There and back again: A Pure administrators’ tale

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Our journey

• When did we set out on our adventures.
• The different paths we took.
• Who we met along the way; friends and foes.
• How we got to where we are.
• What’s our next adventure?
Birmingham

- 34 Million visitors a year
- One of the youngest cities in Europe (40% of people under 25)
- Home to 5 universities (73,000 students)
- 90% of UK is within 4 hours of Birmingham
- Birmingham has more canals than Venice
- Birmingham's Bullring is one of the largest shopping centres in Europe
- ‘The Hobbit’ and ‘The Lord of the Rings’ were inspired by places and people in Birmingham
- Birmingham is the birth place of heavy metal
The two towers institutions- **Aston University**

- Located in the city centre with approx. 10, 500 students
- 365 academic staff with research responsibility
- Strong links with industry and high levels of student placement years. High levels of graduate employability
The two towers institutions - The University of Birmingham

- Campus a few miles outside of the city centre home to approx. 29,000 students
- 1390 academic staff with research responsibility
- And….....
……home to one of the actual two towers!
Who we are...
Who we are…
Who we are

Paul
Research Systems Manager

• Focus is on administration, training and reporting
• Around 80% of the role is PURE focussed
• Also perform other reporting activities
• Administrate new awards management system
• Previous experience includes Business Development, Human Resources and Occupational Psychology

Karen
Deputy Head of Research Planning and Research Information Manager

• Oversight of work on research information within the Planning Office working with other teams to coordinate work
• Development of reporting and skills around research metrics
• Previous experience includes a lucky escape from life as an English teacher, project management, events and communications and general university administration
• Chair of the Pure UK User Group
Where the journey started

- Both institutions started working with Pure in 2011

- The Research Excellent Framework (REF) is the system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions and was the primary driver for purchasing Pure for both Aston University and University of Birmingham

- Paul came into post once initial Pure implementation was completed and has built a strong network within the institution

- Karen project managed the implementation of Pure and has worked to develop more support structures around the system
The Aston fellowship

Knowledge and Research Exchange also includes:

- Strategic Business Partnerships
- KTPs and Industry funding
- European Funding
- Pre and post Grant Award Management
- IP and Commercialisation
The Birmingham fellowship

Research Planning Team

- Impact development and support
- REF process development
- Coordination of work around Open Research
- Responsible use of research metrics
- Various research environment projects
- Work with, but not part of, the funding and award management teams

Impact development
Public Engagement
Research Information Management

Close relationship with the Library, but no dotted line
One does not simply walk into Mordor...... does one?

Birmingham

- Quick 6 month implementation project in 2012
- Rolled out to the Library and REF teams within weeks on technical implementation
- Quickly followed by academic users
- Some awareness comms, but no training
- Consideration of long term support requirements not considered as part of the original project

Aston

- Pure up and running in early 2012
- Around one year in implementation stage to plan and deliver it across the university
- Focus on advocacy and promotion of Pure before launch
- Small team of people delivering training out to 4 schools of study
- Mixture of winning hearts and minds and more formal ‘how to’ sessions

Differences in size of institution may have allowed Aston to have a much more focused approach.
Starting from the same place

Locally hosted, with research projects, student and HR records synchronised into Pure

Aston
• Finance system was previously synchronised but with limited fields. A new awards management system will have to be re-synchronised with PURE
• The previous HR system was synchronised with PURE. Since switching HR systems there has been problems synchronising data

Birmingham
• New finance and HR system project will mean some big changes for Pure.
• The project have identified Pure as a key risk for the delivery of the project
• Also getting a new awards management system
Both institutions have a bespoke portal to expose information in Pure to the web

**Aston**
- Use ePrints as repository for publications and data
- Pure pushes publications to ePrints, but datasets are recorded completely separately to Pure
- Eprints repositories also have their own on-line portals

**Birmingham**
- Pure is the repository for publications
- ePrints currently being implemented for data sets
- There will be a separate interface for deposit, but working on the best way to transfer metadata between the two systems
- Portal only just been released.
Bringing people on the journey with us

**Activities have included**

- 1-2-1 coaching
- Formal training courses
- Briefings/roadshows in local meetings
- Suite of manuals / guides that help people who prefer to learn on their own
- Regular drip feeding of information to keep Pure in people’s minds
- Drop in sessions
- Integrating Pure into other processes

At Birmingham we have focused more on the briefings and online support

At Aston there has been more work to offer training and hands on support
Making the most of Pure

Both institutions have worked to integrate Pure into internal processes

**Aston**
- Pure used to collect activities information such as external examination details

**Birmingham**
- Working to use Pure to supply reports for promotions and internal review
- Collection of evidence for impact funding also collected in Pure
- Working towards collecting engagement information using activities module
Challenges along the way

• People only log in intermittently and so forget how to do things

• Motivation to use PURE varies wildly across staff academic staff have varied computer skills and system understanding

• High workloads means a low priority for Pure use sometimes

• People learn in different ways and have different expectations
Winning them over to our side

• Regularly drip feeding information can help though it can be hard to vary content

• Flexible is important for support

• Linking aspects of Pure to internal processes – what is the benefit of using Pure for the individual

• Key individuals in local departments spreading the right message are important to ensuring people use Pure regularly

Disclaimer – we are definitely not comparing Pure users to Gollum!
Building relationships

Key to for both institutions has been the development of relationships between teams within the institutions. Working with colleagues in Library, Research and Knowledge Transfer Office, IT and academic leadership

Aston has a strong network of administrators in the schools who advocate for Pure, enabling them to disseminate messages easily

Birmingham’s strength is the relationship with IT Services and the high status the system has been given
Everyone working towards the same goal

• Building relationships and helping others understand the importance of issues

• Helping IT understand the context of an issue, rather than just presenting a problem, helps achieve more elegant and appropriate solutions to problems

• Working with Research Administration staff helps build relationships with academics and leads on to increased use of PURE

• Working with library staff, understanding their needs, working together to produce accurate reports / information and running sessions jointly has been a success
What works

Aston

- Meetings
  - PURE / Eprints Management group
  - Library meeting
  - REF Group
  - Timed slots at pre-arranged meetings / committees
- An IT Road Map - shared document online that keeps track of upcoming projects, upgrades.
- Update staff through newsletters
- Reports every month on publications

Birmingham

- Pure Operations Group meets monthly to discuss developments and support.
- Membership includes:
  - IT Service Owner
  - Research systems business analyst
  - Developer
  - Research Information Manager
  - Pure administrator
  - Representative from the Library
- Pure as a way to achieve something else
- Increased buy-in with academic leadership
5 years on have we achieved what we set out to do?

Can we retire to the Grey Havens now?
Thanks for listening

Always happy to answer questions and talk about our experiences

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