Pinning It Down:
Towards a Practical Definition of 'Research Data' for Creative Arts Institutions

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Wednesday 16th January 2013
IDCC13
Institutional Engagement

- Begun in 2012, ongoing involvement in JISC Kaptur project
- Surveys/interviews of researchers
- UAL policy & RDM area on web site
- UAL data management planning template
- Funder requirements document
- Training & advocacy, clarification of roles
- Exploration of use of Datastage-eprints-Figshare
- Definition of ‘research data’ for creative arts institutions
## Complementary Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kaptur</th>
<th>UAL Engagement</th>
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<tr>
<td>Funded by JISC MRD</td>
<td>Funded by HEFCE through UMF</td>
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<td>Led by the Visual Arts Data Service (VADS)</td>
<td>Jointly initiated by DCC and UAL</td>
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<td>Four partners: Glasgow School of Art;</td>
<td>Brings together staff from many support and research</td>
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<td>Goldsmiths, University of London; University for the Creative Arts; and University of the Arts London</td>
<td>areas at UAL</td>
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<td>Focused on visual arts</td>
<td>Focused on broader range of research and teaching areas</td>
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What is Research Data?
What is Scientific Research Data?

...whatever is produced in research or evidences its outputs

“highest priority research data is that which underpins a research output”

- Facts
- Statistics
- qualitative
- quantitative
- Not published research output
- Discipline specific
Definition Issues for Arts Institutions

- Kaptur project sees RD in the visual arts as:
  - Tangible and intangible
  - Heterogeneous and infinite
  - Complex and complicated
  - Digital and physical
  - Scientific vs artistic/humanities research methods - evidence-based vs argument-based.
  - “...no fundamental separation exist between theory and practice in the arts” Borgdorff et al
Survey and Interviews

Deliberately targeted interactions with active researchers, informed by an institutional working group and collecting evidence across a variety of issues: what research data they create, what format it is in, how they manage it, how it might be shared and reused, and – crucially – what ‘research data’ actually means in a specialist creative arts institution.
Interview Results

- The term research data “doesn’t mean a lot”
- Many saw research data as publications or exhibitions, and not data per se
- Most recognised the importance of research data to themselves and to others
- Alternate approaches:
  - For Kaptur interviews expressions ‘documenting the research process’ & ‘visualisation and documentation’ were offered as alternatives to research data
  - Idea of ‘organisational moments’ or ‘trigger points for data creation or management activity’
  - Explanation by interviewer at start
Work with Practioner

- Paul Ryan - lecturer and arts researcher
- Symbolic data vs Iconic data
- Data is more valid if the position of interpretation from which it is presented is clarified

Thesis: Peirce’s Semeiotic and the Implications for Æsthetics in the Visual Arts: a study of the sketchbook and its positions in the hierarchies of making, collecting and exhibiting

An A7 sketchbook double page spread made by Paul Ryan during his PhD
Workshop: Managing the Material

- Kaptur Workshop - Managing the Material: Tackling Visual Arts as Research Data, 14 September 2012
- Attempt to identifying the research data that might be arise out of the research process

Issues and Observations

- Factual information vs 'provocation'
- Interdisciplinary projects
- Can arts subjects learn from scientific approaches?
- Erik Andersson - ‘Fine Science and Social Arts - on common grounds and necessary boundaries of two ways to produce meaning’
- Research is about moving towards "new knowledge and meaning"
- Can a definition consist solely of examples?
UAL RDM Policy

“Research data in the Arts is not so easily defined as in STEM subjects. The data types cited in this policy are not intended to be exhaustive, and definitions of what constitutes research data will vary from funder to funder. Generally, research data can be considered anything created, captured or collected as an output of funded research work in its original state.

In essence, this policy covers raw materials and finished outputs, but not necessarily the stages in between. It applies primarily to externally funded, digital research data, although non-digital data (such as sketchbooks) may also be covered, and requests from researchers to digitise existing analogue research data will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Where data exists in a non-digital form, appropriate effort to manage this to meet the expectations is also likely to be required. No reasonable external request to access analogue research data resulting from externally funded research will be refused, and access should be arranged between the principal investigator and the department of Research Management and Administration (RMA).”
Lessons Learnt

- A definition *is* useful
- Some creative arts researchers may feel threatened by definitions and “performing artistic research in this demystified way “
- Clarifying position of interpretation/inquiry is useful for arts *and* sciences
- Examples are helpful
- Terminology is tricky
- There is a lot more interesting discussion to be had!
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Any questions?

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