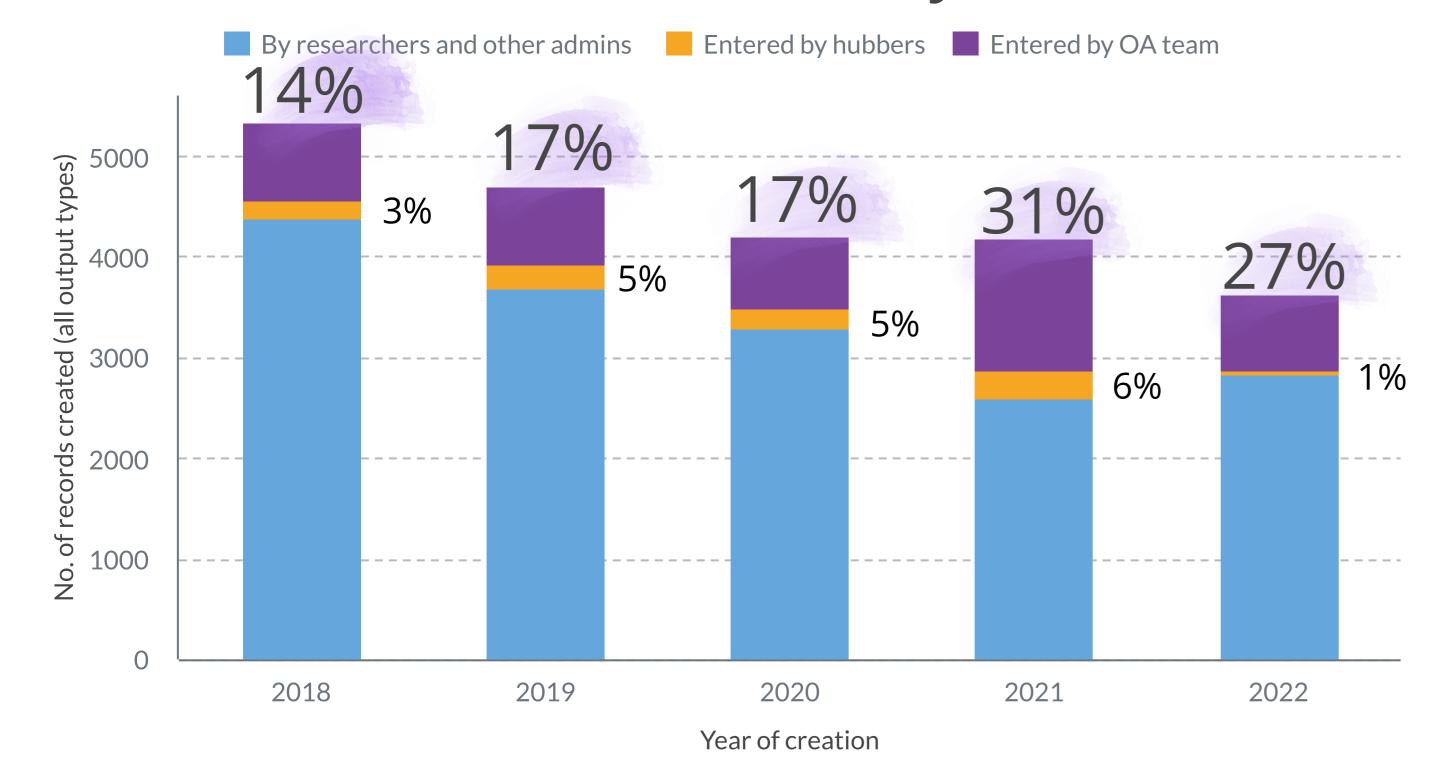
During the COVID pandemic the Open Access team reduced active communication with hubbers to allow greater focus on online teaching provision preparations. Many mediated deposit requests were also passed to the OA team from hubs, at the OA team's recommendation to support the hubs to meet their other pressing tasks.

During this time the OA team also took greater responsibility for creating records to reduce researchers' admin workloads.

Increased manuscript traffic to 'hubbers' passed on to Open Access Team during 2020-21

Researchers → 'Hubbers' → Open Access team → Pure CRIS

Pure records created by OA Team

By researchers and other admins — Entered by hubbers — Entered by OA team

No. of records created (all output types) vs Year of creation

2018: 14% / 3%
2019: 17% / 5%
2020: 17% / 5%
2021: 31% / 6%
2022: 27% / 1%

Aims

- Assess the impact of COVID-19 on the CRIS activity of our 'hubbers'.
- Determine whether more could be done to improve resilience in the face of time-constraining factors.
- Determine what measures might be taken to improve communication channels between hubbers and the OA team.
- Determine how the Open Access team might improve the capacity within Schools and grow the support network of administrators.

Methods

- Quantitative assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the CRIS activity of 'hubbers' and administrators.
- Qualitative assessment and dialogue with administrators to ascertain other issues that result in delays or non-deposit.

Results and Conclusion

- 'Hubber' CRIS activity rose during 2021, but has since fallen below usual levels (this fall will require more thorough analysis to unpick).
- The rise in 2021 indicates that the hubs experienced record creation requests from researchers that was above average, outstripping capacity - this additional pressure was then alleviated by the OA team.
- Feedback received from the hubbers also suggested there was reluctance to email the OA team during such a time of high pressure, indicating a shortcoming of using email as the primary means of communication between the OA team and the hubbers.
- It was also clear that the up-tick in administrative effort from the OA team needed to be addressed, to ensure record creation returns to pre-COVID levels.
- More was needed to be done to enhance resilience, transparency, confidence, and reduce communcation inertia.

Expansion of network with OA team backup

Open Access team fills gaps during times of high demand

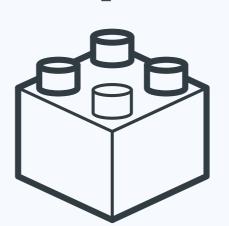Expansion of 'Hubs' networks to enhance capacity

Recomendations

Communications

Frictionless communication 'network' using Microsoft Teams, to bring together 'hubbers':
- limit wasted effort by sharing best practice between hubs
- a set of shared resources and guides to ensure common standards and consistency;
- FAQ section.

Capacity

- Grow the network by encouraging participation from more staff within Schools.
- Spread to new Schools by demonstrating best practice and efficiencies for existing members

References

1. Reaburn, P., McDonald, J. (2017). Creating and Facilitating Communities of Practice in Higher Education: Theory to Practice in a Regional Australian University. In: McDonald, J., Cater-Steel, A. (eds) Communities of Practice. Springer, Singapore. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-2879-3_6

2. Eddy, P. L., Hao, Y., Iverson, E., & Macdonald, R. H. (2022). Fostering communities of practice among community college science faculty. Community College Review, 50(4), 391-414. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/00915521221111474