




What do we (not) know about RSE?

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Software

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Research Software Engineering (RSE) is increasingly being established as a field and profession in its own right. Since the term was coined about a decade ago, RSE has also been the subject of empirical research to gain knowledge and evidence about the various aspects involved. For example, the 2017 “State of the Nation Report” by Alys Brett et al. (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.495360>) presents survey data about the demographics of UK-based RSEs, and Rotem Botvinik-Nezer et al. (<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-020-2314-9>) report on the extreme variability of results they found when they let many teams develop analysis programs for the same dataset. Such findings are the basis for the international RSE community to provide support and develop solutions for open problems.

This workshop aims to assess what we do and do not know about RSE. The participants will work together to collect and classify existing empirical research about RSE, and identify “blind spots” where further research is needed. After the workshop we plan to turn these findings into a review paper that describes both the current knowledge and open questions, suitable to serve as a roadmap for further research about RSE. All participants will be invited to contribute as co-authors.

The workshop will start with a short series of introductory presentations to set the stage. Then the participants will be split into thematic groups to discuss empirical research about different areas of RSE, such as RSE job profiles, RSE needs in different scientific domains, geographical differences in flourishing of RSE organizations, or specifics and challenges of software development processes in research. They will document their discussion in shared (Google) documents. At the end of the workshops all groups will briefly summarize their findings in the plenum.