Case Report: Data Champions

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The funding provided by the University Collaboration Budget has been supporting the bimonthly forum meetings of the University of Cambridge Data Champion network, facilitating collaboration between CUP and the Data Champions during these forums. The funds were awarded to the Research Data team at the Office of Scholarly Communication (Cambridge University Libraries) as this team manages the Data Champion programme.

The Data Champions are members of the University of Cambridge who volunteer to use their discipline-specific expertise in research data management (RDM) to support and advise researchers and students in their departments/institutes, as well as beyond. Data Champions are advocates of best practice in RDM and data sharing, promoting good RDM and the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable) principles. Currently, the network covers 57 departments across the University's six Schools and also extends into some non-School institutions. The Data Champions hold a wide variety of roles (e.g. post-doctoral researchers, PhD students, lecturers, librarians, data and IT professionals) and the range of skills, knowledge and discipline-specific expertise that the network harnesses is both rich and diverse. The bimonthly forums are an essential arena for bringing together Data Champions from across this widely distributed network. They allow exploration of topical RDM issues and provide a great environment for brainstorming ideas and solutions as a collective.

The UCB has supported the forums since December 2019. The move to online forums in 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic has meant that the UCB supported financially only two meetings during the tenure of the funds. The funds have been used to fuel the stomachs and minds of the Data Champions during these collaborative events. Dr Kiera McNeice, Research Data Manager at CUP, has been instrumental in the success of the collaborations between CUP, the Data Champions and the Research Data team. With Kiera, the Data Champions and the Research Data team have been exploring various issues and will continue to do so in the future. For example, early on in our collaboration, Kiera participated in a session on data publishing models, presenting on the launch of CUP's journal *Experimental Results*. Together with the other speakers in the session, she raised the network's awareness of the variety of data publishing options, highlighting the importance of data papers coupled with using repositories for data sharing. In January 2020, Kiera ran a session with the Data Champions aimed at identifying RDM areas where there is a strong need among researchers and students for guidance materials. This was followed up in the October forum by a brainstorming activity that explored the data-related interests and needs of Arts, Humanities and Social Science researchers in particular, and the area-specific guidance that would benefit this demographic.

The discussions between Data Champions, Kiera and the Research Data team have generated so many good ideas that the challenge now is to decide which ones to pursue further. This is what will be focused on next, where Data Champions will be invited to volunteer to work in small groups on key RDM topics with Kiera and others at CUP. The UCB initiative has sparked this collaborative relationship between CUP, the Data Champions and the Research Data team, and has enabled it to develop and strengthen. We look forward to what the future brings!