

eResearch infrastructure, practices and requirements survey

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Summary

Investments in developing eResearch are underpinned by an expectation that eResearch infrastructures *will be taken up* by research communities. However users and developers of eResearch infrastructures and services face challenges: not only technical, but social and cultural challenges. Few of these are explored or well understood.

Background

The University of Sydney in conjunction with Intersect (the peak eResearch body in NSW) has developed a survey to investigate current practices, attitudes, and future requirements for eResearch.

This is the first longitudinal survey into eResearch in Australia.

Issues

Over the last decade, governments and individual universities have made significant investments in developing advanced technological infrastructures for eResearch. Further substantial increases in research infrastructure funding have been committed over recent years. More than \$97M of federal funding will be allocated towards research infrastructure in the next 12 months via programs such as NeCTAR and the Research Data Storage Infrastructure project.

eResearch, however is only used by a small percentage of researchers. Infrastructure developers and researchers face numerous challenges and tensions in developing these facilities and adopting new research practices. In order to improve the development process and to maximise the benefits of research infrastructure and investments, we need to understand the role of advanced technologies in existing research practices. We also need to know what motivates and what prevents researchers from adopting eResearch approaches.

Benefits of the study:

- raise awareness of eResearch
- raise awareness of Intersect
- identify researchers and areas which could benefit from our work
- assist universities & Intersect in scoping and prioritising
- provide baseline data by which we can assess the impact of eResearch initiatives.

Rollout

The first round of the online survey was conducted in May–June 2009 at four NSW universities: the University of Sydney, the University of Newcastle, the University of New England and the University of New South Wales. The second round of the survey ran shortly afterwards at UTS, Southern Cross University and Charles Sturt University.

The survey covers three main eResearch areas: 1) data management, retention and sharing; 2) technology-enhanced research methods, tools and services; and 3) research collaboration and dissemination. The questions focused on four aspects: a) present practices and barriers for eResearch; b) attitudes, and awareness about eResearch; c) priorities and requirements for new infrastructures, services and support; and d) researchers' willingness to be involved in future specification of requirements.

Findings

To date, more than 1000 participants have taken part in the survey from seven NSW universities.

Analysis indicates a gap between researchers' positive dispositions, willingness and obvious need to adopt new technology-enhanced research practices and their limited awareness and utilisation of eResearch and eResearch bodies.

Preliminary findings were presented at the eResearch Australasia conference, and two aggregated reports published in late 2009. The Summary Report and the Full Technical Report of the eResearch Practices and Requirements Survey (Round 1) are available here:

[The Summary report](#) (12 pages)

[The Full Technical Report](#) (46 pages)

The presentation from eResearch Australasia 2009 is available at <http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:188820>

Round 2 Outputs:

- Analysis will be undertaken on round 2 responses in Q1 2012.
- Confidential university specific reports will be provided to key parties at each participating campus.
- Aggregated reports will be published online
- All reports respect participant confidentiality, (unless respondents have indicated that they require more information from Intersect and or their university).
- The same survey will be run on a regular basis at the same institutions to build a longitudinal view.

Contact:

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