A long-term platform for research outputs:

a look at the impact of Monash University's Figshare implementation and engagement

Monash University launched monash.figshare in April 2016. As with other institutions, the initial collection was seeded by PLoS items which was a great impetus and showed what monash.figshare could offer users.

Armed with boundless enthusiasm and the strong encouragement of the Library leadership, a small team set out to convince staff, researchers and doctoral students that monash.figshare was not only something new and innovative, but a tool that they could use to publish their research data without intervention by the Library.
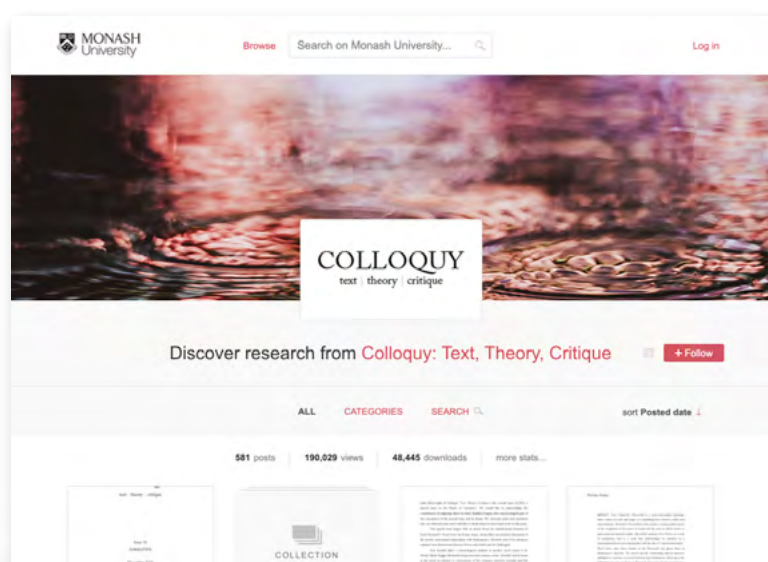
Get in touch:

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We promoted monash.figshare widely and liaised with groups across the university, including, the central Research Office, faculty research managers, eSolutions (our IT support team), and the eResearch Centre, in order to spread the word and raise awareness. In more recent years this collaboration has increased and proven highly successful. We understand the Library is not always a researcher's first point of contact when they have questions or require assistance. Therefore, our goal has been to ensure research support staff across the university feel confident in providing information about the repository, and can point researchers to our team for further advice. The faculty research managers also provide us with invaluable information that help us tailor our promotion to discipline specific researchers, and we are now working with the central Research Office to email recent grant recipients with information about Bridges, related services and who to contact for help.

From the start, an integral part of our researcher engagement was to demonstrate just how easy it was to publish data. We also took the opportunity to demonstrate the many innovative ways in which Monash users had used it to further their research. The plan was to make as big a splash as possible and to make the researcher community aware that this was a brand new self-service data repository for them to use without the need to undertake additional training or workshops. We very much pushed the line that if you were comfortable with social media tools, then monash.figshare was just as easy to use. In the beginning it was fascinating to see how new users experimented with it - a couple of users made themselves into articles complete with a DOI!

bridges.monash.edu/colloquy

Exploding the boundaries

It was through face-to-face meetings and the adoption of a "can do" attitude that we were able to show how Figshare could more than meet the expectations of departments and institutes. Here there were many examples of well-researched reports that were published without a DOI and needed to be made findable, accessible and cited.

We have also looked to new ways to use Figshare that we hadn't anticipated, such as hosting student publications like Colloquy and Monash University Law Review, to supplying the tools for the administration of the local Visualise Your Thesis competition, and the curation of the Music Archive of Monash University's unique collections. Next on the list is taking over the Open Access books provision for Monash University Publishing, as part of their website redesign.

One of the big drivers of traffic has been the university's thesis collection. In 2017, we were able to arrange a workflow with our graduate research office that feeds theses and their metadata directly into Bridges without our intervention. This means that there is a steady flow of new content, plus enhanced discoverability for the work of our graduate students. Our only regret is that we couldn't bring the stats over from our old site, a feature which became available too late for us!

Steadily and step-by-step, we have found new and creative uses for Figshare at Monash. Occasionally we raise a ticket for a feature request or ask a support question. In fact, we have probably requested a veritable avalanche of features and improvements; just ask Chris!

Bridges success is producing more success

The decision to drop the monash.figshare brand name after years of building it up was not an easy one. However, the rebranding, to Bridges, has provided a great opportunity to revitalise the promotion of the repository. The new name reflects our view that we are providing connections between our researchers, their collaborators and the world. It also pays tribute to our university's namesake, Sir John Monash, whose civil engineering firm specialised in, among other things, bridge building. The marketing for the service has been refreshed and the feedback has been very positive and very encouraging.

Expanding our numbers and collections

In 2018, our first full year, we recorded just over 718,000 views and 78,000 downloads. This has now grown to over 4,000,000 views and 1,000,000 downloads. Such phenomenal growth is a real testament to the important need this repository fulfills. One of the most pleasing signs is that datasets, code, workflows and images are added and published on a daily basis, without our need to mediate or assist in the process. And the addition of Altmetric and Dimensions statistics in recent years means that we can demonstrate that there are researchers and students across the world making use of them. By adopting a "can do" attitude, always asking ourselves "Could we do this with Bridges?" and by being creative in our thinking, we have made it possible for users to enjoy success and reach researchers around the world. We have many ideas and improvements planned and we are working with Figshare to make them a reality.

References:
1. https://bridges.monash.edu/colloquy
2. https://bridges.monash.edu/MonULR
3. https://www.monash.edu/vyt
4. https://bridges.monash.edu/mamu
5. https://www.monash.edu/about/who/history/sir-john-monash

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