Case study – Leeds Trinity University – A streamlined commercial option (Pure: Elsevier)

Background

Leeds Trinity is a small, modern university with a strategic plan to grow research activity in the arts, humanities and social sciences. We had no systems in place however to manage research activity, research projects, or to meet sector requirements for Open Access and research data management. Our intended growth in research activity was therefore unachievable (or certainly significant hindered) because of this gap, so we were looking to implement one integrated system that covered all aspects. This needed to be achieved quickly to meet sector requirements.

The Project

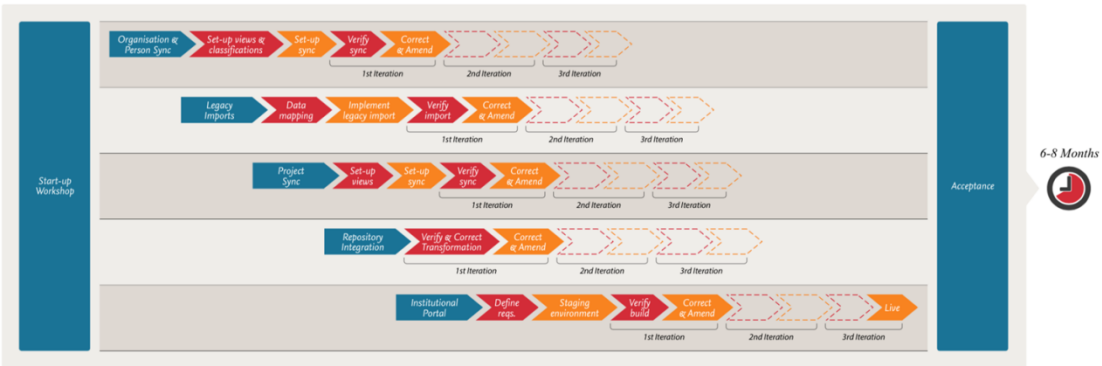
We needed to achieve the following:

- Open Access digital repository for research outputs;
- Academic research profiles (including integration with ORCID identifiers);
- A database of research projects, publications and activities;
- Grant Management system for managing grant preparation and submission workflow, and provide reporting on grant application status;
- Repository Mandate and Research Data Management Policy;
- Training and engagement of academics;
- Central support for population of academic profiles, bibliometric data, full-text publications, and research data.

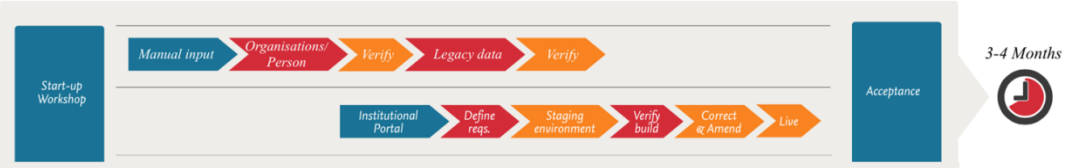
After conversations with several commercial providers, we decided to work with Elsevier to pilot a new streamlined implementation of Pure. This product provided one integrated system that met all of our requirements.

The Approach

This is the model of how Pure would typically be implemented in a larger institution:



This is the streamlined model we piloted at Leeds Trinity:



The main differences in this 'streamlined' approach were: to avoid any custom implementation of system interfaces, to minimise the configuration changes of the core product and to adopt a more agile approach to the development of the bespoke external portal.

To achieve this streamlined implementation, we created a cross-departmental Project Board to draw on expertise from across the University, which included:

- Director of Research
- Research Officer
- Director of Information Services
- Director of Library and Learning Resources
- Project Manager (appointed from within the library)

We also sought advice as appropriate from:

- HR
- Website manager
- Repository and Open Access Officer
- Academic Quality and Standards Unit
- IT Services Manager

The Project Board provided an overall steer to the project but there was mainly 4 staff working part time on the project (alongside usual responsibilities).

Timescales

The legacy data was manually inputted over a period of 3 weeks, resulting in over 1,300 research outputs in the repository, and over 500 external organisations representing the partnerships Leeds Trinity academic staff collaborate with. This was the first time that it had been possible to interrogate this data, which existed in a variety of sources, some in spreadsheets but mainly in word documents. Prior to obtaining Pure, academic staff had individual profiles on the department pages on the external website. These were static pages that were edited (predominantly by academic staff) manually. Information from these pages was copied and pasted into Pure to form the first draft of the new academic profiles. Data was then validated over a period of 8 weeks.

Alongside the physical implementation of the Pure system, we developed operational support for Open Access and Research Data Management. In terms of Open Access, we had in-house expertise through the appointment of a Repository and Open Access Officer (ROAO). The ROAO developed a Repository Mandate and OA policy, along with a flowchart that illustrates the steps an academic has to follow when they have a journal article (or conference proceeding with an ISSN) accepted for publication. This flowchart was tested with several academic staff and revised accordingly.

A Research Data Management policy has been developed and we are looking at how to resource this policy.

Challenges

Leeds Trinity had no institutional repository before implementing Pure, therefore there has not been a change of processes for academic staff which we are viewing as an advantage. We have faced more challenges with regards to Research Data Management. Whereas there is some awareness of Open Access amongst academic staff (predominantly due to the HEFCE requirements for any future research assessment exercise), there is very little awareness of Research Data Management. We rarely have research projects where the funder requires the Principal Investigator to make their data available. This means that engaging academic staff in this area is more difficult. However that is the advantage of being a CREST member and part of the consortial JISC project – we can share challenges and expertise with other similar institutions.

Academic engagement with the Pure system itself has been positive, although it is has only recently been released for academic use. Training was offered for academic staff before the information within Pure was made live on our website. To date, training has taken place on an all-staff internal event plus on 3 different (full) days, with sessions offered on these days on the hour, every hour. This provided more flexibility for staff to attend. Around 20% of academic staff have logged in to the system and modified or checked content. The launch of the Pure portal (meaning that Pure content is live on the internet) has prompted a further wave of queries and more training will be offered to staff in July and September. Most of the queries so far have centred around the legacy data and how errors (or out of date information) can be corrected. A more informed judgement on academic engagement with the repository will be possible once there is regular and sustained use of Pure.

Achievements

- Implementation within 4 months of an integrated RDMS. Buying an ‘off the shelf’ product enabled a quick implementation as we have no in-house developers who could implement/ integrate an Open Source solution, and our project team was made up of only 4 part time staff.
- Repository Mandate, OA policy and RDM policy developed
- Initial training and engagement of academics

Recommendations

- Buying a product ‘off the shelf’ that met our needs meant that we could implement the system quickly with existing in-house expertise (we have no in-house developers who could implement/ integrate an Open Source solution).
- A significant level of user-configuration is available in the Pure system. We have configured the product to our needs to an extent, but were strict with ourselves to not take this too far (in order to deliver within 4 months). We haven't created any custom code for the core product or interfaces. The only custom code created is to support a bespoke external portal which is 'branded' to fit within the University website.
- Given the relatively low number of academics using the systems (about 150), we found that importing the legacy data manually was more cost effective for us as a small institution than implementing and supporting bespoke interfaces between this system and our HR, finance and student administration systems. This also gave significant time savings in the implementation of the project.
- Importing the legacy data centrally using only two people allowed a consistent approach to data entry.
- The 'agile' delivery of the external portal didn't work as well as we hoped. The main reason for this was that there wasn't a clear shared understanding of the project scope between the university and the supplier. Other issues were caused because the supplier wasn't able to dedicate resource to the project at key times in order to respond to university feedback on the first phase of development.
- Creating a cross-departmental Project Board allowed for different perspectives from the various stakeholders to be included from the beginning.