Identifying and Acting on Incentives When Planning RDM Services

A learning guide to accompany OCLC Research [publications](#) and [the 13 November 2018 Works in Progress Webinar: Identifying and Acting on Incentives When Planning RDM Services](#)

Institutional incentives

OCLC Research has identified four general categories of incentives that influence the **"decision to act"** to develop institutional RDM services:

1. **Compliance** with mandates or policies that establish formal requirements for documenting research data management plans or for demonstrating progress toward open science goals.

2. **Evolving scholarly norms** that influence disciplinary perspectives on what constitutes good scientific practice, including expectations of reproducibility and transparency in documenting protocols, methods, and data sources.

3. **Institutional strategies** that are aided by more rigorous and systematic attention to monitoring research productivity and performance and improving (or maintaining) institutional reputation in data-intensive research areas.

4. Direct or derived **demand from researchers** with unmet (or imperfectly satisfied) data management needs: for example, evidence that university researchers are turning to external services to meet data storage, management, or sharing needs that could be met by the university.
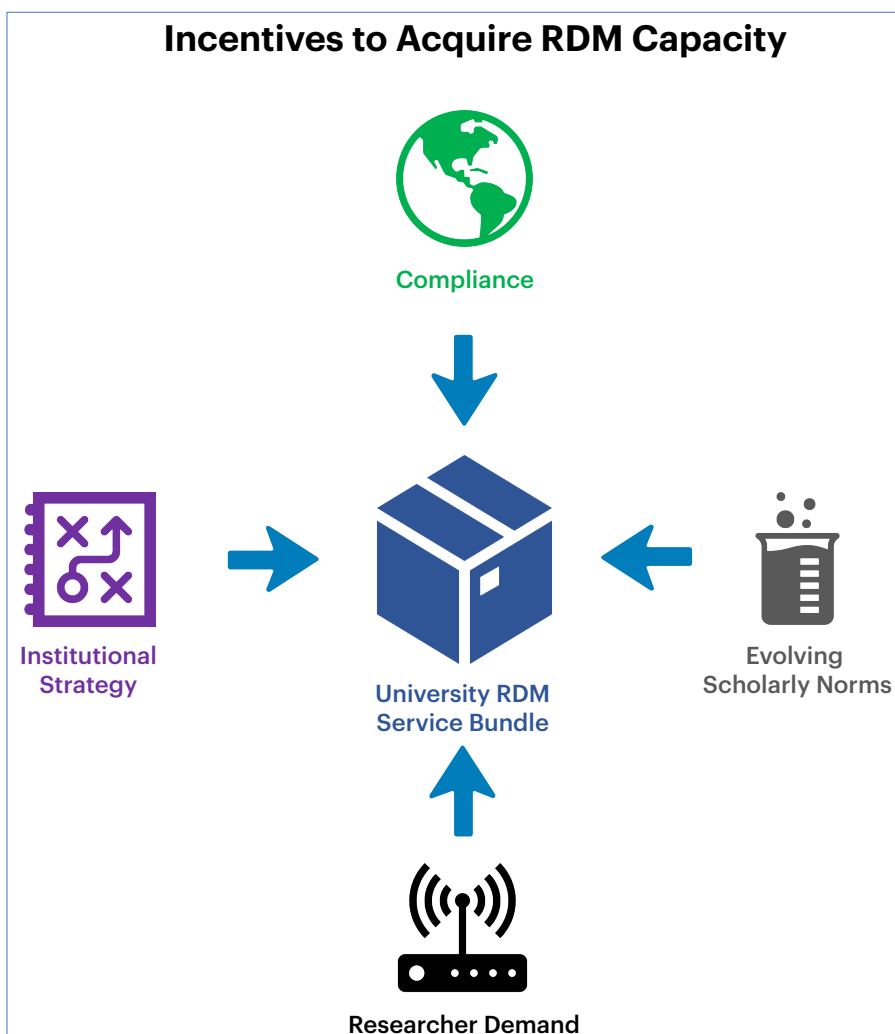

Figure 1. "Incentives to Acquire RDM Capacity" by OCLC Research, from The Realities of Research Data Management Part Three: Incentives for Building University RDM Services (https://doi.org/10.25333/C3S62F), CC BY 4.0.

Compliance

Today, national and funder policies and guidelines related to RDM are common in many locales, but reflect a wide variation of requirements, such as requesting data management plans (DMPs) within grant proposals and/or compliance with open data sharing requirements. These mandates play a significant role in shaping local RDM service bundles, as demonstrated in the following figure.
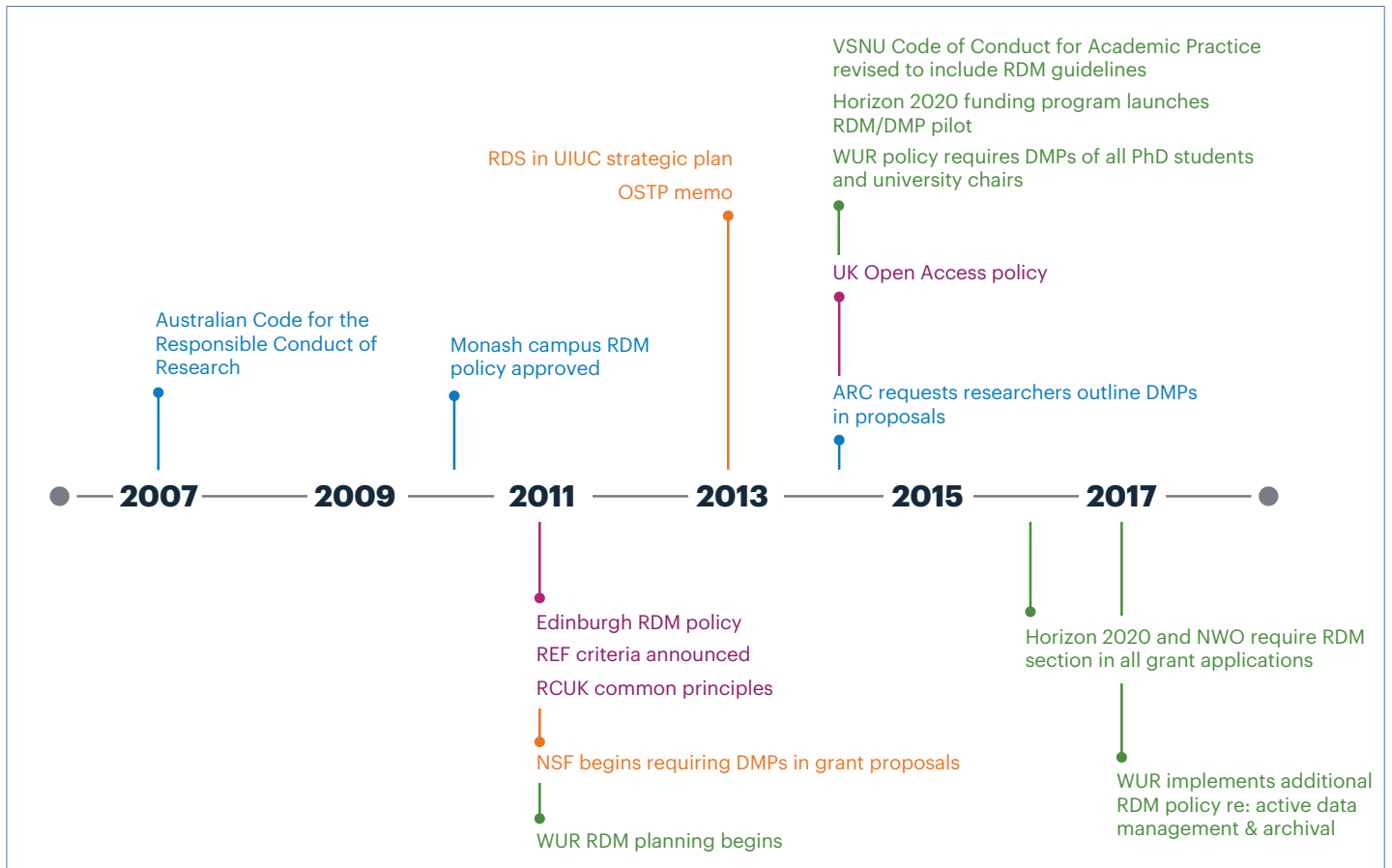

Figure 2. "Timeline of RDM Policies in Four National Contexts" by OCLC Research, from The Realities of Research Data Management Part Three: Incentives for Building University RDM Services (https://doi.org/10.25333/C3S62F), CC BY 4.0. (Monash University milestones are blue, University of Edinburgh milestones are red, University of Illinois milestones are orange, and Wageningen University and Research milestones are green).

Researcher demand

The challenge with meeting researcher demand is that researchers' needs are varied. Attention tends to focus on disciplinary differences, such as norms, practices, data types and formats, and standards, all of which are important. Less attention has focused on how researchers' needs vary within a discipline, depending on whether they are sharing or reusing data. By considering how these and other activities positively and negatively influence one another within a discipline and then making adjustments to better align needs, data are like to flow through the lifecycle more effectively.

Consider the drivers acting on your institution

When considering the incentives driving your RDM decision-making at your institution, it can be particularly useful to consider the following:

Thinking externally. . .

- Differences in external mandates mean that institutions may prioritize different RDM services.
- While scholarly norms are changing and enacting pressures on RDM practices, the changes and pressures are not uniform, and the evolving practices of one part of the research community may different from those with another.

Thinking locally. . .

- University investment in RDM infrastructure, services, or personnel is motivated by locally relevant incentives.
- Improving institutional support for RDM may be part of a broader strategy to improve process and performance management in the university enterprise.
- Institutions may seek to codify RDM and sharing practices through policy development.

Examining researcher demand

- Incentives are dynamic and can manifest differently within institutions and disciplines, so you can't look at researchers monolithically—it's important to look at individual and disciplinary behaviors.
- Researcher demand can be far more important in shaping and sustaining RDM service bundles, rather than incentivizing their creation.
- Active data management is one aspect of the RDM service space where bottom-up demand by researchers is particularly relevant.

Discussion questions

1. What are the most influential incentives in your local environment? How do you think this will shape your RDM service bundle?
2. How does the development of your RDM service bundle need to reflect a broader *institutional* strategy?
3. How do you manage the challenges of tracking guidelines and mandates and determine how this informs your service bundle?
4. How do you know what your researchers need?
5. How do you engage researchers during the data production process to get what you and reusers need without overwhelming your resources or those of the data producer?

Recommended readings

Bryant, Rebecca, Brian Lavoie, and Constance Malpas. 2018. *Incentives for Building University RDM Services.* The Realities of Research Data Management, Part 3. Dublin, OH: OCLC Research. https://doi.org/10.25333/C3S62F.

Faniel, Ixchel M. and Elizabeth Yakel. 2017. "Practices Do Not Make Perfect: Disciplinary Data Sharing and Reuse Practices and Their Implications for Repository Data Curation." In Curating Research Data, Volume One: Practical Strategies for Your Digital Repository, 103–126. Chicago, Illinois: Association of College and Research Libraries. https://www.oclc.org/research/publications/2017/practices-do-not-make-perfect.html.