

CW23 - 2023-05-03

Mini-workshop or demo session: 2.2

Research Infrastructure Roles: Perspectives, Paths, and Lived Experiences

Link to this document: <https://tinyurl.com/ymma95wn>

Logistics for session

Information below is provided to aid the smooth running of the online Mini-Workshop or Demo Session (MWDS).

Session date and time: Wednesday, 3 May 2023 from 10:00 - 11:00 BST (09:00 - 10:00 UTC; 60 minutes)

Session Facilitator(s):

- Anne Steele (in-person)
- Emma Karoune (remote)
- Alexandra Araujo Alvarez (remote)
- Malvika Sharan (in-person)
- Camila Rangel Smith (in-person)
- Hari Sood (in-person)

Hyatt Room: Robinson Room

Zoom Room:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84995633766?pwd=Rmlrd3gxN01kUWdjSm95L1N3YUhUZz09>

Live Transcript: https://otter.ai/u/JrJR09rtLiEnymifjprpWYaXc_A

SSI Helper(s) for In-person Participation: Giacomo Peru, Simon Hettrick

At the start of the session:

- Identify the Session Facilitator(s) and help with setup of the room.
- Liaise with FisherAV to ensure the audio and video are set up and working.
- Liaise with the SSI Helper(s) for Remote Participation.
- Help keep the session to time.

SSI Helper(s) for Remote Participation: Selina Aragon, Catherine Inglis (remote)

At the start of the session:

- Assign Session Facilitator(s) and additional SSI Helpers as Zoom co-hosts. (Open the “Participants” tab, find their name, click “More” and select “Make Co-Host”.)
- Check that the recording has started automatically. (If not, click on “Record” in the Zoom toolbar and select “Record to the cloud”.)
- Check the Otter.ai transcription stream. (In the top left, it should display “LIVE on Custom Live Streaming Service”. Click and select “View Stream on Custom Live Streaming Service” to open transcription in a web browser.) Copy and paste link next to “Live Transcript” above. You can also enable auto-closed captions and transcription in Zoom. (Click on “Closed Caption” in the Zoom toolbar and select “Enable Auto-Transcription”.)
- Help with any Zoom participant management (waiting room, muting participants, etc.)
- Ensure audio and video are working and clear.

This document can be used to synchronize participants and provide information about the MWDS. We have provided a template below, and hint text (Arial, grey, size 11, italic) can be removed once no longer needed. Please feel free to modify anything below this line as you see fit for facilitating your session.

Participants

Please add your name / (anything else you want to add such as Role / Affiliation / Pronouns / Email / Social Media), one person per line, add new lines as needed. /



Ice-breaker question: If you could pick a title for your role - what would you be called?

- Vashti Galpin / Researcher, School of Informatics, University of Edinburgh / Remote / Edinburgh / any / email: Vashti.Galpin@ed.ac.uk, gh: @vcgalpin / **Role title:** **Researcher** (because it’s nice and generic, and should cover a whole host of roles, not just for those who publish. I also quite like the title: Researcher-Not-A-PI-And-Not-Aiming-To-Become-One-Happy-At-My-Current-Level-And-This-Choice-Is-Not-Failure but it is a bit wordy)
- James Byrne / Research Software Engineer, British Antarctic Survey / In person / T/GH: @jimcircadian, E: jambyr@bas.ac.uk / **Role Title:** Community-led RSE-idealist (or something like that), because I try to bring together the technical community in the organisation and connect it to the outside, as well as drive digital forward-thinking.
- Lyndsey Ballantyne / RSE Community Manager, SSI / In person
- Saskia Lawson-Tovey / Data Scientist, Centre for Musculoskeletal Research, the University of Manchester / saskia.lawson-tovey@manchester.ac.uk / @saskiaamber / **Role title:** **Data chameleon** (I do everything with/around data except analysis - lots of changing roles/skills to fit the task)
- Peter S: hmm a bit tricky one as my role is transitioning. RSE podcaster will do the job I think code4thought@proton.me . Ideally I’d like to see myself as a RSE/science promoter
- Georgia Aitkenhead / Researcher / The Alan Turing Institute / Online /

- gaitkenhead@turing.ac.uk / GH: GeorgiaHCA
- Lucy Hunt / CompSci PhD & IT Business Analyst, Lancaster University. IT Octopus
 - Catherine Inglis / Project Manager, EPCC, the University of Edinburgh / Remote / she/her / c.inglis@epcc.ed.ac.uk, T: @cafi_epcc / “Languages graduate accidentally in a supercomputing centre”
 - Hari Sood / Research Application Manager / Alan Turing Institute / he/him / hsood@turing.ac.uk / GH @harisood T @hurrysued / Chief Funtime Officer (or more realistically Emergent Idea Wrangler)
 - Anne Lee Steele / Community Manager / Alan Turing Institute / she/her / astelee@turing.ac.uk / Community Ethnographer (Community Wrangler?!)
 - Camila Rangel Smith/ Research data scientist / The Alan Turing Institute / Loved the ‘chameleon’ description above from Saskia, maybe ‘Research chameleon’.
 - Jannetta Steyn / Senior Research Software Engineer and Training Lead (in practise: Jack of All Trades, if no-one else knows how to do it, ask Jannetta)
 - Reina Camacho Toro/Researcher/ CNRS/CERN
 - Simon Hettrick / Deputy Director/Director / SSI/SRSG / “Botherer of policymakers”
 - This one sounds like a superhero title - ‘Botherer of policymakers, creator of truth’
 - Fighter for justice! ⚖️
 - Love this!
 - Carlos Martinez / Community manager / Netherlands eScience Center / c.martinez@esciencecenter.nl t: neocarlitos
 - Gary Leeming / Director Civic Data Coop (preferred role Chief Data Shaman) | university of Liverpool | leemingg@liverpool.ac.uk
 - David Sarmiento / Research Project Manager (Discipline mediator & translator) at The Alan Turing Institute / dsarmientoperez@turing.ac.uk / @sarmiento_prz
 - Selina Aragon/ Communications Lead / SSI / s.aragon@software.ac.uk
 - Jez Cope / Data Services Lead / The British Library / j.cope@erambler.co.uk
 - Alejandro Coca-Castro / Research Fellow / The Alan Turing Institute / acoca@turing.ac.uk - Collaborative Researcher / t:alejo_coca
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Agenda for the session

Time	Description
0:00-0:15	<p>Please sign in and answer the ice breaker question: If you could pick a title for your role - what would you be called? Be as creative as you'd like.</p> <p>Welcome and introduction - we will introduce the session, what we mean by research infrastructure roles, The Turing Way chapter and Professionalising Data Science Roles project.</p>
0:15-0:30	<p>Examples of Research Infrastructure Roles at the Turing (3-4 mins each x4)</p>

	<p>Speakers</p> <p>Camila Rangel Smith - Research Engineers and Data Science</p> <p>Alexandra Araujo Alvarez - Project Management</p> <p>Hari Sood - Research Applications (product management)</p> <p>Emma Karoune - Research Community Manager</p>
0:30-0:50 (20 mins)	<p>Breakout room discussion questions</p> <p>Resources: https://the-turing-way.netlify.app/collaboration/research-infrastructure-roles.html</p> <p>Group 1: Journey to research infrastructure role: If you already hold a formalised research infrastructure role, please share how you got your role recognised/formalised?</p> <p>Group 2: Career progression: What career pathways for progress look like for research infrastructure roles in your organisation?</p> <p>Group 3: Types of roles in a project: In your project teams, what types of research infrastructure roles do your team members take?</p> <p>Group 4: Wider recognition: How do you feel research infrastructure roles are recognised within your institute/in the research landscape?</p>
0:50-1:00	Share out & Next steps
Post workshop	<p>Collecting skills, responsibilities, job descriptions and related resources - Professionalising Data Science Roles</p> <p>Feedback form: https://forms.gle/mKtevPptsp7Wevn87</p>



Introduction presentation - Emma and Anne (15 mins)

Link for Slides:  2023-05-03_TTW_CW23-infrastructure-roles-workshop-view.pptx

Notes from introduction presentation

- Presenting Turing, TPS, Research Infrastructure Roles

Examples of Research Infrastructure Roles at the Turing (15 mins)

Presented by Camila, Alexandra, Hari and Emma

Notes from the example presentations

Breakout room questions (20 mins)

 Timer: [Cuckoo - Timer for remote teams](#)

Group 1: Journey to research infrastructure role: If you already hold a formalised research infrastructure role, please share how you got your role recognised/formalised?

Notes

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Group 2: Career progression: What career pathways for progress look like for research infrastructure roles in your organisation?

Notes:

- RSE role
 - No career progression atm, it will terminate in the near future.
 - Currently lots of different roles, but not much crossover between roles
 - Currently trying to carve out what an RSE/research infrastructure team can look like
 - Need to share what the need/impact of research infrastructure roles
 - Known problem - if RSEs work for a small number of projects, need to have buy-in from lots of different teams/projects bought in so RSEs can be hired and spread across them
 - This can be damaging, as often in this way RSEs are hired for a year then disappear
 - You need to have a pool that projects can apply to, not hired into specific projects

- You only need a small pool of RSEs at your org, who are capable of integrating/working with other RSEs from other orgs
- Career progression can start to look at e.g. architectural roles etc.
- There can be some career progression (e.g. junior RSE, senior RSE), but this is an exception
- We should have the type of roles where e.g. RSEs can have lateral movement across universities/institutions
- Sometimes you get situations where there is e.g. 1 RSE in 1 centre, disconnected from rest of the RSEs
- Something missing for what are all the things that all RSEs can do - so e.g. where there is shared expertise, and where there is specific expertise with specific people that can benefit projects in the long-term
- Institutions often see the narrow need they have at the moment, rather than how a broader approach can be more beneficial in the long run
- If there are communities of best practice, things become more shareable as there are shared understandings
- With other roles (RAM/RPM), it's the community idea of bringing in expertise that teams might not already have, and seeing a knowledge share between these different communities.
- If teams understand that they're not just hiring a person, but hiring for access to a wider pool of knowledge, that would help
- If you have a pool of knowledge, that's where career progression can come from - increased knowledge, expertise etc.
- At EPCC, it's the board of EPCC that decides who progresses, not Universities - might not be clear to decision makers what value people are providing, and therefore why career progression should be funded
- There's a structural change required to ensure that a professional services / research infrastructure capacity is built within an organisation: often people are assigned to "boxes" due to an archaic structural approach that ignores project requirements and innovation
 - A lot of roles have a black/white 'meet these criteria' setup, which makes it difficult to allow career progressions to naturally emerge

Group 3: Types of roles in a project: In your project teams, what types of research infrastructure roles do your team members take?

Notes:

- Researchers are still taking on multiple research infrastructure roles at once, even if it's not their defined role/skillset
- Some organisations may not think there is a need for formal research infrastructure
- Lone researcher/ivory tower perception of research
- Feeling out what research infrastructure means before the specific roles

Q4:

- No recognition at university level of research infra roles outside of RSE kind of roles. Early days?
- Lack of connection between people doing this kind of roles does not help on getting recognition.

Group 4: Wider recognition: How do you feel research infrastructure roles are recognised within your institute/in the research landscape?

Roll call - Georgia, Emma, Catherine, Vashti, Peter, David S, Alex AA, Alejandro CC.

Notes:

- Collaboration not competition - need for working together.
- Researcher - preferred title is researcher - contribute to research but not necessarily writing papers. Not wanting to be PI - not a failure. What about those of us that want to do other roles and not be PI. Happy and sustainable careers in those roles.
- Research project management - mediator and translator between people. Feel very much recognised in this role at Turing.
- EPCC - language background. Now working with fellows at SSI - user admin desk. We are stuck with university promotion and other structures. Our head now has the ear of the higher ups at the university - lots of us do jobs that don't match the usual uni roles.
- Joined UCL in 2019 - stumbled across RSE role by accident. A slack channel. Led me to the podcasting thing. See myself as research structure engineer. Universal problem that what we do and our values are not widely known. Role that I created by myself does not fit into the academic sector.
- Research fellow - my previous role but did not know about the different roles. I would like to learn more about these roles and collaborate in the future.

Qu 4 - seems there is a start for recognition - our uni has signed up to the technicians commitment, for example —, need something more consistent. Technicians are often permanent contracted and researchers more fixed term contracts.

- Some recognition but it is piecemeal.

Whole unit of people that are on the side of the university - we did not have any MSc course at the start. We self fund so we get recognition and helps us to make our own way.

Research institutes that work differently to universities.

Our work may be more at home in research institutes than unis.


Traditional university environment Vs. "Self sufficient" centres/institutes with more flexibility to set up things as wanted

Technicians commitment - Vashti

🙌 Share out notes (10 mins)

? Questions

🔗 Other information/links

- Slides:  2023-05-03_TTW_CW23-infrastructure-roles-workshop-view.pptx
- Feedback: <https://forms.gle/gaJtpBLDE4Jy9L2r7>
- The Turing Way Book: <https://the-turing-way.netlify.app/index.html>
- Monthly newsletters: <https://tinyletter.com/TuringWay>
- Slack workspace: <https://tinyurl.com/jointuringwayslack>
- GitHub repository: <https://github.com/alan-turing-institute/the-turing-way>
- Turing Way welcome page (start here!): [Welcome to The Turing Way! \(start.page\)](#)
- Demo Introduction: [The Turing Way: Introduction - HackMD](#)



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